

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 18 Jesus
The Rich Ruler

Opening prayer: Lord, we come asking you to be with us during this time of study as well as the worship service to follow. Help us to remember your presence with us, today, tomorrow and always. Amen.

Today's lesson comes from Mark 10 and Luke 19: 1-27 with a brief reading from Mark 12.

Journey to Jerusalem; Concerning Divorce

The land beyond the Jordan was called Perea. It was not a part of Judea, but was under the rule of Herod. It and the river Jordan bordered Judea on the east. Remember that Jesus is still traveling toward Jerusalem. He is probably coming in contact with some of the pilgrims that have started their own journey toward Jerusalem. Show map.

Read Mark 10:1-12

1. Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus if it were lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? They are trying to trap Him. They know that He has expanded the Law of Moses or at least explained the intent behind the Law. They hope that He will say something that will imply that He didn't follow the Law of Moses. What was His response? He goes back to the intention of marriage in the beginning. He explains that **permitting** divorce was because of the hardness of the human heart. He further stated that the only valid reason was for sexual immorality. Notice that all their statements focus on the man while his reply embraces both.
2. After receiving an answer from Jesus. What did the Pharisees then ask Him in regard to divorce? They thought that His answer refuted Moses when in fact He was citing scripture. What was His reply? He corrected their idea that Moses **commanded** divorce to state that rather than command divorce that Moses with God's guidance had **permitted** divorce since mankind couldn't live up to the original command. Explain the meaning of Jesus' reply. Since men couldn't live up to the original law God granted a concession. It was a protection for women who may have been murdered by men who wanted to get out of an unsatisfactory marriage.
3. If one puts away his wife for any cause other than sexual immorality and marries another, of what sin is he guilty? Adultery. Who else is guilty of that same sin? Explain. If the woman remarries then she and the husband or guilty of adultery.

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Blessing Children, Concerning Childlikeness

Read Mark 10:13-16

4. Why were little children brought to Jesus on this occasion? What was the reaction of His disciples? What was Jesus' response to His disciples? Parents are bringing their children for Jesus to bless and pray over them. The disciples wished to protect Jesus from an unnecessary interruption and possibly, they thought it was beneath the dignity of the Messiah to turn aside from the affairs of the kingdom of heaven to pay attention to children.
5. What lesson does Jesus teach using the little children as His example? Jesus directed that the children be brought to him, declaring at the same time that the kingdom of heaven be composed, not of little children, but of those who are childlike.

The Rich Ruler, Peril in Riches. The Reward of Sacrifice. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.

When Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem, his disciples dropped behind and hung back. The outer circle of his disciples knew enough to be afraid of the consequences, and the inner circle, fully acquainted with the dangers, were amazed that he would go. They had worried about His life when He went into Judea and now the situation was even greater danger. But Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem.

Read Mark 10:17-31

6. Briefly summarize what took place when the rich young ruler came to Jesus. Jesus is approached by a man only identified as a rich young ruler. On the outside it would appear this man had it all together. He was young, rich, had power, and was probably good looking. But his question reveals he senses he's missing something. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Why would he come to Jesus asking for something? Especially asking about eternal life. Every good Jew already knew that answer. To get eternal life you obey the commands of God and avoid sin. The rich young ruler has done it all right. Even Jesus seems to confirm that. But still, he senses something is lacking. He wants Jesus to tell him what he's overlooking. Tom Keller in Jesus the King says, "Of course he was missing something. Because anyone who counts on what they are doing to get eternal life will find that, in spite of everything they've accomplished, there's an emptiness, an insecurity, a doubt. How can anyone ever know whether they are good

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enough?" The rich young ruler had worked hard and had a lot of money. He's kept all God's laws faithfully. In essence what he's doing is trying to earn his way into heaven. Jesus is saying to the rich young ruler, you have put your faith and trust in your wealth and accomplishments. But the effort is actually pushing you from God. As he leaves, one commentator says that he is "grieved." The problem with the rich young ruler is not his wealth. It's where he placed his identity. He thought he didn't need the grace of God because he could provide for himself. What Jesus was doing was revealing to him where he had placed his identity. And he left sad. Jesus is using a metaphor to drive home his point. There's no way this rich young ruler, or anyone, can save themselves. When he asked what must I do to inherit eternal life? The answer is nothing. It's impossible. Just like a snowball can't survive the heat and a camel can't go through a needle neither can anyone save themselves. They came from a culture that saw wealth as a reward for good and moral behavior. Prosperity was a sign that you were following God and doing as he said and that He was pleased. We should note, that nowhere in this passage does Jesus say wealth is bad. He doesn't rebuke the rich young ruler for being rich. Rather, for placing his identity in his wealth. It's not a sin to be rich. Jesus is pointing out that money can have a powerful hold on us. It has a power to blind us and lead us astray. He's saying that without a miracle it's impossible for us to find salvation. The three lessons of this parable according to James Curtis Poor are:

- No one can inherit heaven on their own merit. I think about those funeral orations that go on about how good the person was. Nothing wrong with praising the deceased but don't let it sound like they earned their way.
- The only thing you can worship that will satisfy you is Christ. You just get to choose what you worship. What we worship will be where we get our identity. The problem is the things that most people worship cannot satisfy, they only leave you wanting more. These wise words come from an atheist David Wallace Foster. "There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. "
- Jesus offers a better way to live... but it will hurt. Jesus offers us an invitation to a better life the way it was intended to be lived. Life free from

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the things that weigh us down. The invitation is free, but the process is painful.

7. For whom, according to Jesus, is it difficult to go to heaven? The rich. Why? Their identity is tied to their wealth in many cases. What illustration did He use to show how difficult it is? He contrasts it with the difficulty of a camel to go through the eye of the needle.

8. What did Jesus say was the reward of those who had left all to follow Him? He will receive more in the present age as well as eternal life.

We are turning read briefly to Matthew since Fourfold follows Matthew's story and this parable isn't in Mark.

Read Matthew 20:1-16

9. Briefly summarize the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. What is the main lesson? It speaks of a landowner that hired workers throughout the day to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay the first vineyard workers a certain amount for the entire day. He then tells the vineyard workers that he hired at later times through the day that he will pay them what is fair. At the end of the day, he paid the vineyard workers that started last the same amount as the those that started first. This caused the first vineyard workers to be upset. In response, the landowner told them that he was not being unfair because they agreed to what they were paid at the start. Moses Pierre-Paul says Jesus shared the parable of the workers in the vineyard to teach us how the Kingdom of Heaven rewards the work we do. If we look at the parable closely, there are 3 life lessons we can learn from it. In summary,

- Establishing terms from the start prevents misunderstandings. If the terms hadn't been described at the beginning this would be a different story.
- Wrong expectations are a source of disappointment. What we expect and what people do can often lead to disappointment. We can be perfectly happy throughout life until we see something that causes us to develop the wrong expectation. Just like the vineyard workers, we may happily agree to a salary when starting a new job, but as soon as we learn that

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someone doing the same job is making more money, we are suddenly unhappy.

- Feeling that something is right doesn't make it right. The landowner had a right to do what he wanted with his money, in the parable he asked "Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money?" The focus is on the landowner and his right, not the workers.

Jesus and the inner circle of disciples walk away from the crowds at this point so that He can warn them what will happen. He doesn't want to cause a riot or bloodshed.

Read Mark 10:32-34

10. What did Jesus say would happen to Him in Jerusalem? This was the third and by far the clearest and most circumstantial prophecy concerning his death. Fourfold tells us that by sharing these details Jesus is trying to discourage any materialistic hope that they still may have about His Messiahship. He also tells them about His resurrection so that they will not be crushed by his trial, punishment and death.

Read Mark 10:35-45

11. What request was made of Jesus by James and John and their mother? Mark's gospel doesn't mention the mother as Matthew does. Notice that they ask Jesus to grant their request before they tell Him what their request is. In the previous section in Matthew Jesus had spoken about the thrones to be occupied by the apostles.

Matthew 19:28 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The sons of Zebedee, presuming on their high standing among the apostles, and their near relationship to Jesus, were emboldened to ask for special seats of honor among the promised thrones. Did they think having their mother ask would be in their favor? They wanted to sit on the right and left of Jesus. What was His response to them? He asked if they could suffer in the way that He would suffer. He said that the Father will give those places to who He has prepared them.

12. What makes one great in the kingdom of heaven? One who serves others. When the ten heard they were angry. To restore peace among them, and to correct

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their false views, Jesus draws the distinction between the worldly greatness to which they aspired, and the spiritual greatness which they ought to have sought. In an earthly kingdom honor and authority measure greatness, but in Christ's kingdom it is measured by humility and service.

Bartimaeus and His Companion Healed.

Read Mark 10: 46-52

13. What miracle did Jesus perform on Bartimaeus and another man? Jesus came from the Jordan, and was entering Jericho by its eastern gate. As the crowd following Jesus passed by, Bartimaeus asked its meaning and learned of the presence of Jesus. Jesus was in advance of the crowd, and hence he had already entered Jericho before the sounds of the multitude roused the beggar to question its meaning. Being so near the Passover season, great crowds would be on their way to Jerusalem, and all the multitudes coming from Galilee and Perea would pass through Jericho on their way. Jesus, as we have just seen, had entered the city with a multitude, and as he spent some little time there, he would leave with even a larger crowd, for it would be increased by those who had arrived at Jericho during his stay there and citizens of Jericho itself. Bartimaeus wanted to be healed by Jesus before Jesus left the neighborhood. He appears to have passed around the wall till he came to the southern gate, where Jesus would pass on his way to Jerusalem. Here he waited patiently for the coming of Jesus. He cries persistently. This shows his determined preparation and fixed expectation. He told Jesus that he wished to see. Faith saves by leading to proper actions. What were the results of this miracle? He was able to see and followed Jesus on the road. Matthew tells of two, while Mark and Luke tell only of one.

Zacchaeus. The Parable of the Pounds. Journey to Jerusalem.

This was about one week before the crucifixion. Jericho is about seven miles from the Jordan and about seventeen and a half from Jerusalem. This probably happened in the middle of the story about blind Bartimaeus.

Read Luke 19:1-10

14. Who was Zacchaeus? How did Jesus meet him? Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in Jericho. Zacchaeus was a sub-contractor under some Roman knight who had bought the privilege of collecting taxes at Jericho, or perhaps the privilege of

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all Judea. He was rich. Jericho was the border city between these two provinces, the custom duties of the place were apt to be considerable. The famous balm of Gilead was cultivated in Perea, and probably added considerably to the trade which passed through Jericho. Herod the Great had raised Jericho to opulence, and to be rich in such a city was no small matter. He was short so he climbed up a tree so he could see Jesus as He passed by. How did Jesus meet him? Jesus stopped and looked up the tree.

15. What request did Jesus make of Zacchaeus? He told Zacchaeus that He must stay at his house. How did he respond? He said that he would give half of his belongings to the poor and repay anyone that he had cheated.

16. Why according to His statement in verse ten, did Jesus come to earth? He came to seek and to save the lost. Explain what He meant.

Read Luke 19:11-27

17. Briefly summarize the parable of the pounds.

Fourfold thinks that this parable was told this while still at Zacchaeus' house. The crowds around Jesus are expecting that earthly Messiah that will give them material things and remove the oppression of Rome. Jesus corrected these false views by a parable which showed that there must be patient waiting and faithful work before there could be any season of reward. This parable goes by several names, my Bible calls it the parable of the gold coins rather than the parable of pounds. Those present were looking for the crowning of Jesus at Jerusalem, but he was to ascend into heaven. To each of the servants he gave a crown, which was equal to about seventeen dollars of our money. It was a paltry sum for a nobleman and would be give a small incentive to remain faithful to his service. In addition to the servants, this nobleman had citizens, or subjects who owed him respect and look forward to the confirmation of his kingdom. These citizens represented the Jews observes how near the Jews came to repeating these very words of rejection when they said to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar. Write not, The King of the Jews." When the king in the parable returns the first servant attributes his earnings to the king's money rather than his own efforts. He is rewarded with rule over ten cities. The nobleman, who may have risen from poorer circumstances, could sympathize with his servants and delight in promoting them. The third servant comes having buried his coin. Having no banks in which to store money, such

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as we have, the men of Palestine usually concealed it. At the present time the people of that land are accustomed to bury their money in the ground within their houses. He criticizes his lord, saying that he was one hard to please and one who expected others to do all the work and let him reap all the gain. The injustice of his criticism had been shown by his treatment of the first two servants. This servant represents those who make the labors and difficulties of the Christian life an excuse for doing nothing. What lesson does it teach? The lesson taught is that we should work with others if we have not self-confidence enough to work alone. What applications can be made of its teaching today? We are to use what we have so that what we have will be strengthened or even increased.

Closing prayer: Lord may we stay near Your presence in the coming week. May we apply the lessons we have learned today to our lives. Help us to listen in worship for more guidance to live more fully in Your kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Mark 10:1-12	Mark 10: 32-34	Matthew 20:1-16
Mark 10:13-16	Mark 10:35-45	Luke 19:1-10
Mark 10:17-31	Mark 10:46-52	Luke 19:11-27