

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 27 Aug 2023

Sermon Title : The Rich Ruler

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : Luke 18:18-29

INTRODUCTION

“The Rich Ruler” is the last of a 3-part sermon series “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”. “The Ugly” refers to the “Rich Ruler” in Luke 18:18-29 who looks perfect on the exterior, but underneath, there is a sad ugly reality. Like the “Rich Ruler”, many people know what is good for them, but most are unwilling to sacrifice things in their lives to pursue ‘what is good for them’ single mindedly and wholeheartedly.

The ‘Rich Young Ruler’

This story is found not only in Luke but also in Matthew 19 where we learn that besides being rich, the ruler was also young.

Why the ‘Rich Ruler’ asked the question on eternal life (Luke 18:18)

- He sincerely wanted to know how to inherit eternal life because he ran to Jesus and fell on his knees before asking the question in a humble posture. (Mark 10)

Parable of ‘The Rich Ruler’ (Luke 18:19-25)

Jesus answered him with a question, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.” (v.19)

- While Jesus affirms that the ruler was at the right place, at the right time and asking the right question, He was directing the ruler to question himself if he believed Jesus was really the right person to answer that question.
- If he truly believed that Jesus was the right person to answer his question, he should give weight to what Jesus was about to tell him and align with what Jesus had to say. Gently and indirectly, Jesus was in effect asking him, “Who do you think I am?”

Jesus went on to quote some of the commandments from the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20, “You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour your father and mother’ (v.20)”, and then said, “Do these things and you will gain eternal life.”

The ruler replied that he had kept all these things from his youth – meaning from 13

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years onward when a Jewish boy is responsible for his own life and decisions. However, Jesus went on to say that he still lacked one thing – “...sell all that you possess, distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasures in heaven;” (v.22a)

- The ruler was probably hopeful initially when he heard that there was only one thing he lacked as it is commendable that he had kept all the commandments Jesus mentioned. However, that one thing became a huge barrier for him.

On the surface, it might appear that Jesus had something against riches or wealth, but he went on to the heart of the matter....

- ‘and come, follow Me’ (v.22b) – what Jesus is saying is that if someone is serious about eternal life, that person would not allow anything, whether it is wealth or other distractions, to be a barrier that prevents him from pursuing it whole-heartedly.

The rich young ruler who looked perfect on the outside, became very sad when confronted with that requirement to give up his possessions for he was extremely rich. (v.23) Jesus was probably sad too when He looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” (v.24)

- Jesus was not against the rich and wealthy but was gently directing him not to the last 6 commandments on “loving your neighbour as yourself”, which he had fulfilled, but to the first 4 of the Ten Commandments. Jesus was zooming in on his love for God, “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” – have no other gods, no idols, love the name of God and love the things of God (keeping sabbath). (Exodus 20:3-4, 7-8)
- There was something in the rich ruler’s life that he could not let go of for the single-minded pursuit of God. His possession had become an idol in his life because it occupied such a place of priority in his heart that he could not let go of it to follow God.

What is required is more than just loving our neighbours but really loving the Lord our God with all that we have. Jesus was not just targeting the wealthy but rather gently and wisely directing the rich young ruler to realize that though he had fulfilled the command to love his neighbour, he was unable to fulfill the first few commandments – no other gods, no idols. He became very sad and walked away because of that. And Jesus went on to say, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (v.25) Jesus knew the power of wealth to lure, tempt and seduce.

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Who can be saved?

The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" (v.26) They were probably thinking that if a person like the rich young ruler who seemed so perfect and blessed by God could not make it to heaven, there would not be much hope for the rest of them. Jesus replied by saying, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God." (v.27)

- It is not about what a person had done or had not done but about who that person puts as number one over everything in his life.
- If one desires to put God as number one but struggles because of some obstacles, while it may seem impossible to overcome the obstacle on our own strength, God can do the impossible for us in His grace and mercy.

Peter then asked Jesus what about them who had left everything to follow Him. Jesus said in Luke 18:29-30, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

- Jesus addressed the concerns of His disciples who had left everything to follow Him whole-heartedly. He assures them that though they might lose out on some things in this life, they will receive many times more at this time, and in the age to come, eternal life.

Reflection:

Do we have small 'gods' in our lives?

Do we have idols that have knowingly or unknowingly crept into our lives and are sharing the same space with God?

- God is calling us to drop these things – this is one litmus test to find out if we are single-minded and whole-hearted in wanting to follow Christ. If we cannot or do not have the strength to overcome that, let us not give up but go to our good God and ask Him to help us in His grace and mercy.

CONCLUSION

Whenever we are tempted to think that we are missing out on things on earth by giving them up to follow God, remember that we will receive many times more at this time, and in the age to come eternal life, because our God is a good God who will not short-change us.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. What could be some ways you have not loved God with all your heart soul, mind and strength? Which of the following commandments have you broken?
 - (i) You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:3)
 - (ii) You shall not make for yourself an idol. (Exodus 20:4)
 - (iii) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (Exodus 20:7)
 - (iv) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Exodus 20:8)

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Appoint someone to read Luke 18:18-29 aloud.
 - a. What does the rich young ruler initially believe is necessary for eternal life, and how does his understanding differ from what Jesus expects of him?
 - b. In what ways might we, like the rich young ruler, approach our spiritual journey with preconceived notions?
 - c. How can we be open to God's teachings even when they challenge our wrong belief?

- 4a. Why do you think Jesus specifically asks the rich young ruler to sell all he has and give to the poor?
- 4b. (i) What are some things in your life that might be hindering your following Jesus?

(ii) What must you do to follow Jesus whole-heartedly?
- 4c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4b (ii) above in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on how you have experienced God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise in Luke 18:29 for the sacrifices you have made to follow Jesus?

OR

Give thanks to God for revealing the small 'gods/idols' in our lives so we may seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment to deal with it.

6. Go to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to reveal anything that is holding you back from following Him whole-heartedly. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment to drop that which is competing with God to be number one in your life. Pray for our church to truly want to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbours as ourselves.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Open the Eyes of My Heart – Michael W Smith
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0orH2uloel>
2. I Believe (The Creed) – Hillsong <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuDI-sk2nJU>
3. Take All Of Me – Hillsong https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhZx27_WhRU

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