

# THE RICH & THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Sunday, May 23, 2010

Text: Matthew 19:16-30

## INTRODUCTION:

1. A well known story in the life of Jesus involves His interview with a rich young ruler - [Mt 19:16-26](#); [Lk 18:18-27](#).
2. In this story we find a man who was so right, yet wrong...
  - a. He came to the right person - [Mt 19:16](#).
    - 1) He came to Jesus.
    - 2) Who could tell Him the way to eternal life.
  - b. He asked the right questions - [Mt 19:16b,20](#).
    - 1) "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"
    - 2) "What do I still lack?"
  - c. He certainly received the right answers - [Mt 19:17-19,21](#).
    - 1) "...if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments". (suitable for one living under the OT covenant)
    - 2) "If you want to be perfect, go, sell...give to the poor...and come, follow Me" (fitting for one who would become a disciple and follow Jesus during His ministry).
  - d. But in the end, he made the wrong decision - [Mt 19:22](#).
    - 1) He went away sorrowful.
    - 2) For he had great possessions.

3. As rich young ruler went away sadly, Jesus told His disciples about the difficulty of riches...
  - a. That it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God - [Mt 19:23](#).
  - b. That it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle - [Mt 19:24](#).
4. What is it about being rich that makes salvation so difficult?
  - a. Are we aware of the dangers of riches?
  - b. Do we understand the proper attitudes toward wealth, whether we are rich or poor?

[Let's first consider...]

## **I. THE DIFFICULTY WITH RICHES:**

### **A. RICHES CAN ABSORB US...**

1. Riches do not satisfy, and we foolishly think that simply more riches will bring satisfaction -

**Ecc.5:10-11** He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also *is* vanity. <sup>11</sup> When goods increase, They increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners Except to see *them* with their eyes?

- b. Others such as Zaccheus, Matthew, Barnabas, Lydia, Aquila and Priscilla, Gaius, Philemon.
- c. Such people used their riches in service to God and others - cf. [1Ti 6:17-19](#).

3. Therefore...
  - a. The rich should have the gospel preached to them.
  - b. We should pray for the rich.
  - c. We should rejoice greatly that there are rich men and women in the kingdom of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The issue of wealth and riches is often one of contention...
  - a. The poor are often envious of the rich.
  - b. The rich often despise the poor.
2. But riches and poverty both have their difficulties...
  - a. Wealth can make one arrogant, less receptive to the gospel and the kingdom.
  - b. Poverty can make one bitter, filled with envy of others.
3. Whether rich or poor, we should all be aware...
  - a. Of our need for salvation that comes only by the grace of God.
  - b. That we can share together in the riches of salvation.

### C. THE NEED FOR SYMPATHY FOR THE RICH...

1. Jesus loved the rich young ruler - [Mk 10:21](#)
  - a. We should certainly love those who are rich.
  - b. We should not be envious, nor despise them.
2. If the rich are overcome by their riches, we should bear in mind...
  - a. That the desire to be rich affects both the rich and those who want to be rich.
  - b. That the rich face many temptations that the poor do not.
3. The rich are in need of salvation as much as the poorest beggar - [Ro 3:23](#); [6:23](#).

### D. FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD...

1. Though it is hard for a rich person to be saved, it is not impossible - [Mt 19:23-26](#).
  - a. No one can save themselves, whether rich or poor.
  - b. But God can save the rich by His own power, through the gospel - [Ro 1:16-17](#).
2. There were many rich people who became Jesus' disciples.
  - a. Those that supported Him during His earthly ministry - [Lk 8:1-3](#)

2. With riches comes the preoccupation with them: how to use, maintain, store, etc.

-- Like a black hole, the accumulation of riches can absorb what time and energy we have so that we have little for anything else (such as family, church, the Lord)

### B. RICHES CAN DECEIVE US...

1. Jesus warned about the deceitfulness of riches - [Mt 13:22](#) - **Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.**

2. Riches promise much, but really offer little in return.

- a. They can easily disappear, rust, or be stolen -

[Pr 23:5](#); Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

[Mt 6:19](#) **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;**

- b. They cannot buy one's salvation -  
[Ps 49:6-9](#) - **6** Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches,<sup>7</sup> None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—

8 For the redemption of their souls *is* costly, And it shall cease forever— 9 That he should continue to live eternally, *And* not see the Pit.

c. Neither can they protect one from God's wrath -

[Zeph 1:18](#) - 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

-- Riches can deceive one into thinking they are in need of nothing; the parable of the rich fool illustrates the folly of such thinking -

[Lk 12:16-21](#) - **16** Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: **"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' "** **20** But God said to him, **'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? 21 "So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."**

b. "Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants" - Croft M. Pentz (The Complete Book of Zingers)

2. Contentment is a virtue that is learned -

[Php 4:11-13](#) - Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to **4**be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

a. By having a proper perspective on life -

- 1) "You can't take it with you"
- 2) Ever see a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer?

b. By understanding what is truly essential in life -

- 1) Food and clothing...anything more is a luxury.
- 2) Realizing this, we will appreciate how blessed we are!

3. Therefore Christians are to be content with what things we have -

[He 13:5](#) **Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

3. It not a sin to be rich, but the desire to be rich is wrong.

a. Those who desire to be rich will fall into temptation, and not go unpunished -

[1Ti 6:9-10](#) - But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all *kinds* of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

[Pr 28:20-22](#) - A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. <sup>21</sup> To show partiality *is* not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress. <sup>22</sup> A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

## B. THE DUTY OF CONTENTMENT...

1. Contentment along with godliness is true wealth -

[1Ti 6:6-7](#) - Now godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

a. "He is richest who is content with the least." - Socrates (470-399 B.C.)

## C. RICHES CAN PROMOTE PRIDEFULNESS...

1. Wealth tends to promote a sense of arrogance and pride -

[Deut 8:11-17](#) - <sup>11</sup> “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, <sup>12</sup> lest—*when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; <sup>13</sup> and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; <sup>14</sup> when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; <sup>15</sup> who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; <sup>16</sup> who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— <sup>17</sup> then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

2. It was such pride that was the downfall of Sodom and Israel -

[Ezek 16:49-50](#) - <sup>49</sup> Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*.

[Hos 13:4-6](#) - **A** “Yet I *am* the Lord your God Ever since the land of Egypt, And you shall know no God but Me; For *there is* no savior besides Me. <sup>5</sup> I knew you in the wilderness, In the land of great drought. <sup>6</sup> When they had pasture, they were filled; They were filled and their heart was exalted; Therefore they forgot Me.

-- Blinded by such pride, one will not seek God -

[Ps 10:4](#) - **A** The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*; God *is* in none of his thoughts.

#### **D. RICHES CAN HARDEN US...**

1. The wealthy, while in a position to help others, often close up their hearts to the cry of the poor.
2. This was one of Israel's sins -

[Am 2:6](#) - Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals.

-- Abusing the poor to make money, failing to respond to their cries for justice, interested more in money than the welfare of the poor...such are problems that often afflict the rich. Certainly not all who are rich are guilty of such things. Some of the most godly people in the Bible were rich (Job, Abraham, Joseph, David,

Solomon, Barnabas, Philemon, Lydia). But these are reasons why it is so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. If they let mammon become their god, they will not be willing to serve the true God!

[Mt 6:24](#) - “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

From what we have seen about the danger of wealth, let's now draw some...]

## **II. LESSONS GLEANED FROM THE DIFFICULTY OF RICHES:**

### **A. THE FOLLY OF COVETOUSNESS...**

1. Why be so anxious to be rich, when riches might prove to be a curse for us?
2. Besides, covetousness is viewed by God as a form of idolatry -

[Ep 5:5-7](#) - For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them.