

## True Riches

I remember many discussions with the Great Teacher about riches, their use and misuse. One of the most well-known instances was when the rich young ruler came to Him<sup>1</sup>. What was the most amazing thing about it was the humility of the man, who fell on his knees before Christ.

*Just as Jesus started on his way, a certain ruler ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

His compliment to Jesus was deflected towards the Higher Good – that is, God. His argument was that he was a good man, good enough to be chosen by God. He was looking for some "good thing" as a "cap" to decorate the whole of his life. It would be a "finish" as apposed to a continual walk with God. But Jesus continued to discuss the issue with the young man.

*Jesus said, "If you want to enter life, keep the commandments, which you know very well."*

*"Which ones?" he inquired.*

*Jesus replied, "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother, and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

Jesus could have listed all ten commandments, and included the other "Greatest" commandment, but as the young ruler was confident in his near-perfection, Jesus used an abbreviated set.

*"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy. What do I still lack?"*

*When Jesus heard this, He looked at him and loved him.*

The Master loved us all, but there was something special here. You could see how much he loved this man and felt compassion for him, even with his misunderstanding of Good. This love should have been a very important gift to the man. But Jesus gave him a test.

*"You still lack one thing," he said. "If you want to be perfect, go, sell everything you have – all of your possessions - and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

His request was not so much about reducing his wealth, but about loving others (and perhaps being loved by them). The world of love was wide open with infinite possibilities. But, the response of the young man was not good.

*When the young man heard this, his face fell. He went away very sad, because he had great wealth.*

*Jesus looked at him, then all around and said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"*

Now Jesus was sad, for it was clear that His great love was not enough for the young ruler, Perhaps he felt that he needed great riches to be a ruler, and that was the most important thing to him. But for the rest of us, we realized the ultimate message:

**You are rich if someone loves you.**

And we were amazed at the power of this great truth.

1. The rich young ruler: Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:18ff, Matthew 19:16-30

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