



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 90 "The Rich (Foolish) Ruler" By Pastor Jody May

Luke 18:18-30 ESV

The Rich Ruler

¹⁸ And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" ²¹ And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²³ But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴ Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶ Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." ²⁸ And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." ²⁹ And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers^[b] or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."



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LETTING GO...

A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day, when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell. On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet.

He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff. So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something.

HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there? "HELP!"

He yelled for a long time, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice. Jack, Jack. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but who are you, and where are you?"

"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere."

"The Lord? You mean, GOD?"

"That's Me."

"God, please help me! I promise if, you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's get you off from there; then we can talk."

"Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully."

"I'll do anything, God. Just tell me what to do."

"Okay. Let go of the branch." "What?" "I said, let go of the branch. Just trust Me. Let go."

There was a long silence.

Finally, Jack yelled, "HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE ELSE UP THERE?"



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I know you must have heard that joke before, and you most likely heard it in a church too, but it’s too good not to use for a situation like this. Let me explain. This is the 5th week we have been talking about the Kingdom of God in some aspect, it is by far one of Luke’s favorite topics as we have to remember Luke’s aim is to bring Gentiles into an understanding that their faith has been brought in by a King. This King unites all races into one kingdom, so it is paramount to our understanding of scripture to see what it means to be a conquered people. You are not your own, “...*You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*” – 1 Cor. 6:19-20 ESV

In our passage of scripture, just like our young man Jack, a rich, young, man had a very tight hold on something he was not willing to let go of. In Luke 18 the Rich (but foolish) ruler had latched onto his money, his riches, and when confronted by the conquering King with a chance for Salvation, **he would not let go**. Make no mistake family, this is a horrible thing in the text, this man represents most people in our nation today and not only that, but it points to many people in our churches as well. So, we need to take this seriously so that when the time comes, for each of us, when Jesus says to us, “LET GO!” we can release this world and embrace our New Kingdom that brings eternal life.

1. **Danger!** Getting all you that you want now. (18-23)

¹⁸ And a ruler asked him,

Both Mat. 19 and Mark 10 again share this important story of getting into Kingdom Life and in Mark 10 it records that this young man actually makes a big entrance into the story – **he runs up and kneels down at Jesus’ feet!** It is a show of respect, a show of who holds more authority over you. This is intriguing to Jesus for this “*ruler of the Jews*” is code in Luke for a Pharisee. That means we have here a young and rich Jewish ruler that falls at Jesus’ feet when all the Pharisees have ever done is ridicule Him and at this point, they are planning His murder.

¹⁸ “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.



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Now we see this gets even more interesting to Jesus, He’s invested in this encounter, it is as if He knows this story is going to be recorded for His people. No one, but no one, as taught by the Rabbis of that day called a teacher “good” that was left to be a term that was used for God alone. Could it actually mean that this man recognized that Jesus was God in the flesh? Might this be the first time that religious zealot recognized his need for Jesus? Jesus puts him to the test:

²⁰You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” ²¹And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”²²When Jesus heard this,

A) Failure to notice sinfulness – do we really understand the law?

I just want to stop there and take this in. At this point in just a few short words Jesus knows where this guy is at. Obviously this encounter, was not a saving one, this dude was not aware of the sermon on the mount, “*if ya think it ya done it*”. “*There is none righteous, no not one*” – Romans 3:10 The Rich Foolish Ruler failed to see that law was not a way to prove your righteousness, but it shows your depravity.

2 Cor. 3:6 ESV

⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. **For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

The letter, **that means the law**, the OT code, **it kills you**, the Spirit, that which gives you faith in Jesus gives you life. Living in faith shown by your works, is not what earns eternal life. It will do us no good to get to heaven one day, and when God asks us why we were there we blurt out, **because I did anything!?** Any answer other than the redeeming gift of our Savior King’s sacrifice for us we are like that poor man, on the Oscar winning movie *The Holy Grail*, when we say the wrong answer! **The law is not to prove you get eternal life it is to show you that you deserve eternal death and that is a great use of it!**

B) Failure to see the law couldn’t save – leads to us walking away.



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²² ... he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

This is Jesus folks, you and I are listening to the story and we are like, “take the deal!” and we shake our heads when this guy just gives up.

²³ But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

We’re like extremely rich are you kidding me!? This is your eternal soul we are talking about! But you see for that young man, here’s what money meant for him. Back in those days, the fact that he was most likely a Pharisee, his riches, in the other two accounts it uses the word possessions most likely referring to that this was an estate. He employed people, his family depended on him, his position in society gave him esteem, he may have even perhaps have been liked by people in his town if he truly was behaviorally keeping all the commandments. But the one thing he was breaking right now was the first two commandments, he was making a God and an idol out of his riches, he put them before Jesus, His God.

You all may be saying to yourself, I don’t have that problem, but you do. Jody, I don’t have money like that, oh but you are wealthy. Not only that, you and I are idol factories and we are born with proclivities to raise up good things in our lives to justify who we are. **Everyone creates for themselves a frame of reference to define who they are and to make sense in this world... - Illustration.**

If you are having a problem with this, if you are seeing an area where you do this, then you are actually in a good place!

2. Blessing. Seeing that you don’t yet have what you need. (24-28)

²⁴ Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” ²⁸ And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.”



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Jesus makes it clear it is hard, for those that have wealth, to enter into the Kingdom of God. I don't think I have to explain the picture of the Camel going through the eye of a needle that is pretty self-explanatory. It was evident enough to those in attendance that they were alarmed - "Then who can be saved?" **It was also a great teaching moment** because as they stand here watching this poor dejected man walk off, it also meant in that moment that shackles were coming off, blinders were being removed, a weight was being lifted, Jesus was changing the paradigm. The crowds were witnessing Jesus correcting what had become the dominant theology of the day. The gospel wasn't about those that have it all now were the ones that get into heaven, but what was it then?

²⁷ But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed the ability of God to do the impossible, to save a hard hearted people, he looked forward to a time when it would begin to dawn in the minds of men that they could not save themselves...

Jeremiah 32:17 ESV

"Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you!"

Then later in that chapter Jeremiah prophesies for God what it this impossible thing He will do:

Jeremiah 32:38-40 ESV

³⁸ And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

The time was coming in less than a year the HS would descend at Pentecost and would begin to spread through the world converting hearts that would fear Jesus, **fear being without Him**, as is recorded in John shortly before his crucifixion:



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John 14:6 ESV

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Peter, not wanting to miss it, looks for some consolation in the fact that they were still with him.

²⁸ And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.”

Peter understood **Blue Collar wealth**, they weren’t rich, but they had enough, and you even have to be willing to give that up to follow one’s King. Peter was at the first stages of being blessed, he was starting to see that what he was giving up was **nothing compared to being able to live life for this man!** It brings to my mind the words of the author of Proverbs 30 in wanting not to lose his desire for God.

Proverbs 30:7-9 ESV

⁷ Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
⁸ Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
⁹ lest I be full and deny you
and say, “Who is the Lord?”
or lest I be poor and steal
and profane the name of my God.

This morning family are you seeing what you need to give up? It’s not that you have to leave your family, but are you using your family as a crutch as why you can’t follow Jesus? It’s not that you have to surrender all your money but are you conscious about the ability to put it to the Kingdom’s use? Young person, perhaps today you need to care less about you avatar on X-box, your ability to pay a sport, how good your grades are, how attractive you are becoming, let’s stop making that an idol, let’s be willing to surrender that to Jesus if He so calls you into service.



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Are you seeing family the things you put your hopes in instead of Jesus, **then that is a blessing.** I hope so and if so that leads into our last point!

3. **Exaltation!** Knowing you can even get more of a Good Thing! (29-30)

Listen to these last words of assurance to Peter, **to us this morning**, and let’s praise God because we are figuring out that the message of the Gospel is not giving up worldly wealth and worldly idols for a cheapening of the quality of your life. The Gospel is a great exchange for the surrender of your FOR life eternal that begins now and then when you die you will receive the full payment of what is coming!

29 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Again, please see it’s not all tied up in getting to heaven, our best life starts now when we surrender to Jesus, when we let go of what we are hanging onto that which we think identifies us as a good person. When we by faith truly believe that **seeing our depravity IS a blessing** then that means we are getting close that we are entering into this Kingdom. Are you ready to leave behind that which you put your identity in? Are you ready to be identified as a follower of Jesus alone? Then let’s pray and ask that His will be done...

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father.

Go in the name of the Son,



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Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit,