

## **Matthew 19:13-17** **The Poverty of the Rich Man Part 1**

We are in Matthew chapter 19. We are picking up at Matthew 19:13, leaving off at verse 12 last week.

In Matthew chapters 19 through 22 we are studying The Ministry of Relationships, all built in support of Matthew 18, The Lord's Sermon on Relationships. He presented the precepts of the kingdom, how relationships should be carried out.

We saw in verses 1 to 14 of Matthew 18, The Precepts of Greatness. The disciples wanted to know who would be the greatest in the kingdom, and how they could become the greatest in the kingdom. And Jesus brought a little child and we start off with a child again today, in verse 13. But back in chapter 18, He took a child and said, "Except you become like this child, you shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The word for child is **παιδία** (paidia), which means *somebody who is totally dependent upon the parents, a toddler* in our vernacular. Somebody who is trainable and who is able to be disciplined. So Jesus is saying, "Your approach to Me must be like a child who doesn't know anything and confesses not to know anything." So, rather than thinking you know everything, approach the throne, approach the things of the Lord like a little child needing to be led, needing the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to the things of the truth, even for everyday life.

So, The Precepts of Greatness, those who are greatest in the kingdom of heaven are like a little child. It doesn't say they are immature like a little child. It doesn't say that they act like a little child; but that their character has the same approach as that of a child to an adult.

In chapter 18 verses 15 through 20, The Precepts Concerning Sin. How to handle sin. If somebody sins against you, how that is to be handled, both personally and in the church.

And then in chapter 18 verses 21 to 35, The Precepts of Forgiveness. How important it is to forgive, to keep the unity in the body of Christ. But there must be repentance before there can be administered forgiveness.

This whole chapter, chapter 19, begins with the first two verses as dealing with the pivotal point of Jesus leaving Galilee, the northern part of the territory, and coming down into Judea, which is where Jerusalem is. Jesus has spent most of this time in Gentile territory avoiding the attack, avoiding the ambush by the religious leaders. Now it's time for Him to go to the cross, so He's leaving Galilee and going down into Judea.

At the beginning of chapter 19 the religious leaders wanted to know about divorce. When can a person divorce? They were asking Him to pick between the two schools of thought among the Jews:

- 1) The school of Shammai, which said the uncleanness in Deuteronomy 24:1 has to do with adultery, the only reason for divorce.

2) But the school of Hillel said the term uncleanness meant anything. Even if a wife lost her beauty, even if she burned his food, or did things that were displeasing to him.

So, the religious leaders were coming to Jesus and saying, "Which school are you from?" Of course, the majority of the Jewish people held to the thoughts of Hillel because they offered the easiest way out of a marriage, rather than Shammai which is limited to just adultery.

Which is interesting, because Jesus turned it on them, and said, "Instead of trying to make it easy - find an easy way to get a divorce - you should concentrate on and find an easy way to stay married." He gave what marriage was really all about. It's God calling two people together to represent Him and His relationship with His people. Instead of answering their question directly, He told them about what marriage is for, what is the interpretation of marriage, not the interpretation of divorce.

But then as they pressed Him on it, they said, "Well you didn't answer our question," and He says, "If you should divorce except for fornication," which is sexual immorality, "then you are and have committed adultery by getting a divorce." When the disciples heard this (because they are with the school of Hillel and they are looking for the easy way out) they said, "Well, if it's that difficult to get a divorce, then why even bother to get married?" Again, they didn't pick up on the Lord's ministry to them; that you work for what marriage is all about, not for an easy way out of divorce.

So, Jesus said, "Well, this isn't for everybody," and He went through and we shared with you from I Corinthians chapter 7 what Paul said to the Gentiles. I Corinthians chapter 7 is the chapter on marriage and divorce for the Gentiles. Matthew chapter 19 is the scripture for the Jews, the Jews lived under the law. The Gentiles did not, they were not raised under the law. So, there are very spiritual principles in which Paul said Gentiles must live by; and the common thread between I Corinthians chapter 7 and Matthew chapter 19 is that a believer, Jewish or Gentile, is not to initiate divorce. Period. Serve the Lord in whatever circumstance and condition you are in. That is your service to Christ.

Paul went on to say in Ephesians chapter 5, because marriage represents the relationship between the church and its Lord, Jesus Christ. The husband represents the Lord and the wife represents the church and they are to function as a testimony between God and His people, just like Matthew 19.

So, continuing with relationships, now with Matthew 19:13, The Proper Place of Children, and The Correction for the Adults. This is not the correction for the children but the correction for the adults.

### **Then was brought to Him children...**

And again, the word is **παιδία** (paidia), the *toddler*, the *one who is at the age of correction and discipline*.

**They brought to Him children, (multiple) in order that He might lay hands on them and He might pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.**

It wasn't the disciples bringing the children, it was the adults of the children bringing the children up front to where Jesus can lay hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples said, "Oh no, no, no, this is for the adults. This is not for the children." And so they rebuked them. That's what religion does. Religion keeps the kids away. It's for the adults to run the church for God.

**But Jesus said** (a positive command and a negative command) **"Allow the children and do not prevent them to come to Me, (allow them to come) for such is the kingdom of heaven."** And after having laid hands on them, He departed from there.

Now, two things I want to mention before we move on to the next section and that is the fact that Jesus didn't call them up to give them a Bible story. There is nothing wrong with giving children Bible stories and that's why when it comes time to study what we study, material that would be beyond the understanding of children, we take them in the back, and we teach them the stories of the Bible. That's in preparation for sitting in here. That's the whole motive for what we do, is that we prepare them for being in here. But Jesus wanted to lay hands on them and pray for them, pray for the little children. That's what He wanted to do. So, the children came up and the Lord laid hands on them and prayed for them, perfectly acceptable.

But, on the other hand, preparing the children to sit in with the adults takes some effort by the adults to teach their children how to sit for an hour, or sit for 45 minutes and not make a disturbance. And that's something that we had to do with our kids, we had to teach them to sit. It was mostly Patty. Patty would read to them and sit there for an hour and read to them and make them sit still and listen. Train them to be able to sit and listen.

I know when I was a kid and I wasn't saved, I was very angry when I did have to go to church and my mother brought me a coloring book, which was interesting. I would color and listen and color and listen. The whole point is to raise the children so that they can reach that point of being able to sit in and study the word of God with the adults. And that's the main point of what we, at least here, what we attempt to do; is raise the children to be able to sit in and listen to the study. As soon as they are able to sit still and listen, we invite them to come in and sit with us and listen.

In the next section, Matthew 19:16-22, the title of this section - and we won't get through the whole thing, we will just take part of this section today - The Poverty of the Rich Man. It sounds like a contradiction of thought; how can you be a rich man and be in poverty? His richness and wealth made him poor. Rich people are poor spiritually.

So, in verses 16 to 17 that we are focusing on this morning, going to start with The Character of God.

**And, behold, one came near to Jesus and spoke to him.**

This one who came near out of the crowd is said to be, in verse 20, that he's a young man. The text reveals that he's a rich man and in Luke 19:18 in Luke's version he describes him as a ruler. That's why in some of your Bibles the subscription on the top would read *The Rich Young Ruler* because that's who he is, they're putting all of the descriptions together, the rich young ruler.

**This one came near** (this rich young ruler) **and said to Jesus, "Good teacher"...**

The King James says *Good Master*, but it's the Greek word **διδάσκαλος** (didaskalos) for *teacher*, not *master*. "Good teacher."

Also, if you have the New American Standard version, and the New International Version, they will not have the word *good*, it will just say, *Teacher*, as he's addressing Jesus. Well, we have a problem because the word *good* is in the manuscripts for the King James, the manuscripts are called the Textus Receptus. The word *good* is in that Greek text. The word *good* is original in Mark's version of this verse, Mark 10:18, he has "Good Teacher." And in Luke 19:18, in his version, he also has the man saying, "Good Teacher." So, it is in our text and should be in our text. Some texts don't have it, so some translations decided not to use it; but the rest of the teaching in these two verses doesn't make sense unless it is there. And because it is in the manuscripts that we go by and Mark and Luke go by, we are leaving it in.

**He comes to Him and says, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do in order that I might have eternal life?"** (Now listen to what Jesus says.) **And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good?"**

See, if the word *good* is not in there why would He mention that? "Why do you call Me good?" The rich man would have said, "No that's not in the manuscripts that I use."

**"Why do you call me good? No one is good except One, and that's God! But if you desire to enter into life, keep the commandments."**

Well, in English it's a little confusing. In fact, the true meaning of the text doesn't come out unless you know what word *good* is being used in the Greek text. The word *good* in English is a general word that translates several different Greek words, but there are two primary words that are of importance to the believer and to understanding the Scriptures.

1) The first word is the word **καλός** (kalos), that's *human good*. *Human outward good, human performance, human looks, beauty or handsomeness* is all **καλός** (kalos). *Outward, any effort, any good effort* is called **καλός** (kalos), *human effort*. And so **καλός** (kalos) is used for the external.

2) There is another Greek word that's of even more importance it's called **ἀγαθός** (agathos). That Greek word is *internal quality, inward quality of a person, a person's spiritual good*.

So, **καλός** (kalos) is human, **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is spiritual. So now, it might start to make sense if you understand that the only Greek word used in these two verses for good is the word **ἀγαθός** (agathos), the word for *spiritual good*.

So, when he comes up to Jesus in verse 16 and he says, "Good Teacher," he's not saying to Him, "You know, you're a good teacher, I really enjoy listening to you." He is not describing the kind of teaching that He does. "Good teacher," he's calling Him *spiritually good* and as Jesus is pointing out to him in these texts, when you call Jesus *good*, you're calling Him *God*. There is

only one who is **ἀγαθός** (agathos). If a person is *a good teacher, a good Bible teacher*, it's **καλός** (kalos). If God does reveal Himself in it, **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is revealing Himself in the teaching.

But the rich young ruler says, "What good thing shall I do in order that I might have eternal life?" And again *good thing*, he is using **ἀγαθός** (agathos). "What **ἀγαθός** (agathos) must I do, **ἀγαθός** (agathos) teacher, that I might have eternal life?" He is looking for something to do that's not considered human but considered acceptable to God in order to get eternal life.

In the prayer requests we mentioned people who contacted some of us asking, "How can I be saved? What can I do to be saved?" and it's interesting, that's what this man is doing. He's coming and saying, "What must I do that I might have eternal life?"

So, Jesus says to him, "Why do you call me good **ἀγαθός** (agathos)? No one is **ἀγαθός** (agathos) except One and that is God." He is bringing to his attention that whether the rich young ruler knew it or not he was identifying Jesus with being God. He didn't say, "Good **καλός** (kalos) teacher. Give me some of that good **καλός** (kalos) teaching." But he says, "Good **ἀγαθός** (agathos) Teacher." Jesus is making him stop and consider, "Why did you call me good **ἀγαθός** (agathos)? There is only One that's good **ἀγαθός** (agathos) and that's God. You called Me **ἀγαθός** (agathos), so what are you saying? Do you realize what you called Me?"

It says in the Scriptures about this word **ἀγαθός** (agathos) that Jesus went about doing good, all through the gospels. And the word is **ἀγαθός** (agathos). I am bringing this out to you because we have a problem with ourselves, with our understanding, with our humanness, and humanitarianizing spiritual things. In other words, if someone comes to me and says I should be doing good to my neighbor, usually the first thing that comes to me is that "Oh well, than I should take in his trash cans for him, or go over and help him pull his weeds, or do some kind act." If that kind act isn't the person of Jesus himself, then it is just **καλός** (kalos). But I can say, "It is *good*," because of what we understand in English and how we understand.

We have a tendency to make the human and the spiritual all one, that there is no difference between *spiritual good* and *human good*. There is a big difference between *spiritual good* and *human good*. When Jesus went about doing *good*, He went about doing spiritual good, **ἀγαθός** (agathos), to the people. Even when He did physical things it was for a spiritual purpose and it was by the Spirit of God. He wasn't being a good teacher, **καλός** (kalos) teacher, by doing *good* to people.

We have a lot of gurus who are in charge of various religions in the world who teach kindness and goodness, but it's not Christ. Teaching people how to be better human beings. Now, that's very helpful, to be a better human being but that's not what God has called us to do. He has called us to surrender to the Spirit of Christ and allow Christ to minister through us and reveal Himself through us. If people just see our good acts and our good works they are saying, "That person is a good Christian." That would be **καλός** (kalos) Christian. But if they see Christ, if they see the Lord through us, doing good to them, that's the whole purpose of Christ

doing good. He's not trying to build up the human character. He is trying to reveal Himself to the human being. So, I have the wrong motive if I'm trying to show people what a good Christian human being I am and trying to do good so that people approve of my Christianity. That is not what the Scripture talks about, not at all.

In the book of Acts the disciples were said to go around doing good, in the various places that it states that. And again, the word is **ἀγαθός** (agathos). They didn't go around doing human good. Even though it might come out that way, a human being would benefit from it, it was motivated by the Holy Spirit and the good was ministered by the Holy Spirit to bring people to Christ.

Then two verses that we are all familiar with, but which are very important:

1) One of them is Romans 8:28, which literally reads, **And we know that God works all things together for good ἀγαθός (agathos) to those who are loving God, and to those who are being called according to His purpose.** God is working everything for good. It doesn't say everything is good. We have a tough time differentiating between something that is good or something that is bad.

"How's your day?"

"Bad day."

"How's your day?"

"Good day."

"How's it going?"

"Good and bad." Mixture, which is most days.

We have to understand that Romans 8:28 is saying that **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is the goal and the purpose for everything that God does. It doesn't say everything that God does is good. It might even be bad. But everything that He does works together for **ἀγαθός** (agathos), spiritual good; to bring people to Christ, to cause them to know Him more and to be closer to Him in a more intimate way. Most of the time it's the *bad things*, using human evaluation, it's the bad things that we experience that bring us to Christ. We sometimes say to the Lord, "Why does this have to happen to me? I'm a child of God and these bad things are happening to me."

In fact, I saw on the Internet this week where somebody wrote, "People keep saying, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?'" And he says, "That's because there's no good people." Bad things happen to everybody. "There is none good," the Scripture says, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Recently a person passed away, a friend of my daughter's. She's having a tough time wrapping her head around the fact that this was a good person, a good guy, kind to all people, told everybody he loved them and he hoped that they would have a good day; but she just couldn't wrap her mind around the fact that such a good person might go to hell if he didn't know Christ. And my response is going to be, if you're a kind person or you're not a kind person, if you're a good person or not a good person, that doesn't designate

people to heaven or hell; it's a relationship with Jesus Christ. You can be the nicest religious person in the world. I know some very nice religious people that reject the deity of Christ, and yet in the human, in their actions, they outshine some of the best of Christians.

God works everything for the good. It doesn't say everything is good or that God works good in everything; but the end result is to experience the goodness of God. Sometimes just being devastated, you put yourself in line to experience the goodness of God.

2) Then another verse that we've mentioned before, Romans 7:18. Paul says, "As a human being and as a Jew in keeping the law I try to do good." He says, "But this is what I have found out, that in my flesh dwells no good thing **ἀγαθός** (agathos). The more good I try to do the more I find out I can't do it," is what he says. "For to will is present with me, I want to do **ἀγαθός** (agathos), but how to perform that which is good I find not. I do not find the ability in me to do **ἀγαθός** (agathos)." Why? Because he is a human being, he's just flesh. He is just human. **ἀγαθός** (agathos) cannot be produced by human. **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is spiritual.

In Galatians 5:22 about the fruits of the spirit, one of the fruits is *goodness*. It's this word **ἀγαθός** (agathos). Only the Spirit of God can produce the kind of spiritual goodness that represents God because **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is the very nature and quality of who God is. I can't produce it. It is another one of those love things. **ἀγάπη** (agape) love can only be produced by the Spirit of God. Human beings can't produce it, it must be by God.

### He says, "Why do you call Me good?"

**ἀγαθός** (agathos) represents that inward quality of the Spirit of God. The first thing He says to this young man, and by the way He's dealing here with the two aspects of the Christian faith.

- 1) The first aspect of the Christian faith is a relationship with the Lord.
- 2) And the second aspect of the Christian faith is service to the Lord.

This young man came and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He says, "First of all, why did you call Me good?" The first thing we are going to find out next week, as we continue, is that the young man is totally void of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He recognized He is God, but then went on to talk about, "What do I do? What can I do to earn it? What can I do to do it, to get eternal life?" And Jesus said, "Let's wait a minute here. Why did you call me **ἀγαθός** (agathos) Teacher? Because only God is **ἀγαθός** (agathos), so you are recognizing Me to be God." And so, at the end of verse 17, Jesus says, "But if you desire to enter into life keep the commandments." That's aspect number two. He's looking for something to do, so Jesus is going to give him something to do, which is a tremendous lesson as we continue with The Commandments of Eternal Life next week.

Alright, let's close with prayer.