

# Am I Good Enough?

Scripture: Matthew 19: 16-25  
Date: January 19, 2020

## **VISION 2020**

This winter season of 2020 we are in the midst of an Epiphany series on looking and seeing. 2020 is the physically defined norm of clarity and clear vision and it is our goal to gain a clearer perspective of who God is and who we are to God. By looking up, by looking around and by looking inside of ourselves. This series focusses on questions because questions are useful tools to leverage our understandings of answers. Questions help us know what it is that we're looking for and they help us better understand what answers are right for us and how to live them out

## **CHECKMARK**

### ***RICH YOUNG RULER***

The story read today in Matthew 19 is also available in gospels of Luke and Mark. Together they give a picture of someone else who is looking for answers. The gospel of Matthew indicates that they are young, the gospel of Luke indicates that they are a ruler - perhaps of a religious group like the Pharisees but all three indicate that this man is very rich – wealthy

While it is clear that the man is someone who has “it” all ie. money, power, prestige, youth etc. It is also clear that there is something missing in this man's resume. They've not been able to check all the boxes off their status. They are lacking something - but they are not sure what it is

### ***QUESTION FOR JESUS***

So, the man comes to Jesus – seemingly after several years of His ministry and becoming aware of His miracles and His healings and His wise teachings – with an important question.

How do I get eternal life? More specifically he asks - What good thing do I have to do to get eternal life? It's a question that many today also ask. Is there more to life than we are living? We can check off the boxes of our 'successes' - but there seems to be something lacking.

Some people have found the 'works' in the world temporary or unsatisfactory in filling the needs deeper within them. Even Christians are not immune from this search for more. They have been born and raised in the church, attended church faithfully, given time, talent and tithes to the church - yet there is a doubt that they're not good enough. A doubt that grows into a question - will I have eternal life? Or Am I living life fully and obediently now?

The rich young ruler asks a question about eternal life. The Greek word here is Zoe which represents a spiritual understanding more than a physical or psychological understanding. It's the same word Jesus uses in vs. 17 - *If you want to enter into life*. But Jesus uses other terms as well in describing what the man is looking for - treasure in heaven – vs. 21, kingdom of heaven – vs. 23, kingdom of God – vs 24.

In Matthew' account Jesus responds to the questions by His own - *If you want to be perfect*. Perfect here meaning – mature, full, lacking in nothing. In other words – what the rich young ruler is looking for - even if he doesn't fully understand it yet - is pretty immense – pretty big

## **CHECKLIST**

### ***RICH YOUNG RULER QUESTION***

So the rich young ruler comes to Jesus – seeing wisdom and seeking answers. He acknowledges Jesus authority – Teacher - and asks the depth of his question. What GOOD thing must I do?

In order to fill the void, the lack in his life he's certain that there is something that he must do to fill it. Some requirement of the law that he's missed out on perfecting or some measure of living obediently that he's flawed in.

Honestly – many of us would have asked the same question. What am I not doing – that I need to do – in order to be blessed? If there's something missing in who I am then there must be something I can do. More participation, more money etc.

### ***JESUS RESPONDS***

Jesus responds to the rich young ruler with an answer of action - obey the commandments. As a ruler the man would have – along with all other Israelites - had the 10 commandments memorized. They would have known the explanations and the expansions. They would have been challenged to live them out daily.

### ***RICH YOUNG RULER QUESTION***

The rich young ruler responds with an affirmative - yes I have lived them out – perfectly. Mark and Luke include that he's been living faithful obedience of the law – since he was a boy – it's something he's done all his life

If perfectly living out religious law was a requirement to eternal life, to the treasure in heaven, to the kingdom of heaven / of God then the rich young ruler could check this off the list.

Been there – done that !!

Yet – at the same time - it's clear to this rich young ruler that this requirement of the law – somehow – isn't enough. He asks Jesus a follow-up question:

Am I good enough now

OR

What ELSE am I lacking?

### ***JESUS RESPONDS***

Jesus answers with a challenge that only Matthew records. If you want to be perfect – if you're lacking perfection – which again means a maturity – a fullness – a wholeness lacking nothing

Then move past sinless living and into selfless living. He challenges the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. THEN come and follow Him

If we recall from last week when we looked at Zacchaeus that Zacchaeus offered 50% of his holdings to the poor and Jesus commended him for his actions. But in this case the rich young ruler was challenged to sell ALL. The whole enchilada

Clearly this is a significant challenge in the to do category of living. There's someone doing a checklist of things and there's also doing a checklist of things to become someone. Regardless of which – this challenge is extreme

## **CHECKMATE**

### ***RICH YOUNG RULER***

And the rich young ruler is done. No more questions. No more searching. The cost of the answer - the requirement of the checklist and checkmark - is too high. He can't sell all he has and he can't follow Jesus and so he leaves sad. Luke's gospel says very sad. The ESV translation describes him as sorrowful and the NSRV describes him as crestfallen. All his hopes and dreams of becoming a better person are laid to waste by a seemingly impossible expectation. The rich young ruler was checkmated. He loses - the questions, the answers and the vision

### ***JESUS CALLING***

Jesus expectation of the rich young ruler was less about money and more about obedience. Jesus recognized the heart condition of the rich young ruler was compromised. His desire for being and doing good was tempered by an idol – the rich young ruler's primary idol was of money. It became hard for the rich young ruler to give up his temporal riches in order to gain a treasure in heaven.

Jesus explained this in the following verses using a proverb that described the difficulty of a camel to going through the eye of a sewing needle as a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. This position would have been scandalous then because to the everyday Israelite – the blessing of money WAS a blessing from God. To sell it and give it away was rejecting a blessing not gaining one!

But Jesus was desiring the rich young ruler to gain but sacrificing. But the rich young ruler was compromised by his unwillingness to surrender his idols. He could accomplish the last commandments – but not the first. There shall be no gods / idols before God himself - He alone is our God !!

Perhaps we too can identify with the rich young ruler. We've been searching for the checkmark identifying us as a Christian. But in our search to fulfill the checklist of requirements we're unable to submit the one box that we've checked. The box of who's in charge. He desires us to surrender all to Him - to submit all to Him and truly make Him the priority in our lives

## CHECKBOOK

### **WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?**

#### DISCIPLES QUESTION

It's no wonder then that the disciples ask that if we can't accomplish the list - then how can one be saved. If the rich young couldn't fill the lack in his life through his own status – am I good enough? Or through his own works – am I doing enough good? Then how can one have life in this world and in the one yet to come.

#### JESUS ANSWER

Jesus replies to their question with a foreshadowing of his own work. With human effort and understanding it IS impossible. However – with God's grace (Ephesians 2:8) all things ARE possible

Jesus replies that we can never be rich enough to write a check big enough to fill our lack and only God himself – through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - can balance the checkbook well enough.

## APPLICATION

### **COME FOLLOW ME**

The Vision question facing the Rich young ruler – and us – is not about what good thing we need to do but rather what good ONE we need to follow. Then the vision of the treasure – the kingdom of God becomes clearer

Eternal life – full and abundant life here on earth - that is our treasure – our riches – our wealth.  
Kingdom of God – Kingdom of heaven - that is our perfection

### **QUESTIONS**

We ask hard questions

What am I missing / lacking in my life?

Am I good enough?

Have I done enough?

The right question Jesus asks of us instead is - will we follow Him and lay down our idols & picking up His treasures

The right question we need to ask is - Did Jesus love us enough?

And the answer to that is YES !!!

And we celebrate that through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Remembering that it's by God's grace that the cost of following Him is paid and that the treasure found in following Him is available – by faith and in love.

AMEN