



With God All Things Are Possible

We've all heard the story of the Rich Young Man (or ruler) in Mark 10 and Matthew 19. And we've all heard and probably quoted the verse "*with God all things are possible*". Most of us don't think of these two stories being linked, but Jesus said this famous line at the closing of the account of the rich young man, and I believe there's an important side of the story that is often missed in this passage.

Mark 10:17-27 (NASB)

*As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." Looking at him, **Jesus felt a love for him** and said to him, "One thing you lack: **go** and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and **come, follow Me.**" But at these words he was saddened, **and he went away** grieving, for he was one who owned much property.*

*And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus **answered again and *said to them, "Children, **how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God."* They were even more astonished and said to Him, "**Then who can be saved?**" Looking at them, Jesus said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; **for all things are possible with God.**"*

A couple key notes to consider in this passage.

- Jesus felt a love for him, specifically agape love, the highest form of deep, affectionate, intimate love we have for family or a spouse. It is the same love we are called to have for believers (1 John 4:21)
- Jesus told him to "go and sell" what he had so he would have treasure in heaven. This seems to be a command, and the same Greek word was used when Christ told the people He healed to "go" present themselves to the priests, etc. He was calling them to an action.
- Most importantly, Jesus said, "come follow Me." I did not find another place in Scripture where Christ gave this command to anyone except one of His disciples, and they always obeyed.



In fact, in a similar passage, Matthew 8:21-22, Christ's rebuke and command is also directed at a disciple.

Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."

The same account is recorded in Luke 9:59-60 and has a slightly different point of view:

And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

I find it interesting that in this account it's also commonly taught that Jesus sent this guy away as unfit, but I would argue the opposite is true. Just as with the rich man, Christ instructed this disciple on how to follow and obey by going – instead of "go and sell" it was "go and proclaim". And as with the calling of other disciples, the same key words are used: "follow Me".

Back to our passage:

But at these words he (the rich man) was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. (v22)

Most of us focus on the fact that, at Jesus's command, the man was sad or grieved, because he was very rich. Did he go away and never return to follow Christ? Or, perhaps, did he go away to sell his possessions, just as Christ had instructed him to do?

I think the context of this story may give us a clue. Jesus said:

*"Children, **how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God." They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" Looking at them, Jesus *said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; **for all things are possible with God.**" (v24-27)*

Is it *possible* this young man was saved? Yes! Why? Because ALL THINGS are possible with God! Even a selfish rich man can be saved through what God can do in the heart. I think it's also worth noting that this rich man did not boast in his works. Knowing his heart, Christ asked if he had kept the law, to which he replied he had. The man did not lead with this, but instead, understood and acknowledged that keeping the law was not enough to be saved.



For some self-reflection:

If you met Christ today and His command was the same, considering what you have accumulated in your life to-date, would you cheerfully give it up without even a thought or would it be hard? Would there be some sadness if Christ's call meant you walked away from your home and all that filled it? For me, if I am being really honest with myself, the answer is yes. It would be hard! However, that's the worldly human flesh at work in my heart.

This is where God helps us set our priorities and challenges us to love Him more than we love this world. It's part of the pruning process. Christ does not expect perfection, and we are not saved through our own righteousness or works, or even, as this young man had done, adhering to the commandments. We are saved because of Christ's work on the cross. Rich or poor, Christ makes all things possible and removes the barriers to our spiritual growth, and sometimes that hurts. A lot.

In closing, a reminder from Christ to his disciples:

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece