

“Lay down your gods...”

Matt 19:16-30

Scripture Ref: Heb 4:15; Rev 22:12-13

1. Over the past few weeks we have looked at things like: “How many times do I forgive my friend? When can I cut him off?”, or “How much do I have to take at home before I can ditch my spouse?”
 - a. People often look for the measuring stick, and yet the answer we keep getting back is “keep forgiving, keep loving, stay married...” In other words “keep pouring our love and grace.”
2. As we move further into chapter 19 of Matthew, we find a young man coming to Jesus with a very basic question: *“...behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’”*
3. In other words this man is asking *“so, what’s it gonna take to get into heaven? What do I do? How good do I have to be?”*
4. The question is reasonable, logical. It’s an excellent question. As with any excellent question, it brings us to a place of self-examination:
 - a. What is important to God?
 - b. What is important to me?
 - c. How do the two resulting answers align with one another?

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" 17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

5. Just to give some clarity here, Jesus is not saying that He is not good – in fact He was without sin

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

- a. What Jesus is saying is more like *“Only God is good, so do you believe I am God?”*
6. Next – who is this guy? When we combine the gospel accounts we learn three things about this man:
 - a. He was young, he was rich, and he was a “ruler” – probably the ruler of a synagogue.
 - b. In other words he had attained a place in life that was quite enviable...
 - i. He had money – not a small thing in that day
 - ii. He had a position of authority –

iii. He was young enough to enjoy it! (we saw a nice corvette – my son commented ‘I’m going to get mine before I get old...)

7. And ... this guy would have been considered to be “right with God” because in that day – they had “prosperity religion” too!
 - a. The Jewish rabbi’s taught that if you were financially blessed, then God was pleased with you.
 - b. There was good reason for that – Deuteronomy 6 taught them that God would bless them materially for obedience, and that God would take it all away if they disobeyed.
 - c. And you know what? There is truth to that, even to this day – if you obey God and His principles for life, you will be blessed materially.
 - d. The problem comes when we use material blessing as the only test of whether or not we are right with God.
 - e. Honestly, I’m not sure if I would place my faith in my circumstances to determine if I am right with God – and I think this guy felt the same way... because He came to Jesus.
8. In other words, the guy had everything going for him, so why did he come to Jesus?
 - a. Perhaps he felt a need for something more.
 - b. Perhaps he had experienced what many people experience – he reached the pinnacle of success:
 - c. Had money, power, success, youth – yet he came to the place that he thought “so...is this it? Is this all there is?”
 - d. And He comes to Jesus and say “*is there more? Is there something else that I have to do?*”

But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 19'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

9. Jesus basically tells the man “you know the ten commandments... don’t you follow them?”

20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

10. “Sure” says the young man, “I totally follow the law, I do everything I’m supposed to do...”
 - a. “But I know, and you know, there is still something missing”

11. Before we move on, think about that for a second... he is doing all the right things, not doing any of the bad things... but there is something still missing.

- a. You know something, I can relate to that. When I became a Christian in 1986, over the course of the next few years I made some profound changes in my life**
- b. I stopped drinking, stopped doing drugs, stopped being promiscuous, I stopped treating people badly.**
- c. I got married, worked hard at my job, payed my bills, became a productive member of society!**
- d. I started going to church, I even started tithing.. I gave 10% of every paycheck to the church.**
- e. But I found myself at a place ten years into my new life that it seemed that something was missing!**

12. I was doing everything right on the outside, but it seemed more like behavior modification...

- a. I knew I was saved, but I also knew I wasn't walking in the fullness of my new life. I couldn't help but think "so...*this is it?*"**
- b. Something else needed to happen – another step – I didn't understand it at the time, but God knew what it was... and He was going to be true to His nature and bring me face to face with it.**
- c. Face to face with what? With my own priorities – what was really important to me? Was I living my life for me – or for the Lord?**

13. And that is exactly what Jesus did with this young man.

- a. This guy was doing all the right things, not doing the wrong things, was blessed in many ways – but there was something missing, and so he comes to Jesus...**
- b. And being true to His nature, Jesus brings this young man face to face with his core problem...**

21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

14. If you want to be "perfect" – or better "complete" – then go and sell all your possessions and give it to the poor...

- a. So... is Jesus saying that to get to heaven we have to sell all of our possessions? Give away everything to the poor?**
- b. No – we cannot say that – because wouldn't align with the overall teaching of Jesus, and the Apostles, nowhere else in the bible do we see this supported.**
- c. So if Jesus is not laying out a new condition of salvation, then what is He saying?**

15. He is bringing this young man face to face with his own priorities – what was really important to him – his true lord – and that was his wealth!
- Jesus was saying to this young man *“hey, you’re on the right track! You’re going in the right direction! But there is one thing holding you back, one thing keeping you from being “complete”*
 - “And here is the kicker – you need to let go of that one thing”*
16. Here is where it gets interesting – we are looking at this young man and saying to ourselves “yep, his money is his idol”...
- But that’s not the point - the point for us is to look at our own life and ask ourselves the same question:
 - Is there anything in my life that I place ahead of God?
 - But you can’t ask that kind of question as a ‘yes or no’... because when someone has an idol – they are usually incapable of being honest about it...
17. Think about it - if Jesus had just asked the man *“are your possessions more important than your relationship with God?”* his answer would have been *“of course not!”*
- That’s why Jesus didn’t present the man with a ‘yes or no’ question – instead He brought the guy to a point of DECISION by telling him to go and sell all of his stuff.
 - Jesus wasn’t saying “show me” because Jesus, being God, already knew the truth.
 - Jesus is saying – *“see for yourself – you come asking me for truth, well here it is, what will you do with it?”*
18. What I am saying is that we might want to think about taking a look at our own life - going through the things in our life...
- my house, my car, my motorcycles, my career, my entertainment... and ask myself *“Is this more important to me than my relationship with God...”* or better *“Is this an idol?”*
 - See you were thinking that an idol is a little carved statue – but in fact an idol is anything that holds a position above God in our lives.
19. How do we know if something is an idol? Well, how much do you think about it? How much do you spend on it? How much time do you allocate to it?
- You see – there is only room for ONE on the throne of your life, and at some point you have to decide – who will sit on the throne? ME, or the Lord?
20. It is a simple answer - but it can be a difficult answer, because it requires us to die
- That point in time came for me about 15 years ago, I was at a men’s event, and that night I made a decision – that I was going to fully and 100% surrender to God – whatever that took.

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, 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."

21. God is not against rich people – some of the greatest people in the bible were men and women of wealth.

- a. **Jesus is simply acknowledging that in a material world, a person with great material wealth can find themselves trusting in their wealth rather than God.**
- b. **Their wealth is so tied to their security and their identity that it becomes in fact, their idol.**

22. God is simply saying to this young man – and to you and I – “Lay down your gods!”

25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." 27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" 28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

23. Jesus tells these guys – “look, I know that you have given up a lot to follow me, and trust me, its not going to get easier.

- a. **He is saying “Let me tell you something that is important, whatever you give up in this life, you will receive a hundredfold in the next.**
- b. **This is what we call in promise – Jesus is telling us “you want something good now, or something great later?”**
- c. **If we are wise we will hear Him, and determine in our hearts – “If it is important to God, then it is important to me -**

Dan 12:1-3

"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those

who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

- 24. You can trust in your little idols – your riches, your career, your hobbies, your pleasures – but they are just that – “little gods”**
- a. There is one true God – one King – one Lord – and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ!**
 - b. And on the day that the kingdoms of the earth fall, and the great men of this earth are no more – and eternity shines on the horizon...**
 - c. The King of Kings will reward that who have followed Him.**

Rev 22:12-13

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Copyright © 2009 Pastor Clay Ritter. This data file is the sole property of Pastor Clay Ritter. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain this copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Pastor Clay Ritter. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Pastor Clay Ritter, c/o Calvary Chapel of Wilmington, 2831 Carolina Beach Rd, Wilmington NC, 28412.