

## The Invitation You Cannot Ignore

Mark 10:17-31

October 10, 2021

Thought-provoking questions are deep inquiries that often lead to self-reflection. The French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778), teaches us to judge a person by his questions rather than his answers. The questions one asks often reveal his intentions, his interests, and his values. No doubt that you'll get to know the person better by paying attention to his questions.

Another way to get to know a person better is by asking him the right questions, the questions that will lead to the answers that reveal his intentions, his interests, and his values.

In the same way, you will know yourself better by asking yourself the right questions. People who continually ask themselves the questions that provoke introspection will create a foundation for a happier and more meaningful life.

Human behaviors are driven by two factors: needs and values. We all have various needs. Some needs are physical and some are emotional.

In order to meet these needs, we ask critical questions. If we are hungry, we ask, "Where can we get something to eat?" If we need a shelter, "Where can we sleep tonight?" Or "Where can we be safe tonight?" The needs for these staples of life can be overwhelming especially when we are desperate for them. When we are starving for food or panting for water to the point of death, we will do almost anything to satisfy our needs.

If we are fortunate enough to have our basic needs met, the question changes. The question changes from safety and security to love, self-worth, meaning and purpose. We begin to ask: "How can we be accepted?" "How can we love and be loved?" "How can we be happy?" "What worth do we have in this world?" "How can we find fulfillment in life?" "How can we find meaning and purpose?" We begin to desire to truly live, and not just survive. We realize there is deeper hunger in life, which is for meaning and purpose.

This is the story of the man in the passage we've just read. Luke's version described him as a "rich young ruler." Isn't it interesting that he was described as "rich," "young," and "powerful"? In other words, he had everything he ever wanted. He was very fortunate. I am sure he was the envy of everyone. Not only

that, he was righteous and moral. He had kept all the rules and regulations, not just any rules and regulations, but God's rules and regulations. He was religious. He was a man of faith. Yet he had emptiness in his life.

He came to Jesus and asked "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The biblical understanding of eternal life is not just living forever. No doubt that it has that element but it also means the quality of life. The first century Israelites understood eternal life as the life that belonged to God. Only God had eternal life. So when this young man inquired, "What must I do to have eternal life," he literally asked, "What do I have to do to experience godly life?"

Jesus said, "You know the commandments. 'Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not give false witness...'" "I have kept all of them, all my life," he responded. "But I don't have real satisfaction in life. I want to be as holy as God is.<sup>1</sup> I want to experience God's goodness, his mercy and power. I have tried everything. I have kept the Law. Whatever the Law required, I have done. I am serious about my spiritual journey. I have done everything I know I should do but there is an emptiness I cannot fill. Nothing that I have done fills it. Definitely, there is something I have missed. So, what is it? What have I missed?"

There was sincerity in his search. There was genuineness in his effort. No wonder Jesus loved him. Jesus was impressed by this young man. There were not many people who impressed Jesus but this young man did. Not only was Jesus impressed by him, he also knew what this young man really needed. So, he gave him a personalized prescription for his condition.

When Jesus told this young man to "Go and sell all his possessions and give them to the poor," this message was specifically for him. If Jesus were to give me his prescription, he would say something different than what he would say to the young man. In the same way, if Jesus were to give you his prescription, he would say something different to you than what he would say to me or to the young man. This message was for his condition, and his condition only.

Jesus would not give the same prescription to everyone. If you are ill, your doctor will give you a prescription. That prescription is not for anyone else. It is only for you. It is not for your spouse or your children. It cannot be shared with them unless they have the same illness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 19:2.

This young man needed this prescription. Jesus did not tell him to sell all his possessions and give them to the poor because the poor needed it. No! It wasn't for the poor. It was for him. Jesus told him to do that because the young man needed it.

What was this young man's condition? Why did he need this remedy? Couldn't he follow Jesus with all his possessions? Why did he have to give them up?

He was rich and powerful. Whatever he wanted in life, he was able to get. All his life he had been successful. He was always in control. With his enormous possessions there was hardly anything he couldn't do. On top of that, he now wanted spiritual fulfillment. He wanted to find out exactly how to obtain spiritual fulfillment. If it required money, he would buy it. If it required his power, he would use it. So, he asked Jesus, "How can I get it?"

He reminds me of King Solomon. King Solomon had everything he ever wanted and more. He was rich and powerful. Under his reign, silver was as common as stones in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> He did whatever he wanted. Nothing stopped him. Then at the end of his life, after trying all things, power, sex, wealth, fame, you name it – after trying all things to find meaning and purpose and true satisfaction in life, he confessed, "Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless."<sup>3</sup> At the end of Ecclesiastes Solomon confessed, "Now all has been heard: here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is whole duty of man."<sup>4</sup>

I will bet you this young man feared God. He kept God's commandments but for some reason he still did not have fulfillment in his life. Why?

His self-dependency was too great. His self-reliance was way too strong. His dependency on his possessions, his power, and his position hindered him from totally trusting God. In fact, his possessions, his power, and his position were his obstacles. Actually, he didn't own his wealth, his power and his position; they owned him. He needed to let them go. He needed to be vulnerable enough to rely upon God and God only.

That is why Jesus said, "Give them up. And then come, follow me." Jesus was basically saying, "Come, let us walk together. I will teach you who God is. I

---

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:27.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 12:13.

will reveal him to you. You will learn what it truly means to trust God. You will learn of his love. You will learn of his grace. You will learn of his plan for your life. You will learn of his great blessings. Come, follow me!”

This young ruler thought keeping God’s commandments would bring him satisfaction in life. He thought he would earn that satisfaction by keeping the Law. But what Jesus told him was, “Come, follow me, and learn who you are and whose you are. You are an Israelite. You are God’s child. You will learn that from me. Come, let us journey together.” It was an invitation to a relationship. We don’t know what happened to this young man after this encounter. He left Jesus with sadness on his face but did he ever come back to follow Jesus or become a follower of Jesus after his crucifixion? We don’t know.

But that invitation, “Come, follow me,” is the invitation that is also given to us. We all have different idols in our lives. These idols control our lives. The idols could be our business, our relationships, our children, fame, money, family, or whatever. We don’t own them; they own us.

Jesus says, “Stop worshipping them. Taking care of them is not the most important thing; relying upon the Lord is. When you rely on God, God will take care of them. God will take care of you. What you need to learn is who you are and whose you are.” You are God’s child. You belong to him.

Church encourages you to come and worship together, so that you may learn the joy of loving God. Church encourages you to study the Bible, so that you may know God’s heart. Church encourages you to serve God, so that you may experience the thrill of serving God.

But you know what? Unless you humbly accept God’s love for you, your worship is nothing more than weekly ritual; your study of the Scripture is nothing more than building your knowledge; and your service is no different than social service.

We need to discover the love of God for us, and accept that. Then and only then your worship becomes joyous expression. Your learning of the Scripture becomes a life changing experience. Your service becomes a privilege.

The Lord invites us to a relationship. “Come, follow me. Let us journey together.” I pray that you take this invitation. The Lord loves you. Accept that love. Discover the joy of that relationship. Once you discover that joy, attending worship service and serving the Lord will be an exuberant and blessed experience.