

Matthew 19:18-22 The Poverty of the Rich Man Part 2

Alright, we are in Matthew chapter 19. The section we are in is verses 13 through 22. We are focusing though, on 16 through 22 as we took a couple of verses last week.

Matthew chapters 19 through 22 deal with relationships. The first part of chapter 19 dealt with The Proper Interpretation and Understanding of Divorce and along with it The Proper Interpretation and Understanding of Marriage. Marriage itself represents God's relationship with His people. In particular for the Christian it represents Christ and the church as a testimony to others around us.

In verses 13 through 15, we studied last week about The Proper Place of Children. While Jesus was speaking some people were bringing the children through the crowd for Jesus to pray for. And it was the disciples, of all people, who reached out to stop them from bringing the children up. As if to say, "This is an adult meeting. Religion is for the adults, not the children. We don't want them to interfere." Jesus said in verse 14, "Allow the children and do not prevent them to come to Me, for such is the kingdom of heaven," and after having laid hands on them, He departed from there.

I point out the fact that Jesus welcomed children, wants children in His presence. Secondly, I point out to you they weren't coming forward for a Bible story or sermon, they were coming forward for Jesus to lay His hands on them and pray for them, to pray for the children. Not wrong to pray for the children. And like I said last week, here we take the children in the back and teach them the Bible stories so that they can reach an age where they are old enough to sit in here with the adults and hear the adult lesson. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like the little children, so let them come."

But then, last week we took verses 16 and 17. How important these verses are. "Behold then, when one came near." We know later on this was a young man. The text tells us that he was a rich man and Luke 19:18 tells us that he was a ruler. So that's why in your Bibles you might have the heading for this section The Rich Young Ruler, putting all those characteristics together. "But behold, when one came near," that would be the rich young ruler, "he said to Jesus, 'Good Teacher.'" And again, that's a title. He is not saying, "You're a good teacher," he is saying, "Good Teacher." He is calling Him *good*. "What good thing shall I do in order that I might have eternal life?" The question that just about everybody asks. "What can I do to be saved? What can I do to have eternal life?"

There are several words translated *good*, this particular Greek word is the word **ἀγαθός** (agathos) and it has to do with inward or spiritual good, versus **καλός** (kalos), which is external good. This is very important because people think they want to go around and be doing good things for people, that's **καλός** (kalos), that's human and religious good. Spiritual good is when God's Spirit does it. When God's Spirit works through an individual to another person. Or in this instance, "Good Teacher," he's calling Jesus *good*.

There are some translations, as I told you last week, that don't have the word *good* in the text; but it is original in Mark and Luke in their versions and it is in the Greek text for our text.

"What good thing shall I do in order that I might have eternal life?" he says in verse 17. And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? Why you call Me, personally, **ἀγαθός** (agathos)? No one is **ἀγαθός** (agathos) except One, and that's God!" People are not *good*. I do not do *good* things. Somebody might think I'm a good guy, those are the ones that don't know me. Some people might say, "I'm a good guy," or, "I did a good deed for someone," but that's not **ἀγαθός** (agathos). **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is something that God does. It is something that God is. It's His nature. And so He's telling this man, "Do you know that by calling Me **ἀγαθός** (agathos) you're calling Me God because only One is *good* and that's God?" It has a tremendous enlightenment and awakening for this rich young ruler, especially for what he's about to be told.

We know that in Romans 8:28 it says, "God works all things for the good to those that love him and are called according to His purpose." It doesn't say, "All things are good." He said, "All things are for the good," and that's the word **ἀγαθός** (agathos). Things might be hard and difficult in the human realm and not good from a human standpoint, but it's for a spiritual purpose, for God's spiritual good.

In Romans 7:18 the Apostle Paul said, "I've tried to do what the law has told me to do, but I find that I do not have the capacity (or the ability) to keep the law, that is, in my flesh there is no good thing." That is **ἀγαθός** (agathos). He says, "There's no spiritual good in my human nature." It's human. It's flesh. The **ἀγαθός** (agathos) can only come from God.

So then Jesus goes on to say, at the end of verse 17, "**But if you desire to enter into life keep the commandments.**" So now the attention has shifted to, "I want you to realize what you just called Me. You called me **ἀγαθός** (agathos) and the only person that is **ἀγαθός** (agathos) is God." So there is something in Jesus that this rich young ruler saw that enlightened him to call Jesus, "God." And when Jesus told him that, He made him think; but he's got more to think about here in a minute, just like we do.

"If you desire to enter into life keep the commandments."

The commandments that He's talking about, as we'll see in just a moment in the text, are The Ten Commandments. Or, as the Hebrew Bible calls them, The Ten Words, or Ten Statements. The Hebrew Bible does not call them The Ten Commandments, it calls them The Ten *Davar*, Ten *Words*, *Statements*. And he's making reference to these Ten Commandments or Ten Statements from Exodus 20:1-16. That's where The Ten Commandments are found, Exodus 20:1-16.

Now, The Ten Commandments as we know it were given on two tablets. Four commandments were given on the first tablet, and six on the second. The first four commandments of The Ten Commandments had to do with a person's relationship, a personal relationship, with God Himself. The last six commandments of The Ten Commandments had to do with a person's relationship with his or her fellow man. So, it's divided in half, it has two parts to it, and these two parts represent the two parts of the Christian life. Please keep that in mind as we go through. There are two parts to the Christian life; one of them we focus on and the other one we are negligent about, and we will get to that in just a moment.

When a lawyer came to Jesus one day he said, "What are the greatest of the commandments?" and Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 when He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and the second commandment is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The second commandment came from Leviticus 19:18. Those two commands summarize all of The Ten Commandments, in fact, summarizes all of the commandments that God gave to Israel.

"To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength," summarizes the first four commandments of The Ten Commandments.

"Love your neighbor as yourself," summarizes the last six commands of The Ten Commandments.

And so keeping this in mind, how these commandments lineup in two halves, summarized by two statements, we move on to see how the young man responded. Look at verse 18, The Commandments for Eternal Life.

He said to Jesus, "Which ones?"

Jesus said, "Keep the commandments."

"Which ones?"

And Jesus said, and He now lists five commands from The Ten Commandments. These five commands are from the second half. He completely leaves off the first half on purpose, we will see in a moment.

Jesus said, "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother." And then he quotes from Leviticus 19:18 summarizing those last commands by saying, "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

That's the one we just introduced to you. That is a summary statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

"By doing what?"

Then you can go down the commands. A summary statement, which is interesting because you notice right away, you notice that when Jesus said, "Keep the commandments," and the young man said, "Which ones?" that He left some off. He only gave the second half. He didn't give anything about his personal relationship with the Lord, just commands concerning his relationship with his fellow man.

Now listen to this, verse 20,

The young man says to Him, "All these things I have kept from out of my youth."

Wow, that's a pretty bold statement to make. "I've been a good guy since I was in my youth. I've never murdered anybody. I have never committed adultery. I've never stolen. I've never given false testimony against anybody. So, all these I've kept from my youth." He thinks he's got it made.

"What yet am I lacking?"

"If that's it, then tell me what else."

Verse 21, **And Jesus says to him, "If you desire to be perfect,"**

This Greek word doesn't mean *perfect by way of performance* but perfect in the sense of *complete* and *whole*.

"If you desire to be perfect," which is what the young man is presenting himself to be, **"Go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me." But when the young man heard that statement, he went away being grieved, for he was having many possessions.**

He couldn't do it. This rich young ruler, what Jesus is revealing to him is that "There's something about your life, and something about your lifestyle that prevents you from having a right relationship with the Lord Himself. You are good toward your fellow man. You haven't done any harm toward your fellow man. But what about God? What about God Himself? What about the commandments about God?"

Now, Jesus didn't give the commandments, those first four commandments from The Ten Commandments. He told him to go sell his possessions, give to the poor; and then the last command was, "Come and follow Me." In other words, his time spent with his possessions kept him from following Jesus, even though he was a good guy and did some good things for people. Even though he had money and wealth, and even though he helped his fellow man with his riches; he still lacked one thing, his devotion to God himself. God himself was not the top priority.

Here is what Exodus chapter 20 beginning at verse 3 says - the four commandments that Jesus left off -

You shall have no other gods before Me.

The word *before* doesn't mean *ahead of me*. Because some people take it, "Well, Jesus is my God, He's number one, but I have all these others and it's after Him so it's okay." No. Literally in the Hebrew and with the Greek text - the Greek translation of the of the Old Testament - it is, "You shall have no other gods besides Me." You only have one. If you have another God you have just violated The First Commandment, no matter what else you do.

Secondly,

You shall not make unto you any graven (or crafted) image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Talk about religion violating that one. No statues. No works of art. I can remember my mother used to have a painting of Jesus. Of course, nobody knows what Jesus looked like, but I always wondered about that. This big huge picture of Jesus that a lot of people have hanging up in their house. And I said, "Doesn't the Bible say not to have any images or any..."

"Yeah, well, this just helps us with our faith, and..."

Well, it says not to.

You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I am the Lord your God and I'm a jealous God.

So you will have no other gods besides me.

I visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; And showing mercy to the thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

That's not just swearing. That is attaching His name to something human or horizontal that is empty and vain of any spiritual substance whatsoever. If it is not of God don't use God's name to it.

Next,

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work: but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that's in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Those are the things He did not tell this man because there was no way that he could listen to this and say, "I have kept them from my youth up." Because here's a businessman that's spent all of his time and energy and money getting rich. Where it says on our dollar bill, "In God we trust," and I can remember someone on TV holding up a dollar bill and saying, "It says that on there because that's what we do, we trust in our money that it is the answer to everything." Here's a man that in the Lord's name probably broke the Sabbath day but helped people and did it in the name of the Lord, just for the sake of doing good to his fellow man. There are two parts to relationship with the Lord:

- 1) a direct relationship with Him, one-on-one
- 2) in service to Him, by serving others.

So, the Lord touched the area in this man's life that kept him from a relationship with the Lord. He would do good things, especially for other people, but his relationship with the Lord he was negligent in. He had no reverence for, he had no honor, he had no obedience in keeping those commandments with the Lord. It is the area that most believers have trouble with.

Even believers have trouble because what we do is we go to church - that's a horizontal effort - we go to church. Hopefully we learn about the Lord, hopefully we worship the Lord; but we go to church, we go to Bible study, we do our functions in fellowship in the horizontal. But what do we do the rest of the week? How is that in line with and following the person of Jesus Christ? See, it's not just being a believer, it's being a follower. That is what the Bible talks about.

You see, I can have my convictions, I can have my beliefs, I can go to church two to three times a week. We used to have - I don't want to hear any groans here, because you'll start moaning - we used to have five Bible studies a week. We used to pastor two churches, one here and one in Casimalia and we had five Bible studies between the two churches. People would go

back and forth, constantly studying the word of God but that doesn't save you. That doesn't give you a right standing with the Lord. It sure helps my relationship with the Lord to learn about Him and to worship Him but that does not take the place. That doesn't mean that I can check the box and say that I have done my duty as a Christian this week.

It is all about a personal relationship with Him. I take all of that and go have a one-on-one with the Lord all week long. And I can say to you honestly from experience, most Christians, or most people who profess to be Christians don't have that one-on-one relationship with the Lord; interacting with Him, seeking Him as to what we are to do, or where we are to go, or how we are to function in this earthly life. We pray about things. We pray, "Lord bless this," or, "Show me what to do," but we just go ahead and we do what we are going to do anyway. We concentrate on helping people, people in the horizontal realm; but the Lord Himself does not have top priority in what we do.

It is personal and I'll touch on one point just to show you. Many, many times people will say concerning seeking the Lord, "Well, I'm asking the Lord to show me what He wants me to do." I can tell you right now every time what the Lord wants you to do. Nothing. The Lord is not going to tell you what to do, the Lord is going to do it Himself. There is a difference. There is a difference there. When I rest in Him, when I pray, and I commit, and submit something to the Lord, I am committing and submitting for Him to go ahead and work out His way and work out His will the way He has planned. When I ask Him to show me what to do, which is the natural normal thing I think that we all say. But I pick up on it. From myself and from others I pick up on the fact that we think that God tells us what to do because we are so much involved. No, it's the Lord. We are to seek Him, not what He wants me to do. And then once I pray about it, watch for Him and follow Him in it. So, there's a difference between functioning in the horizontal and doing it religiously with my beliefs and my convictions, and having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, interacting with Him, seeking Him, talking with Him. You hear the testimonies that people give and you sense the interaction; that they're talking with the Lord and they are seeking the Lord and they are experiencing the Lord Himself. Not just a general circumstance that the Lord might be working, even though He might be working.

So, this is very, very interesting. Going back to the beginning when the young man came up and said, "Good Teacher." Do you realize who you're talking to? It's the Good God that you've been avoiding. And you're asking Him the question, now you are going to find the answer. It is quite a lesson for this for this young man and for us because we have a tendency to look at ourselves and say, "You know, I know I'm a sinner but I'm not really that bad. I try to do the best I can." The best *I* can. Or as I told you last week, I saw a posting on the Internet where someone says - and you hear it all the time, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" It is because there are no good people. We are all sinners. There is none that deserve anything more than the judgment of God. Except for the mercy through Jesus Christ it would happen to us.

Let's close with prayer.