



**Luke 18:18-23**  
***The Rich Young Ruler***

18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

20 "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. 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 this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Yesterday, Ruling Elder Ivory and I attended Presbytery at one of the oldest churches in our Presbytery, Back-Creek which was founded in 1805. Back Creek is one of those buildings that even smells old, I wish we could get that 200 year old wood smell for our own metal building. One of the things I particularly like about Back Creek is its graveyard which I had an opportunity to wander around in at the last Presbytery. It's filled with great old gravestones, with stirring epitaphs that tell you about the lives of these saints.

By comparison, I don't like modern cemeteries much. Many of them have done away with gravestones entirely in favor of little metal plaques that they can mow over. The plaques generally only give you 3 pieces of information, Name, and birth and death date separated by a cold impersonal dash. If you think about it, the funny thing of most importance, isn't the name or the dates. Its that dash, because contained in it are all the events of their lives. Everything that the person bearing that name did between the date of their birth and the date of their death is summed today in a dash.

Many people fail to realize that no matter how much they manage to pack into that little line, it eventually ends and immediately to the right is always another cold hard date. A day when your body will die, and your soul will be called to stand before the judge of the universe. ***it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment – Hebrews 9:27***

Not all people of course fail to realize that that little dash is going to run out. In these verses we read about a man, whom Matthew tells us was young, and whom Luke tells us was a ruler and whom Matthew, Mark, and Luke all agree was very rich, so he is called the *Rich Young Ruler*.

Now this rich young member of the Jewish Ruling Classes, knew that someday he too would die and that must have preoccupied a lot of his thoughts because Mark tells us that as Jesus was leaving the place where he had been teaching and blessing children, probably a house, this young man came running up to him and falls at his feet. Then he asks a good question, in fact he asks the best question of all. A question I hope you have asked.

But before we get to that question, I want you to see what he called Jesus. What does he greet him with? He called Him *Agathe didaskale* "Good teacher" "good rabbi" which was a very uncommon greeting. He probably didn't even think about it, but Jesus is already teaching him. He says to him, "**No one is good but One, that is, God.**" Jesus isn't saying, I'm not Good. He is saying, *think about what you have said young man*, you are right, I am Good, but only One is good, that is God. Which has two conclusions:

- 1) Only God is really *good*. That is only God is without sin
- 2) If Jesus really is good, and only God is good, then Jesus is...

Those two great truths are going to be enormously important in understanding Christ's answer to the Rich Young Ruler's question. Which is: "***what shall I do to inherit eternal life?***"

He's done well, he's realized that there is something that all the money can't buy. Eternal Life. Salvation. But though he realizes that he can't use *money* to obtain eternal life, he is still thinking in terms of rewards. Matthew is more direct in his account of what the Ruler asked: "***what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?***"

"What work can I do to obtain eternal life? I know what I must do to obtain the earthly things that I desire, I give people money and they give them to me, I also know what I must do to have people think well of me, I do good deeds and they reward me with acclaim. Now, what works do I have to do to get into heaven? What deeds must I do to live forever with God?"

Jesus answers him according to his question: "You know the commandments" i.e. if you want to *earn* eternal life, if you want salvation as a *reward*, you must do these things.

The young man then answers, "***All these things I have kept from my youth.***"

Have you ever asked a child to clean up their room before they can play, and a few minutes later, you see them playing, and you say to them "I thought I told you to clean up your room" and they look at you nonchalantly and say "I did clean up my room" so you go to their room and you look at it, and a few things have been pushed toward the closet, some of the piles have been consolidated, the top sheet has been thrown over all the junk on the bed, and so on. So you say "***You call that clean???***" Lets just say that between your standards for clean and their standards for clean, there is more than a slight difference.

What is God's standard for Good? Perfection. Keeping the commandments perfectly. Which as we saw at the beginning of the conversation, between Jesus and the Ruler, only God can do. Now the Ruler, when he is told keep the commandments, says like the child, ***I already did.***

Now this is just one of the many millions of ways you can tell I'm not Jesus, I would have said at this point in the story – "***Kept the Commandments.... Riïïïïïight....***"

But Jesus is meek and gentle his heart is full of compassion, in Mark it says, ***then Jesus, looking at him, loved him.*** And he seeks to gently show him exactly how messy the room really is. How far short he has come of actually keeping the commandments.

Kids, What is the first commandment? ***You shall have no other gods before Me.***

That means God says to us, you mustn't put anything ahead of me, you mustn't love anything more than you love me.

And what do we call something in our hearts that we love more than God? *An Idol*

So Jesus tells this young man, "*Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*"

Why can't he do that? Why can't he get rid of his money to follow Jesus? I mean the Apostles gave up everything to follow Christ. Jobs, Family, security... He can't give it up because he loves money. All the stuff, the house, servants, titles, gourmet food, leisure time, fine clothes, has so captivated his heart that he can't do without it even when Jesus calls him to be his follower. So we read that in Matthew that he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

*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. (1 Tim. 6:10)*

He thought he had kept all the commandments from his youth, when in fact, he hadn't even kept the first.

*But could he have kept it? Could he have kept any of them?*

*Romans 3:10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;*

*11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

*12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."*

*13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips";*

*14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."*

*15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

*16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;*

*17 And the way of peace they have not known."*

*18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

*19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

*20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

*21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

*22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;*

*23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

*24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

*25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*

*26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

*27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

***28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.***

Every life has those two dashes and the dash: some people pour themselves out into the dash, thinking this is all there is. Some see that the dash must end, but cannot do without the things of this present life. But only through faith in Jesus Christ *do we get another DASH!* Only in him is the line extended!

Applications:

- 1) The idol of this young man's heart was *money* – wealth, the good things of this world. You may be saying to yourself, "whew, I don't have money, so I'm ok!" Pride, "Skills"**
- 2) You have come running. When Christ Calls you. Will you *go away sorrowful?***