

# Rich Young Ruler Part 4 Evangelism and Notes

Following Jesus to the Cross: Part 15

Mark 10:17-27 (Mt.19:16-30, Lk.18:18-30) 3/3/2020

## Evangelism

One final word about what we can learn from this passage about evangelism. Verse 23: Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is to get people into the kingdom. If only I had taken a different approach! I just blew it with that guy. He was interested, and now, after talking to me, he walking away."

No, that's not Jesus' reaction. Did Jesus blow it? No. Keep this passage in mind the next time you experience some apparent ministry failure.

It's hard to imagine a hotter prospect than this for evangelism. He's asking the right question, he brings it to the right person and he comes in the right posture—on his knees. And he's not lackadaisical about it—he comes running (which was undignified for a man of his stature). From a human point of view this is the best person who ever approached Jesus. Not cowardly like Nicodemus, coming at night. We find out he's a man who is striving to follow everything the Bible says the best he can. In our day, a guy like that would be considered more than just an ideal seeker—he might be hired as a pastor.

## The Guy Would Have Prayed a Prayer

What do you think most Christians say if this guy would have run up to them with this question? Pray and invite Jesus into your heart? Get baptized? There might be various different answers he would get.

But whatever answer someone gave him, do you think he would do it? A guy this desperate for eternal life—if you told him he had to fill out a card and walk an isle and pray a prayer—do you think he would do it? In a heartbeat. This guy knows his eternal destiny is at stake. I'm sure in his mind, as he's running to catch up to Jesus, he's thinking, I don't care what he says—I'll do anything. Whatever it takes."

But if Jesus would have done any of those things—if he would have closed the deal while the iron was hot, this guy would have been weedy soil—one of those people who get converted, believe for a while, then fall away when the deceitfulness of wealth chokes out their faith.

## Footnotes

**Mark 10:17** As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone.

Before administering the law test, Jesus gives the guy a big hint—no one is good except God. But even without Jesus' hint, it's not that hard. He should have known from the OT Scriptures that he was a hopeless sinner. He could have read Psalm 51, where David says, "Long before I committed adultery and murder, I was sinful from birth." In Romans 3, Paul points to all kinds of places in the OT that make that point. "There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and

misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."<sup>1</sup> Every one of those is a quotation from the Old Testament.

## Verse 19 The Commandments

**19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'** "

The Ten Commandments are divided into two tables. The first four are about your relationship with God, and the second table—the last six have to do with how you interact with people. When Jesus gives this list, he skips the first table, and starts with #6—don't murder. Then #7, 8, 9, 10, then 5.

Now, saying it that way draws a lot of attention to #5, right? Jesus is using some examples to make us think of the entire law of God, but by pulling one commandment out of order and ending with that, he places emphasis on that one: **honor your father and mother**. What's special about that commandment? Remember, the first step is always to look to context. Think about the book of Mark. Where has Jesus talked about the fifth commandment before in Mark? It was when Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees for breaking God's law when they thought they were keeping it.

**Mark 7:9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' (there's the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment) ... 11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.**

What happened there? They were breaking the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. Why? Because of money. When your parents get old, keeping the fifth Commandment can get expensive. So they figured out a way you could be a good, solid, respectable Jew without having to take too much of a hit in your pocketbook.

Do you think maybe Jesus knows a little something about what's in this rich man's heart? Jesus knew the kinds of sins rich people tended to commit in that cultural context, and so when he gives this guy the law, he lays special emphasis on one law this guy had likely broken.

## Why Adjust #10?

There's one other thing that catches our attention in Jesus' list. I told you he listed the commandments 6,7,8,9,10,5, but that's not exactly right. When Jesus got to #10, he didn't really give us the tenth Commandment (do not covet). Instead of that, he says, "**Do not defraud.**" If you're rich, you probably don't think you have a big problem with coveting. You say, "I don't covet my neighbor's stuff—I've got my own stuff." But defrauding—not very many rich people in that culture got rich without defrauding some folks along the way.

Jesus is doing everything he can to help this guy see how much of a lawbreaker he really is.<sup>2</sup> He starts by saying, "Remember, we're talking about absolute moral perfection here." Then he cites the second table of the law. It can be hard to spot areas where you sin in your relationship to God, but sins against people are more tangible and easy to see.

## An Incomplete List

One thing I'm learning about Mark is that he really does seem to place significance in numbers. In this case, we know that Jesus mentioned some other commandments as well, but Mark only includes six—one shy of the number of completeness. An incomplete list of God's commands. A subtle hint that

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 140:3, Psalm 10:7, Isaiah 59:7,8, Psalm 36:1, Rom. 3:9-19.

<sup>2</sup> When a scribe asked this same question, Jesus pointed him to the law of love (Luke 10:25).

something's missing. This list isn't complete. And that sets us up for what Jesus tells this guy next. **21**  
**One thing you lack** One thing. Six plus one more equals seven. You're at six; you haven't reached seven. The idea is, the man's lawkeeping wasn't complete. Despite all the man's devoutness since childhood, his lawkeeping still lacked something.

## **Verse 24**

**24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!"**

Why did Jesus call them his children? It's hard to disconnect that with everything Jesus has been saying about only people with baby faith enter the kingdom. It's not the same word for children as in the previous two passages, so commentators don't make much of it. But I'm convinced it's significant. Jesus has cast some doubt on their salvation based on their response to the babies in ch.9. But here I think he's affirming, in this case, they had a lot better response than the rich young ruler. As Peter is going to point out—when Jesus told them to leave everything, they did it.

So he might be referring to that. Or he could just be speaking to them in a way that he wanted them to live up to. He calls them something he wants them to be in order to inspire them to strive for it.