

The Rich Young Ruler

Mark 10:17-31 (CGS#16)

INTRODUCTION: One of the things we've seen in the Gospel of Mark is that discipleship (following Jesus) is not a leisure cruise. Here is how one commentator explains it, "The call to discipleship involves a cost of discipleship. Fishermen must leave boats and nets (1:16–20), a tax collector his tax table (2:14), and Peter his false conception of the Messiah (8:33). Another disciple will have to leave a bystander's security and literally take up Jesus' cross (15:21). The call to follow Jesus does not constitute an additional obligation in life, but rather judges, replaces, and subordinates all obligations and allegiances to the one who says, " 'Follow me.' " Anything, even the obligation to parents (Matt 8:21), is a hazard if it impedes the following of that call. The rich man in the present story, with his possessions and social status, is a striking contrast to the simple children of the previous story. He receives a clearer picture of the kingdom than anyone so far in Mark's Gospel, and he displays great eagerness in accepting it. His enviable assets, however, prove a greater liability in inheriting eternal life than do the deficits and paucity of the little children in the previous story, for they embody the essence of the kingdom of God, whereas he turns away from it." ¹

If we haven't seen this reality about discipleship yet, Mark turns our eyes pointedly to Jesus' interaction with the Rich Young Ruler. Everything about this young man points to success. He is a financial success... he had much to lose. He is a moral success... he has kept "all" the laws. And he is a social success... his religious fervor and financial footing would have given him significant social influence. But, he knows he is missing something, and so he comes to Jesus to figure it all out. But, the answer Jesus gives to his question is the very opposite of what he hoped to hear. And in the end, it is too much for him to bear. We shouldn't be surprised by this. Jesus has been talking about serving, and how the great ones in the Kingdom are servants. We will also hear Jesus at the end of chapter 10 tell us that he will serve us with his very life (10:45). Jesus is serious about this serving business. And he is serious that his followers walk in it just as he does. In order to do that, it will mean that discipleship is going to cost all who follow Jesus something. That is the same message he said in 8:34-35, ³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

Jesus hasn't changed his tune. No, he's been singing the same song the whole way through. The Rich Young Ruler heard Jesus clearly, but didn't want anything to do with him. How will you respond to the call of discipleship?

GETTING STARTED – As a group, take time to answer this question. When did you realize for the first time that following Jesus could lead you into uncomfortable situations or decisions?

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage(s). It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 309.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday- Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Note: Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions.

1. How might you summarize the values of Jesus so far in the Gospel of Mark?
2. How does this section correct or challenge your view of Jesus?
3. What did the Rich Young Ruler place his hope in?
4. How do you see yourself in the Rich Young Ruler?
5. When following God through hardship and trials, how does his character help you to trust him?