

The Sorrow of Riches

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the tension between wealth and spiritual fulfillment, urging listeners to prioritize their relationship with God over material possessions.

Duration: 28:08

Scripture: Psalm 62:1-7, Mark 10:17, Mark 10:19-21

Topics: "Riches"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on Mark's Gospel, specifically chapters nine and ten. The sermon begins by encouraging the audience to read these chapters and join in the study. The preacher then delves into the story of the rich young ruler who approached Jesus and asked how to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by pointing out that only God is truly good and challenges the young man to give up his wealth and follow Him. The young man is saddened by this request because his riches have become his god. The sermon ends with the preacher highlighting the uncertainty of the young man's ultimate decision and the importance of having God at the center of one's life.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 62 for our scripture reading. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation as you read the even-numbered verses.

Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? Truly my soul waiteth upon God. From him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation.

He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved. How long will you imagine mischief against a man? Ye shall be slain, all of you, as a bowing wall ye shall be, and as a tottering fence.

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency. They delight in lies. They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense.

I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory. The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.

Trust in him at all times. Ye people pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us.

Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery.

If riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God has spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his word.

Let's pray. Lord, we've come this day to wait upon you, to open our hearts to that work of your spirit within our lives, to receive instruction in the way of righteousness and truth. And so, Lord, we pray that you would guide us now as we turn to the word.

May your Holy Spirit minister to our hearts, and may we receive, Lord, from you guidance and direction for our lives. Blessed, we pray, the study of the word this day, in Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated.

While we're continuing our study through the Bible, this week we are in Mark's Gospel, chapters 9 and 10. Great chapters, we encourage you to read them over, and join with us at 7 o'clock tonight as we gather to continue our journey through the Bible. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 10th chapter, beginning with verse 17.

Mark tells us, and when Jesus was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him and asked him, good master, what shall I do that I might inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why do you call me good? There's none good but one, that is God. You know the commandment, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing you lack, go your way, sell whatever you have, give the money to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come take up the cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and he went away grieved, for he had great possessions. Mark tells us of this rich young ruler who came to Jesus running, kneeling before him, and asking him that all-important question, what must I do that I might have eternal life? Now the word eternal life in the Greek is not speaking of quantity so much as a quality of life.

Evidently he had been observing Jesus. He saw the joy that Jesus had. He observed what peace he had.

Watched him under stressful situations and admired that life that he saw in Jesus, and desired that he could have that kind of a life himself. He realized that with all of his success and with all that he had, it had not brought to him that same quality of life that he saw in Jesus, and he desired to have that quality of life. This man had everything that we usually associate with a good life.

He was rich. So many people think that if I were only rich I would be happy, but in this story this man who was rich became sad because of his riches. He was young.

Some people become rich when they are so old they can no longer really fully enjoy the riches. They're lacking the vitality that they had earlier in life, and they just aren't able to enjoy the riches. He was a ruler.

Looking at him from this standpoint, he's rich, he is young, and he has position. You, if he lived in your neighborhood, might be very jealous of him. You might think, wow, he's got it all.

He's got it made. But with all of his riches, his position, his youth, he still was conscious that there's more to life than what I am yet experiencing, and this brought him to Jesus. Kneeling before Jesus, asking Jesus how he could have this same quality of life that he observed in Jesus.

Jesus told him, keep the commandments. And he asked, which? And so Jesus gave to him the six commandments that are on the second table of stone. As you know, the commandments were written on two tables of stone.

The first table of stone dealt with the commandments that regarded man's relationship with God. If you're to have a right relationship with God, these are the things you must do. The second commandment had to do with a right relationship with fellow man.

If I'm to live in a right relationship with you, these are the things that I must observe. And as Jesus talked about these commandments that dealt with his relationship with fellow man, he could say, been there, done that from the time I was a youth. Now, I do not think that this was an empty boast.

I think that he was very moral, because it says that Jesus at this point looked at him and loved him. Now, Jesus was very harsh on those who were making false claims, the Pharisees and all. He could not abide them.

But here was this young man saying, I've kept all of these from my youth. But Matthew tells us, he said, what lack I yet? Still conscious, I haven't found it. There's something more.

We see him kneeling before Jesus. He is saying, good master, what must I do to have this age abiding life? And Jesus answered his question with a very strange question. He said, why do you call me good? There is none good but God.

What is Jesus saying? Well, he's saying one of two things. He is saying, I'm no good. Or he is saying, I am God.

Calling to his attention, that which he has observed in Jesus that is drawing him, is the fact that Jesus is God. The fact that he would say, good master. Jesus is saying, the only one that is good is God.

Why do you call me good? Trying to awaken his conscience to the realization that Jesus is God. And so Jesus said, keep the commandments. Thou shalt not kill.

Do not steal. Do not commit adultery. Do not bear false witness.

Defraud not and honor thy father and mother. And so he was able to say, I've done all of this from the time I was young. Yet, what do I lack? Jesus, beholding him, loved him.

He said to him, one thing you lack. Go your way. Sell all that you have.

Give the money to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven. And come, take up the cross and follow me.

What was the one thing he lacked? If you just read it in a cursory manner, you might say, well, he lacked poverty. I don't think that that's what Jesus is saying. If it was a lack of poverty, then the story has no application to most of us.

I think that the real thing that Jesus is saying is that you lack God in your life. Because the real message of Jesus to him was, take up the cross and follow me. The first part was incidental to taking up the cross and following Jesus.

The first part was the thing that was keeping him from God. He was very wealthy, and his wealth was keeping him from following Jesus Christ. And so Jesus is putting the finger on that which is keeping him from following Jesus.

And if you come to Jesus seeking the path of life, he'll put the finger on what it is in your life that is holding you back. From following him completely. I really do not believe that Jesus is saying, if you sell everything and give it all to the poor, you'll have this quality of life.

That isn't complete. What is complete is, you've got to take up the cross and follow me. You need to commit your life fully to God.

You call me good. Why? Because I am God. You've recognized that.

Follow me. What is it in your life that is keeping you from following Jesus completely? That's the thing that Jesus would address to you today. He's saying, that's got to go.

It's keeping you from following me. Jesus is saying, you need to have God at the center of your life. Follow me.

Maybe we understand now why Jesus didn't give to him the commandments that are in the first table of stone. The commandments that relate to man's relationship with God. He didn't give those commandments to him.

What are those commandments? Well, they start with, thou shalt have no other God before me. I think that in just quoting that, the young man would have again said, well, I kept all of these from my youth. But in reality, his money was his primary God.

As with so many people, money had become his God. It was one of the gods of the Old Testament. They called him mammoth.

The love of money and the possessions and all that money can bring was his God. And so rather than pointing out the commandment, he gave a interesting illustration. Putting his finger on it, he said, you need to have God at the center of your life.

The thing that is keeping you from that is your wealth. Get rid of that. Don't let that be your God.

Follow me. The Bible tells us that he was sad at this saying. He went away grieved because he was very rich.

In this case, his great riches didn't make him happy, but they made him sad. His riches were his God, and he was sad at the thought of having to give them up, and he went away grieved. Now, this is one of those interesting stories that doesn't tell us the ending.

We don't know what the ending of the story is. As we see it, it sort of ends. He's walking away.

He's sad. He's grieved. He had come to Jesus to find eternal life, this quality of life, and he's going away sad.

But what happened to him? One of two things. One, he started thinking about what Jesus said. He started thinking about his treasures here on earth, his wealth, and he began to realize that they indeed were the things that were keeping him from committing his life fully to God.

He realized that I'm not going to keep my wealth forever. I'm going to die one day. I can't take it with me.

I want eternal life. I want this age-abiding life. I don't want a life that just ends when I die, but I want eternal life.

Jesus said, I would have treasures in heaven. They would be eternal treasures. The treasures I have now are limited, limited to my lifetime if I hang on to them.

But he's promising eternal treasure. He sort of was in the position of Moses. It tells us that when Moses came of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

You see, he realized that it was only for a season, and he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he considered the eternal consequences. So he forsook Egypt and endured as seeing him who is invisible. Last week, we looked at the question of Jesus.

What would it profit a man if he would gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Jim Elliot said, no man is a fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose. Jesus is saying, give up that which you cannot keep in order that you might gain that which you cannot lose. And coming to this, he called his servants in, and he said, sell everything, distribute the money to the poor, I'm out of here.

And he came, and he found Jesus, and he began to follow Jesus. Or he shook his head and said, I can't believe that I just did that. The audacity of that man to tell me I had to sell everything and give the money to the poor, how ridiculous.

What is it that came over me that caused me to run up to him and kneel down and ask that question? Perhaps in years to come, he was at a party with his friends and the subject of Jesus came up. And he said, you know what, one day when I was young and impulsive, I actually met Jesus. I knelt before him, and I asked him how I could have eternal life.

Can you believe that? You know, the foolish things that you do when you're young. And he actually mocked that day when he had approached Jesus and was close to him. You say, is that possible? That a man can have a close encounter with the Lord, and one day sort of scoff at that, pass it off as something that is ridiculous and foolish? Yes, it is.

It is possible to have a heart that is hardened to the things of God, so much so that now you sort of make fun of the earlier times when you were drawn by the Holy Spirit to come to Jesus Christ. Maybe some of you today were at one time drawn to Jesus. It's possible that you went forward at a crusade, and there you went through the sinner's prayer, and you felt drawn to the Lord, but you went away, and you soon forgot it.

And now someone talks to you, you say, oh, you know, I once went forward in a Billy Graham crusade, or in a Greg Laurie crusade, or yeah, I actually went with those that went forward, and now it is something that you sort of make fun of and sort of scoff at. And in the meantime, you've sought to fill the void in your life with other things. You've done so many things to try to bring that satisfaction, that deep kind of a sense of this is what I'm living for and should be living for.

You don't have real fulfillment in your life, but you're still trying to fill the void with other things. But it's still there, and you're still aware there's got to be more to life than what I've yet experienced. I can't believe that this is all.

Perhaps you're older and wiser today, and this time you'll not walk away sad, but this time again you've been drawn, and you realize that Jesus is the answer to the quest in the heart of every man for meaning and purpose in life. And you're ready now to do whatever is necessary to get rid of whatever other god may be paramount and prominent in your life. You're willing now to take up the cross and follow Jesus that you might have that age-abiding life.

And rather than going away sad, you'll go away rejoicing in that you have found that which you've been seeking after all your life, that contentment and that fulfillment that comes from denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. I pray that it shall be so. Father, you see our hearts today, and Lord, you've planted into our hearts that thirst and that desire for a meaningful relationship with you.

That emptiness, that void that is there, is something, Lord, that you created to draw us unto you. And Lord, so many have sought to fill that void with other things, but the void remains. And today they are still aware that life has to have more than what they've yet experienced.

The emptiness is not gone. I pray, Father, that this day they'll be willing to give up whatever it is that has held them back from a full commitment to following Jesus Christ, and that they might know the joy and the richness of serving you. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to pray for you who would like to know that eternal life, that age-abiding life, that quality of life, that comes from following Jesus. And so we would encourage you to come on down.

As soon as we're dismissed, make your commitment. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee.

And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13505.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/the-sorrow-of-riches/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net