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# Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

## “The Rich Young Ruler”

Mark 10:17-31

VERSE DISCOVERY: Mark 10:17-31 (KJV, Public Domain)

### Prepare

- Ask, *Has anyone ever gone to a circus? What was your favorite act? One of mine was the tightrope walkers (prepare some pictures ahead of time). I am always impressed by their balance as they walk confidently from one side to the other (pretend to be balancing on an invisible rope, using props is a plus to make it fun). Sometimes they do it alone. At other times, they walk with people, chairs, or even riding a bike. Yikes!*

*I think those who study to do these types of feats can be classified as adventurous. They dare to step out, in faith, into the unknown, to make it to the other side.*

*There is another side to living, that as Christians, we are trying to get to, and that's heaven. We all want to make it to live with Jesus in eternity. But exactly does it take for that to happen?*

*We are going to explore one man's question about eternal life in today's lesson. Then, we will explore his response. Was he adventurous in his faith or does he walk away without Jesus? Let's get into it and see.*

### Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 6-13

If you have a question, where do you usually go for answers? I guess it would really depend on what type of question you were asking. For instance, if you were seeking information on how to build something you would contact someone with expertise in that area. If you had a question regarding a recipe or cooking, you would talk to a chef or someone who was experienced in cooking. If you wanted to know the definition of a word, a dictionary would be your resource for that answer. The types of questions we ask will determine where we seek the answers from.

For this man in our lesson, his question was about eternal life and what he may do to inherit it. That's a very good question, one that everyone needs to ask for themselves. And it is a question whose answer can only be found in the one who came from heaven where eternal life resides: Jesus.

While many will search here, and there, and everywhere for that answer, the Bible tells us in John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

And, while this was a very good question for the man to ask, was his heart ready to receive the answer from Jesus? Are we?

For encouragement in examining our own hearts, previously I wrote:

*"When it comes to Jesus everyone will experience one of three responses: you believe, you don't believe, or you don't know what to believe. Jesus had that effect on people. He would do things (miracles) that utterly dumbfounded people. He would say things like, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink," (John 7:37) that would take people totally off guard, and they couldn't help but to be amazed by the words that came from His mouth. Yet, there are those who derided who Jesus said He was, and they said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" (John 7:41). These types look for reasons not to believe.*

*It is an awesome thing to be fully persuaded in one's own heart that **"This is the Christ!"** Many in the crowd that Jesus was speaking to on that day were divided. They were not only divided with one another, but they were perplexed within themselves about the man who stood before them teaching with such authority. They heard and saw, but still they wrestled in their heart to believe. Yet, in the division, there were some who knew, who felt the truth within them that **"This is the Christ!"***

*Commotions, dissensions, and disagreements, they will always exist as long as this world does. But, for those whose hearts are grounded in the truth, they can boldly declare, **"This is the Christ!"***

*How often has someone come against your faith? How many times have you been ridiculed for what you believe in? If not verbally, but in the way others treat you because of your hope in Him? One's faith is at the core of the declaration of Christ for themselves. If their faith is real, it will keep them rested in their Savior despite the contentions around. Yet, if it is but a surface faith, when the hardness of life approaches it will wither under the pressure of adversity.*

***"This is the Christ!"** The soul that can still declare that is a soul happy before their Lord. The soul that cleaves to the truth of these words is the soul that won't soon be moved. The soul that rests in that wonderful truth is the soul that will find peace eternal no matter the failing of others who don't recognize Him for who He is.*

***"This is the Christ!"** That's who He was then and that's who He remains to be today. Keep your hope anchored in that truth and no matter what else may be going on*

*in your life, your faith in who He is will see you through.” (©WordforLifeSays/[This is the Christ](#))*

The man in today’s lesson walked away without making Jesus the Lord of his life, but you don’t have to. Today, you can walk toward Jesus in a declaration of faith for yourself, claiming in your own heart, **“This is the Christ!”**

## Activities

- The young man in today’s lesson held tightly his possession in his heart and it hindered him from having a full relationship with Jesus Christ. Our hearts need daily check-ups with Jesus so that nothing will get in the way of our relationship with Him. Using the **Adult Journal Page**, finish the prayer prompt using your own words. Just write what is in your heart to your Lord and ask Him for help in any areas that you may feel there is lack. Using the **Kid’s Journal Page**, children can write how they think the rich young ruler should have responded to Jesus.
- Using the **Draw the Scene** sheet provided on-site, students can draw a picture of the rich young ruler coming to talk with Jesus.
- **Craft/Activity/Object Lesson: “Hearts in a Jar”** To prepare for this, take a clear jar and tape a red heart to the front of it. Next, tape a bigger heart to the lid of the jar. Then, using smaller hearts, have children write the different things they love on the hearts and put them into the jar.

Once all the hearts are in the jar explain: *We have a whole lot of things that we hold dear to us, and we seal all those things in our hearts (seal the jar with the lid that has the big heart). The rich young ruler in today’s lesson became sad when Jesus asked him to empty himself of his possessions (dump the jar out) and follow him (reseal the empty jar with the lid and write JESUS on the heart) because Jesus was the main thing he needed in his life and not the stuff he had.*

*Sadly, the man did not join Jesus and his disciples, and he walked away. He liked all his stuff too much (refill the jar with the hearts) and left Jesus out of his life (take the JESUS heart off the lid and reseal the jar).*

*We must ask ourselves are we doing the same as this man? Are we filling our hearts with a lot of stuff and leaving Jesus out? Or have we made Jesus the Lord of our lives over it all (replace the JESUS heart on the lid)?*

This is great for a class activity or object lesson, but it can also be used as individual crafts for students. Give each student their own jar or empty water to design and fill with hearts to help them remember the main point of this lesson: the most important thing we need in our hearts and lives is JESUS.

- **Camel Flag Craft:** Simply print out Camel Flag Craft paper (found on-site), cut and glue on colored construction background for a decorative border, color and decorate. Tape to a dowel rod and there you have your flag reminding you that With God All Things Are Possible! Or just use as a coloring sheet and enjoy!
- **Word Search, Memory Verse,** and other alternate activity sheets are available on-site for those who want to only work with printed materials.

## Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” Mark 10:27***
- Using the game Tic Tac Toe, with hearts as markers, ask questions about the lesson and for every one that is answered correctly, they get a marker (this can be done as teams or individual play). Play the game as usual, explaining just as we can block one another from getting three in a row to win the game, there are some things that can block us from eternal life. Our job is to remain in faith in Christ Jesus, and one day we will experience eternal life for ourselves.
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 14)

## Life

Envision a ruler. You are standing at one end and Jesus is standing at the other end. Between the two, there are many marks. If you were to itemize those marks according to outward measures of success, is there anything that hinders you from relying wholly upon God for your salvation?

We don't measure our faith by what we have or what we have done. Trusting in God alone, and His plan of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, makes all things possible.

**TOPIC:**

## "The Rich Young Ruler"

**Mark 10:17-31**

### **VERSE DISCOVERY: Mark 10:17-31 (KJV, Public Domain)**

*Investments. They tell a lot about what is on the inside of a person. Where one places their efforts, time, resources, and value can show you more of the makeup of an individual than the most moving speeches.*

*Concerning where one places their value, Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).*

*Being that one's treasure is a revealer of the heart, today's lesson explores one man's struggle with where to invest: in the here and now or in eternity to come. Although the personal decision for each of us may not revolve around riches, all of us must make that decision for eternity.*

### **MOVING TOWARD JESUS**

**Mark 10:17-18 "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."**

Jesus was not new at disrupting what people accepted as the norm. In this chapter alone, when questioned and tested about divorce, He gave them an answer that may have stirred their pots of belief the wrong way, saying, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (10:9). And when parents brought their children to be touched by Jesus only to be turned away by the disciples, Jesus was displeased and spoke something that would flip their own way of thinking about the kingdom of God. He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever

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shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (10:14-15; that lesson is available [here](#)).

Then, to solidify His point, Jesus so beautifully and tenderly "took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (10:16).

Leaving that scene and having "**gone forth into the way,**" a man approaches Jesus, who had become a living example of where one's trust should truly lie and the hindrances that can stand in the way of a life of faith.

The Bible, in other passages, gives a little more background information on this man. From the verses found in Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30, he has been dubbed as the rich young ruler, revealing his age and status in life. He is the one, who came "**running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?**"

Though his posturing was one of respect, was his heart really moving toward Jesus as fast as his feet were? Was he ready to bow to the true answer Jesus would reveal after his questioning? We will explore this further in the last section of this lesson covering verses 23-31.

Eternal life should be at the forefront of everyone's mind, though it is not. As the verses in the introduction indicate, it's not what one accumulates here that really makes a difference toward one's eternal future. That which has been laid up in heaven is what matters the most. With that, the rich young ruler asks what he must do to gain an eternal inheritance.

Jesus' first response was not to his question but rather his addressing of the Lord by calling Him "**Good Master.**" Although the young man meant it as a sign of respect, again, did he really understand whom he was addressing?

Jesus said, "**Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.**" There are many verses in the Bible that express God is the One that is good. For example:

- In Exodus 33:19, He told Moses, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee . . . ." (emphasis mine).
- In Psalm 31:19, we see David praising, saying, "Oh how great is thy *goodness*. . . ." (emphasis mine).

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- Nahum 1:7 exclaims with trust, “The LORD is *good*, a stronghold in the day of trouble . . .” (emphasis mine).
- And Psalm 25, along with many more references, David once again declares, “*Good* and upright is the LORD . . .” (vs. 8, emphasis mine).

What was the rich young ruler truly saying regarding Jesus when he addressed Him as “**Good Master?**” Was he connecting the spiritual dots between the deity of Jesus and God, the Father?

Jesus then speaks, leading the young man to recognize truths he should already know.

## MOVING AWAY FROM JESUS

**Mark 10:19-22** “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”

“**Thou knowest the commandments.**” Every Jewish child was brought up to know and revere God’s law. Deuteronomy 6:7 instructed parents regarding the holy commands to “teach them diligently unto thy children . . .” This, they were to do with every opportunity given. From even a young age, Jesus knows that this rich young ruler would have known the “**commandments,**” so Jesus begins to quote some of them to him.

God’s word is a revealer of hearts. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” When faced with God’s word, it will show us things about ourselves if we listen.

Listening to Jesus’ listing of these commandments, the young ruler probably thought to himself, check, and check. Possibly thinking he had this in the bag, so to speak, he tells Jesus, “**Master,**

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**all these have I observed from my youth.”** In his personal opinion of how he viewed himself, he saw no lack. Desiring eternal life, he saw no areas of a hindrance.

But, as 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” True humility in moving toward Jesus will admit that there may be something in this flesh that needs to be worked on. And if it is eternal life that we are seeking, there is a closer inspection of oneself we need to look at. There may be some adjusting in a way we thought we were okay according to the norms of our day. In moving toward Jesus, there may need to be some plucking out of old ideas and replacing them with more of what our Lord wants for our lives.

Jesus saw something that should give this young man pause in his own evaluation of himself; something that if he really came to hear what Jesus had to say about eternal life, it would move him even closer to Jesus, but as we will read, he turns away from our Lord.

The text reads, “**Jesus beholding him, loved him . . .**” This gives the impression that Jesus was intently looking at him with love because He saw the desire of the young man for eternal life – but He also saw an obstacle to his faith: his possessions.

So, He speaks, “**One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor . . .**” (vs. 21). This is where *his* problem lies (emphasis on “his,” which may not be everyone else’s particular issue). His stuff and his possessions have put a wedge between his relationship with God. That wedge created space for lack. In this area of lack, his oneness with God was not whole. For him, this was the missing link he couldn’t see in himself.

In His statement, Jesus was basically asking him to rely less on himself and all he has acquired and to disperse the objects of his affection (his wealth) to the less fortunate and turn wholly to God with complete abandon and trust. He was to prepare himself to “**take up the cross, and follow**” in Jesus’ footsteps who, as we are reminded, gave up everything in an effort to gain victory for the whole world.

The rich young ruler thought he had crossed every “t” and dotted every “i” of the things necessary to gain eternal life, but his wealth became a stumbling block that he couldn’t seem to overcome.

**“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”** Those two words, “**sad**” and “**grieved**,” remind me of someone who attends a

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funeral, as if mourning is involved. When feeling overwhelmed and exasperated over circumstances, I often hear people use phrases like, “You’re killing me!” Could it be the thought of giving away everything he owned was just as damaging to him with unthinkable sorrow?

This definitely gives us pause for reflection when we really consider what Jesus was saying here and what He said in Matthew 16:26. There, trying to teach one to tear their focus away from the unprofitableness of the things in this world, He says, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Just as we see this rich young ruler walk away from Jesus because he could not fathom giving up his possessions, everyone must earnestly and honestly look at themselves to see if we have some blockade to our faith as well.

Eternity waits for no man or woman. When one’s time is up, it’s up. Where will we be found? The Apostle Paul once wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves . . .” (2 Corinthians 13:5). We all have areas that need improvement, things we can do better. Sometimes a close, personal examination is the only thing that will draw it out of us, to see “whether ye be in the faith.” The rich young ruler’s initial reason for coming to Jesus was a question regarding eternal life. Jesus then exposed something in him he did not know was there. What about us?

## THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN JESUS

**Mark 10:23-27 “And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”**

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The rich young ruler's disappointing response gave Jesus an opportunity to teach His disciples a lesson and to set right some cultural misunderstandings concerning wealth and God's favor. This is a good lesson I think much of our generation can benefit from as well.

Jesus said, **"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"** In Jesus' day, as well as our own, there remains this idea that if one has wealth and influence somehow or another God has blessed them, and they are favored more.

If you think I am wrong, I'm sorry to say, just look at what much of the preaching and sermons are based on even in our mainstream Christian media forums. I like blessings and to hear about them just as well as the next person, but that IS NOT the focus of Christianity. Gaining the greater treasure of eternal life (again, the rich young ruler's original question) is the most important.

1 Timothy reminds those that are rich in this world to "Be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God . . ." (6:7). Then, he goes on to teach one to use those resources for good works and on "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life," (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Paul, the author of 1 Timothy, taught that the greater treasure to be had is eternal life. This is the path Jesus was trying to encourage the rich young ruler to walk. Now, Jesus teaches how hard it is for one in his position to do so. Jesus and Paul equally knew that the issue of faith in both instances revolved around the **"trust in riches."**

We must know that all things outside of Christ that one accumulates while living here on earth amounts to nothing in the end. All successes, wealth, and accolades perish along with the bearer of these things. Too often, the whole of one's life is measured by the temporary things that bring brief satisfaction while keeping the soul thirsty for eternity.

Using the pattern of those who are wealthy (by the way, most of us are wealthier than we think we are from an overview of the world's economy), Jesus knows it is hard for them to take their eyes off of their own resources – give it up, and follow Him.

Following those same lines of popular cultural thinking that wealth meant more of God's favor, Jesus' disciples **"were astonished at his words."** This blew their way of thinking out of the

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water. If the rich, who appeared to be favored and blessed on the outside, are not in a better position with God, then what hope have others?

Salvation is not complicated. It begins in the heart, and the heart of faith is found in the one who can let go and let God. The one who recognizes it's not about what I have done or accumulated. It's not about who I appear to be. It's all about the Father. It's all about submitting my all to Him in full reliance. It's laying me and mine at His feet and walking forward toward Jesus in faith.

For the young rich man who walked away from Jesus, and those who are rich of themselves (promoters of self), Jesus taught, **"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."** With the absurdity this picture presents, it really tells us just how incredibly hard it is for one who is used to leaning on their own strength and ability (here noted as the wealthy) to turn and lean on a God whom they cannot see.

When was the last time you may have tried to thread a needle? How hard was it? It can be incredibly challenging, especially as our eyes get older. But it will never be as challenging as trying to get an animal as huge as a camel to walk through the eye of a needle – ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE!

Perhaps this is why they asked, **"Who then can be saved?"** If they that are in better financial situations are still found lacking, what of the rest? It seemed, as with Jesus' illustration, to be literally impossible. But Jesus righted their wrong thinking, saying, **"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible,"** meaning their trust must be fully in God and God alone over all else.

The things we use as markers towards outward forms of success are not the same measurements by which God measures one's faith. As always, He knows what's on the inside of a person, and what's on the inside tells where their true faith lies. Trusting in God alone makes salvation and eternal life possible, the step the young man missed by walking away from Jesus when Jesus was the answer he was looking for.

**Mark 10:28-31 "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and**

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**brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."**

The rich young ruler walked away from Jesus, disappointed in all that he would have to give up to obtain eternal life. But the disciples have put their personal lives and families on hold, left nets from fishing, left their father's businesses and such, and followed Jesus, knowing that He was the answer they all needed.

In John, there was a day when Jesus' teachings became too hard to digest for some in the crowd, and the Bible tells us, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6:66). Jesus then turned to the twelve and asked, "Will ye also go away?" (6:67). Just as in the above verses, Peter is the one who spoke up, saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (6:68-69).

They found the answer to eternal life in Jesus (except one which Jesus addresses in John 6:70-71). The rich young ruler came to Jesus for just that but left His presence without it.

He or she that walks away from the comfortable (metaphorically speaking) to submit to a life of living in light of His way and working toward the spreading of the gospel – God will bless spiritually **"now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life"** (see also Matthew 19:29 and Luke 18:30). We are told, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25), pointing us back to the main idea, that it is living a life of faith in God, not in the world and its trappings, that leads to eternal life.

Of that, the rich young ruler's thinking was backward, as many others are as well. But Jesus corrects this also, saying, **"Many that are first shall be last; and the last first."** Many will be surprised on that day how God's perspective of real success (a lesson He had previously taught His disciples when they argued about who would be the greatest, Mark 9:34) is not the same as the norm we have become accustomed to. Just as in this verse, Jesus lets them know, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all," (Mark 9:35). Those who think they are on top will find out something different, and those who the world thinks amount to nothing, may be the greater (see also Matthew 20:1-16).

It is our faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, not the world's status and possessions that leads to eternal life. Therefore, keep walking toward and with Jesus.

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**TOPIC:**

## “The Rich Young Ruler”

**Mark 10:17-31**

**Please Answer the Review Questions Below**

1. **T or F.** The rich young ruler in today’s lesson wanted to know about eternal life. (Mark 10:17)
2. How did the rich young ruler address Jesus? (Mark 10:17)  
**A. Good Master      B. God’s Son      C. Blessed Savior      D. Good Teacher**
3. What are some of the commandments Jesus quoted to the young man? (Mark 10:19)

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4. What phrase let’s us know the young man was confident in following these commands? (Mark 10:20)

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5. What did Jesus ask the man to give up, then come and follow Him? (Mark 10:21-22)

**A. His Title      B. His Family      C. His Possessions      D. His Dignity**

6. **T or F.** The rich young ruler gave up everything and followed Jesus. (Mark 10:22)
7. Using the illustration of a camel going through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25), Jesus knew it was impossible for a person to get to heaven by their own means. Only with God would this be possible. What are some things we can do to keep our perspective on God for salvation, relying on Him, and not what we can do for ourselves?

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