**Little Children and a Rich Ruler**

Luke 18:15-30

Key Verse 22

“When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”

**Introduction**

So far we have studied two lessons from this chapter. Jesus compared an unjust judge and the just Judge. Also Jesus compared two prayers between a Pharisee and a tax collector. Today we will see different types of people as examples between little children and a rich ruler. In this passage Jesus teaches us to be like little children in order to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus also tells a rich young ruler what he must do to receive eternal life. Jesus challenges us to trust in God and have treasure in heaven. Jesus gives a wonderful promise to all those who have left earthly treasures for the sake of God’s kingdom. Let’s listen to Jesus with ears to hear and hearts to receive the words of Jesus. They show us the way to eternal life.

1. Read verses 15-17. Why did people bring their babies to Jesus? Why might the disciples have rebuked the parents? Why did Jesus have the little children come to him? (16) How can we receive the kingdom of God like a little child? (17)

1-1, Read verses 15-17.

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. **16** But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **17** Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

1-2, Why did people bring their babies to Jesus?

1-3, Why might the disciples have rebuked the parents?

***15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.***

* People brought their babies and little children to Jesus so that he might bless them and pray for them.
* From a parent’s point of view, their kids were precious.
* But from the viewpoint of others, children might have been seen as annoying, and burdensome.
* In addition, from the Jewish viewpoint, children were judged by their usefulness and ability to make practical contributions to the family.
* So, to the disciples, the younger they were, the more useless they were. They thought of these children as a waste of Jesus’ time. They rebuked the parents.

1-4, Why did Jesus have the little children come to him? (16)

***16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.***

* Jesus wasn’t too busy for these little children. Rather than pushing them away, he invited them in.
* In addition, Jesus even said ‘the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’ Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God belongs to those who have a child-like attitude.
* Here Jesus refers to a child’s pure heart, humility, and their continuously growing and having a learning mind.
* Most importantly, Jesus wants to build a trust relationship with each of us. This requires each of us to have child-like dependence on our Heavenly Father.
* The issue of trust is very important from an early stage of life. Newborn babies don’t talk much, or do much. It doesn’t even look like they think about much.
* But, in fact, babies’ brains are constantly making connections and growing to understand the world around them and how it works.
* During the first year of life, babies learn one of their most important lessons—one expert in child development labeled this lesson “trust vs. mistrust”.
* What babies experience early on completely shapes the way they view the world during the rest of their lives.
* Some parents believe that it is good to let babies “cry it out” to teach them self-discipline. However, it is IMPOSSIBLE to spoil a baby with too much affection, attention, or love. In fact, research has shown that babies who form strong, loving bonds with their parents are MORE independent as children.
* Kids are seen as helpless and vulnerable because they can’t do anything for themselves.
* While this may be taken for weakness, in Jesus, this exact same inability to do anything about our sin is a source of hope and strength.
* The disciples might have seen these little kids as a waste of Jesus’ time because they had nothing to offer Jesus.
* As sinners, we likewise have nothing to offer Jesus so Jesus should consider us as not worth his time.
* But instead of rejecting us he called us to himself by dying on the cross for our sins.
* The kingdom of God is a gracious gift that we did not earn and certainly do not deserve.
* But it is available to each of us when we enter into a loving, trusting, fully dependent relationship with Jesus as our Heavenly Father.
* As God’s people, we should continue to seek God with a pure heart and find pure joy in our walk with God.
* We can be encouraged to continue learning and growing through God’s word and acknowledge our need for God everyday.
* As we seek God with the heart of a child, the kingdom of God and our relationship with Jesus grow closer everyday.
* We must be like children in our relationship to God: simple, teachable and trusting.

1-5, How can we receive the kingdom of God like a little child? (17)

***Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”***

* With child-like faith, we must accept and believe the message of the gospel concerning the kingdom of God.
* Romans 1:5 says that through Jesus we are called to the obedience that comes from faith.
* Absolute child-like faith in Jesus and his word should influence our decisions as well. When there is faith, there is also obedience.
* Not all of God’s words in the Bible are easy to obey.
* But when we do, we reveal that our relationship with Jesus is real and that our faith is real.
* Jesus says, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
* To do so, requires faith that Jesus will provide for us when we make sacrifices for him in school, in our professional career or socially with our friends.
* He tells us in Matthew 28, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.” To go requires faith that Jesus will be with us and watch over us when we may face persecutions of many kinds.
* We must take Jesus at his word and trust that he will do what he promises. If we proclaim we have faith in Jesus, let us do so with our obedience and, by doing so, enter the kingdom of God.

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2. Read verses 18-21. What did a certain ruler inquire of Jesus? What does this reveal about him? What can we learn from Jesus’ answer? (19) Why might Jesus have mentioned four commandments? (20) What does this man’s reply show about him? (21)

2-1, Read verses 18-21.

A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **19** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’” **21** “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

2-2, What did a certain ruler inquire of Jesus?

***18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

2-3, What does this reveal about him?

* Apparently, this man was not only calling Jesus good but must have believed that he was good too.
* This man is known as the rich young ruler, because he is described as a ruler ([Luke 18:18](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Luke+18:18&t1=en_nas)), as rich ([Luke 18:23](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Luke+18:23&t1=en_nas)), and as young ([Matthew 19:23](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Matthew+19:23&t1=en_nas)).
* Good Teacher was a title never applied to other rabbis in Jesus day, because it implied being without sin and complete goodness. Jesus, and everyone else, recognized that Good Teacher was a unique title.
* There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a rabbi being addressed as Good Master. They insisted on calling God alone good.

***What must I do to inherit eternal life?”***

* This question demonstrates that this man, like all people by nature, had an orientation towards earning eternal life. He wanted to know what good work or noble deed he should he do to inherit eternal life.

2-4, What can we learn from Jesus’ answer? (19)

***“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.***

* Jesus asked the man, Do you understand what you are saying when you call Me good?
* It was as if Jesus said, “You come to Me asking about what good thing you can do to inherit eternal life; but what do you really know about goodness?”
* It means, as there is none good but God, Jesus who is good must be God.
* We might say that the ruler did not really know who Jesus was. If he did, he would truly humble himself as the tax collector did.
* Unless this man believed absolutely that Jesus is God, he should not call Jesus good.
* If he believed Jesus is God, then he should have called Jesus “Good Lord,” not “Good Teacher.”

2-5, Why might Jesus have mentioned four commandments? (20)

***20 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”***

2-6, What does this man’s reply show about him? (21)

***21 “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.***

* Apparently, he had kept all the commandments on how to treat others. He did not commit adultery, did not murder, did not steal, did not give false testimony, and made sure to honor his father and mother.
* He was young, rich, had a good job, and respected his parents. He had everything and lacked nothing. He was self-sufficient and independent.
* The disciples rejected little children, but this man would have welcomed them with open arms.
* To the disciples, here was a man who apparently was worthy of Jesus’ time. What can we learn from the interaction between Jesus and this rich ruler?
* “All these I have kept since I was a boy.” His answer tells us that, not only did he think he was good, but he thought he was good enough to inherit eternal life.
* Jesus wants this rich ruler to understand that the standard for ‘good’ is not a human standard, but a Godly standard.
* By this holy standard no one is good.

Romans 3:23 says,

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

* Because of our sin, none of us is good enough for eternal life and each of us is only worthy of God’s judgment and punishment.

1 John 3:15 says,

“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer.”

Matthew 5:28 says,

“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

* The first and foremost step to inheriting eternal life is lifting our eyes up to a holy God and realizing that I am a sinner. Like a child, I am helpless to do anything about it on my own.

Luke 5:31-32 reads,

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

* Thankfully, our unworthiness is exactly what makes us worthy of the grace of Jesus and for the gift of eternal life.

3. Read verses 22-23. What was the one thing this man lacked? (22) Why did Jesus tell him to sell everything and give to the poor? How did the young man respond and why?

3-1, Read verses 22-23.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” **23** When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy.

3-2, What was the one thing this man lacked? (22)

3-3, Why did Jesus tell him to sell everything and give to the poor?

***When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”***

* This was perhaps not the answer the ruler expected from Jesus. After answering that he had kept all the commandments, he may have expected Jesus to say that he would surely inherit eternal life.
* Instead, Jesus points out that he still lacks one thing.

Mark 10:21 reads,

“Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

* In fact, this ruler’s possessions and wealth created a lack of love for God. He lacked an undivided heart towards God.
* Luke 16:23 taught us that no servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.
* The rich ruler’s love for his wealth was in reality hatred toward God. All the commandments Jesus mentioned in verse 20 related to this man’s dealings with his neighbor. But by challenging the ruler to give up his worldly wealth, Jesus was asking, “How is your relationship with God?”

3-4, How did the young man respond and why?

***When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy.***

* It was a great contrast from Jesus’ disciples. When Jesus called Simon and Andrew, at once they left their nets and followed him.
* Luke also writes that James, John and Levi immediately left everything to follow Jesus.

Hebrews 11:24-26 read,

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. **25** He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**26** He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

* The one and only way we are able to follow Jesus is by looking forward to his promises and by understanding that giving Jesus our life is the greatest investment we will ever make.

4. Read verses 24-30. What did Jesus say about the rich young man? (24-25) Why is so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven? What question did the disciples’ then ask? (26) What can we learn from Jesus’ answer? (27) What was Peter’s response? (28) What is Jesus’ promise to those who seek the kingdom of God first? (29-30)

4-1, Read verses 24-30.

Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! **25** Indeed, 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.” **26** Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” **27** Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

**28** Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” **29** “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God **30** will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

4-2, What did Jesus say about the rich young man? (24-25)

***24 Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, 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.”***

4-3, Why is so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven?

* Riches can be a problem because they tend to make us satisfied with this life, instead of longing for the age to come. Often, riches are also sought at the expense of seeking God.
* Clearly Jesus said that riches are an obstacle to the kingdom of God. Jesus told us that riches may present a serious problem.
* Giving the example of a camel going through the eye of a needle, Jesus illustrated how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. We immediately think of this scenario as being impossible.

4-4, What question did the disciples’ then ask? (26)

***26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”***

4-5, What can we learn from Jesus’ answer? (27)

***27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”***

* Jesus has made the impossibility of sinners entering the kingdom of God possible by paying the cost for our sins on the cross.
* Jesus defeated sin and death to give us this great hope and promise of eternal life.

4-6, What was Peter’s response? (28)

***28 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”***

* In contrast to the rich young ruler, the disciples gave up everything to follow Jesus. Peter wondered what reward would be promised to those who obeyed as opposed to the rich young ruler who disobeyed.

4-7, What is Jesus’ promise to those who seek the kingdom of God first? (29-30)

***“Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”***

* Here Jesus confirms his promise to Peter. Like little children, we must trust in Jesus’ words and his promises to us.
* We live in a generation that may be interested in eternal life but does not care to give up anything to inherit it.
* To inherit eternal life is a matter of believing in Jesus and his words and giving him first place in our hearts.
* The test of our devotion will come when we face life decisions great and small and by our decisions reveal what is truly important to us in life.
* To prepare ourselves for when we face these tests, I pray we might prepare our hearts and grow in our knowledge and understanding of God.
* Through a prayerful relationship with Jesus, may we not walk away from life’s trials with sadness but walk away joyfully with the assurance that the kingdom of God lives in us.

**Conclusion**

1 Timothy 6:6-10 reads, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” Also Jesus’ brother, James says in James 4:13-16, “Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. **17** If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” May the Lord help each of us to be like little children who trust in the promises of God’s words and live a life of faith to the end. Amen.

**One word: Trust and Obey!**