

LG 3: The Rich Young Ruler

Big Idea:

Eternal life is impossible through man but all things are possible through God. Also, often there are idols in our lives, playing the role of our “functional god,” that keep us from placing our hope for eternal life in Christ.

Launch

This story is about a rich, young ruler who asks Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responds by revealing some idols in the man’s life. When you hear the word, false god or idol, what comes to mind?

Read Luke 18:18-34

Explore

We pick up this conversation in the middle of chapter 18. It is crucial in reading any text to always look at the context or the surrounding verses of the passage. The rich young ruler asks Jesus, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Where does this question come from? From the surrounding verses, why does he ask Jesus this question?

Just one verse earlier Jesus says whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.

So, in order to attain eternal life we must receive it like a child. In the way the ruler approached Jesus, how was he not acting like a child?

Vs 18 “what shall I do...” A child comes desperate and dependent; the young man came independent, desiring eternal life apart from the work of God.

How does Jesus respond to the man’s question?

Jesus shares some of the commandments with the man. Vs 20

Is this true? Is Jesus telling the man that eternal life is obtained by obeying the Law?

If no, then what was Jesus purpose in responding with the Law to the man’s question, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus was speaking the truth. In order to inherit eternal life was must perfectly obey the law of God. Jesus was trying to expose the assumption in the man’s question: That it is possible to follow the Law. However, no one is good except God alone. {Also, Romans 7:7 shows the law exposes our need for Jesus.}

The rich young ruler says that he has kept these aspects of the Law from his youth. After hearing this, Jesus informs the man that he still lacks one thing. He must go sell his possessions and give to the poor, then come and follow Christ. How does the rich young ruler respond? *He became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Vs 23*

Why did the rich young ruler have to give up his money before he could follow Jesus? *Money was acting as his functional god. The young man had made an idol out of his wealth. The first commandment is “You shall have no other gods before Me.” This is the one thing he still lacked from VS 22.*

Jesus then turns to those around him and explains that it is easier for a camel to go

through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Who then can be saved? *The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.*

Did you catch that? Not only is inheriting eternal life impossible for the rich man, its impossible for the poor, the young, the old, the kid that was raised in Sunday school and the kid that was raised atheist. It is impossible for man to enter the kingdom of God.

What a terrible story, and then it seems to just end. How are the disciples supposed to respond to this seemingly hopeless message? *Vs 31 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." Jesus Christ came to do the very thing we were incapable of doing. He perfectly followed the Law of God. He then went to the cross to die as our perfect sacrifice and raising three days later. He now sits in heaven and pronounces amnesty and freedom from the Law to all who will come and follow Him. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.*

Application

The young man asks a good question. It is clear he was listening to Jesus teachings. How often in our own lives do we block out the voice of Jesus? What are some things that might distract you from hearing Jesus this semester?

How are you coming to Jesus? So often we bring our own agendas and ideas to the throne of God. What are the areas of your life that you control? Where are you asking God, what must I do...rather than, God, I need you in this situation?

Money was a mini-god in the rich young ruler's life. What are the gods in your life that keep you from following Christ? What rights, expectations, or comforts are acting as mini-gods in your life? Relationship? Boyfriend? Girlfriend? Ministry? Money? Respect of others?

Why is it better to follow Jesus than your functional god?

Let's take 5 minutes and be silent before God and pray that He would reveal to us out mini-gods.

Would anyone be willing to share some idols in their lives and then tell us why Jesus is better than his/her idol?

Close in Prayer