

## Rich Young Ruler

I was “the man who had everything” – and I didn’t even feel old enough to be considered a man. For as long as I can remember I was pampered by my parents, obeyed by my servants and envied by my neighbors. My friends? I didn’t have any! I did my best to be the best Jewish boy that ever lived, trying to impress the rabbis at my Bar Mitzva. All I got was more teasing from my peers.

It all left me feeling empty. But what was missing? The Rabbis told me perfect obedience to every subtle nuance of the law was the way. But it seemed like I was never good enough. The wealth and position of our family? That was none of my doing. I was born into it.

I sought an audience with Jesus because I was desperate and I heard that his teaching was a fresh perspective on the Law. And people spoke of miracles and healings. I did not have a sickness that I knew of, but I was not whole and needed an answer to my search.

I addressed him as politely as I could with a little memorized speech. I had learned how to speak to the Rabbis in my Bar Mitzva training. So I said to Jesus, “Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” But he set me back with an unexpected reply, “Why do you call me good? No-one is good— except God alone.” That got me thinking right away, who was he really, and why is he responding this way? Even, what was I really asking?

But then after getting me completely off balance, he answered my question, “You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” I said, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” This was not the fresh view I was hoping to hear.

Then he looked at me – really looked right into my soul. It was not the critical look of the Rabbis, who always seemed to assume that I harbored some hidden sin. No, the look was kind and gentle, the expression of one who really wants to help. But what he said floored me, “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

That was fresh! And deeply disturbing! I had previously considered making a large donation to the Temple. But he was asking for everything I owned, followed by everything I was. Give away **all** my possessions, then follow him. I knew a little bit about what it was like for his followers. They lived a pretty modest life, sleep where you could, eat what was available, no luxuries, no servants and often no respect. The no respect I had often experienced despite my luxurious lifestyle. But on the other hand, his followers were constantly hearing his teaching and sometimes seeing miracles, able to ask him personal questions, living life alongside him with his commentary. How much did I want the answer to my heart’s longing?

He looked genuinely disappointed when I turned to go. The shock in my face was plain for everyone to see. This would not be a minor adjustment of expectations or a supplement to the life my family had planned for me. This would be a completely new direction, with unknowns written all over it. I left him that day in a quandary, but I had the distinct impression that the encounter was not over. Turning over in my mind was the question, “Do I really want to trust this man with my life?”

Mark 10:17-22