

“Doctrine: AHA! A Tragic Moment”

The Reflection Series

Scripture: Mark 10:17-22 (NIV)

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘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.’^[a]”²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. “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.” ²²At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Subject Question: What three interactions in Mark’s account of Jesus talking to the Rich Young Ruler; have for us as modern day believers, several AHA-moments?

Compliment answer: A Righteous Interest, A Rigid Inquiry, and A Redeeming Invitation.

Big Idea: The three interactions in Mark’s account of Jesus talking to the Rich Young Ruler that have for us as modern day believers several AHA-moments are: A Righteous Interest, A Rigid Inquiry, and A Redeeming Invitation.

Homiletical Idea: “AHA, Really? YES!”

Purpose: I want the congregation to think critically concerning the interaction between Jesus and a person who was earnestly seeking God’s Will for his life.

Introduction: The key to understanding this interaction is seen in verse 21: *Jesus looked at him and loved him*. This is a loving conversation between a sincere inquirer and a saving and sanctifying Savior. Jesus desired the very best for this young man. The ruler had a good heart and had led a good life. Yet, there was something missing. The ruler knew it, Jesus knew it. And for many of us, we know it as well. What is it that is missing? How much more could or should he or for that matter, can we, do to fill that empty gap that all the good deeds in the world seemingly cannot fill. Let’s explore this little story and see if we can’t find an answer.

(For you my Beloved)

Ground Work: Matthew Henry Commentary

10:17-22 This young ruler showed great earnestness. He asked what he should do now, that he might be happy for ever. Most ask for good to be had in this world; any good, Ps 4:6; he asks for good to be done in this world, in order to enjoy the greatest good in the other world. Christ encouraged this address by assisting his faith, and by directing his practice. But here is a sorrowful parting between Jesus and this young man. He asks Christ what he shall do more than he has done, to obtain eternal life; and Christ puts it to him, whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for eternal life which he seems to have. Is he willing to bear a present cross, in expectation of future crown? The young man was sorry he could not be a follower of Christ upon easier terms; that he could not lay hold on eternal life, and keep hold of his worldly possessions too. He went away grieved. See Mt 6:24, Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

MacLaren's Expositions *Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone*
Our Lord answers with a coldness which startles; but it was meant to rouse, like a dash of icy water flung in the face. 'Why callest thou Me good?' is more than a waving aside of a compliment, or a lesson in accuracy of speech. It rebukes the young man's shallow conception of goodness, as shown by the facility with which he bestowed the epithet. 'None is good save one, even God,' cuts up by the roots his notion of the possibility of self-achieved goodness, since it traces all human goodness to its source in God. If He is the only good, then we cannot perform good acts by our own power, but must receive power from Him. How, then, can any man 'inherit eternal life' by good deeds, which he is only able to do because God has poured some of His own goodness into him? Jesus shatters the young man's whole theory, as expressed in his question, at one stroke.

But while His reply bears directly on the errors in the question, it has a wider significance. Either Jesus is here repudiating the notion of His own sinlessness, and acknowledging, in contradiction to every other disclosure of His self-consciousness, that He too was not through and through good, or else He is claiming to be filled with God, the source of all goodness, in a wholly unique manner. It is a tremendous alternative, but one which has to be faced. While one is thankful if men even imperfectly apprehend the character and nature of Jesus, one cannot but feel that the question may fairly be put to the many who

extol the beauty of His life, and deny His divinity, ‘Why callest thou Me good?’ Either He is ‘God manifest in the flesh,’ or He is not ‘good.’

(For you my Beloved)

- A. A Righteous Interest. (Vs. 17-18) *17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.*
- B. It seems like a good question. Here is a young, successful, powerful person who has seemingly looked and considered the fact that there must be something beyond this human existence. In reality, he couldn’t help it. Every human being has an innate, inborn, and intuitive sense that there has to be something beyond the temporal, beyond the basic cyclical routine of life. It’s a royal, noble characteristic of a creature that was created in the image of God: thus, always striving to somehow reach out and connect with the Deity who lies beyond the veil of the chronological.
- C. He, like many of us, come to God and ask the same question: what must I do? His philosophy and more, His theology went something like this, ‘if I can “do” enough right, then I can “be” right enough.’ I’ve paid the price. I’ve earned consideration. My goodness outweighs my mistakes. He had a very common view of how to be a good person. How about you? Have you led an exemplary life, one which you can now come before God and say, I’ve done enough good things...?
- D. AHA—the rub for him and us is Jesus’ rather cold response: *“No one is good—except God alone.* MacLaren points out: *Our Lord answers with a coldness which startles; but it was meant to rouse, like a dash of icy water flung in the face. ‘Why callest thou Me good?’ is more than a waving aside of a compliment, or a lesson in accuracy of speech. It rebukes the young man’s shallow conception of goodness, as shown by the facility with which he bestowed the epithet. ‘None is good save one, even God,’ cuts up by the roots his notion of the possibility of self-achieved goodness, since it traces all human goodness to its source in God.*
 - 1. Paul understood this when he wrote in Romans 3:23, *23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
 - 2. It’s the difference between viewing God as a God of Scales verses God being a God of Arrows:



3. AHA--If God is a God who weighs our deeds on a scale, and if our good deeds somehow outweigh our bad deeds then perhaps we each have a chance. We've earned God's favor. But, if God is really a God of Arrows, o my, then we all might be in trouble: In Other words, If God expects us to never miss the mark, never make a mistake, never blow it in our conversation or actions.., then we must not only consider Paul's statement in Romans 3:23, but also the reality of the first half of Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death...* A God of arrows seeming is saying to all of humanity: Good enough is never good enough. But... but I have good news... there is a second half of Romans 6:23 *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
4. I have a gift for you. My Son paid the Archers Ransom. Through Him, you have not "done" enough, but you "are" enough. It's not about "doing" as much as it is about "being." It's not so much who you are and it's whose you are. As a Christian, doing good works does not earn you a place in heaven, as much as they earn you rewards in heaven. But notice that Jesus didn't belittle this young man for His honesty or his curiosity:
- A. A Rigid Inquiry. (Vs.19-20) ¹⁹ *You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder (5), you shall not commit adultery (6), you shall not steal (7), you shall not give false testimony (8), you shall not defraud (9), honor your father and mother.'*^{[a](4)}²⁰ *"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."*



- B. AHA--I find it interesting that Jesus uses the *Decalogue* (10 Commandments—4 commands about our relationship with God; 6 commands about our relationship with others) to question the sincere young man about his behavior. But what's telling is that Jesus only uses the commands about the young man's relationship with others...not his relationship with God. Why?
- C. AHA--I think Jesus was setting him up, and in reality to set us up, to be able to distinguish between two mindsets, two heart-sets really: how much of God do I have and hold verses how much does God has and holds me.
- D. I don't think the rich young ruler was insincere, but I do think that his idea about God reflects many peoples way of thinking today. Chuck Swindoll writes:

"I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a warm cup of milk, or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please"

Chuck Swindoll goes on to say about this, "That's it. Our inner 'self' doesn't want to dump God entirely, just keep Him at a comfortable distance. Three dollars of Him is sufficient. A sack full, nothing more. Just enough to keep my guilt level below the threshold of pain, just enough to guarantee escape from eternal flames. But certainly not enough to make me nervous... to start pushing around my prejudices or nit-picking at my lifestyle. Enough is enough!"

(For you my Beloved)

- A. A Redeeming Invitation. (Vs.21-22) ²¹ *Jesus looked at him and loved him. "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."* ²² *At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*
- B. I do not think Jesus had any problem with the young man's wealth or prosperity, prestige, or power. Remember Jesus loved him. It wasn't that he had wealth as much as wealth really, really had him. Wealth had grown to become his ultimate security, the true divining rod of sincerity. Again, let me say, that wealth was not the problem! Wealth is a blessing! In God's eyes He blesses many of his children greatly... but always with the intention that they will become a great blessing to others. God is the ultimate giver... (John 3:16) and he wants his kids to be the same.
- C. AHA—what Jesus was really inviting him to do was two-fold:

1. Follow Him...
 2. Start to view himself and his possessions more as a Godlike river where things lovingly flow through more than a rigid reservoir that simply holds everything back.
- D. Concluding thoughts: I honestly believe that Jesus was only waiting for one answer from this one that loved and he stood face to face with. "OK" I believe Jesus just wanted to hear a word of willingness. I believe that if the young ruler would have simply said, you're right, I've been putting too much trust in my things... and turned to go do what Jesus asked Him, Jesus would have said, wait, you can keep your riches... follow me and I'll let you see what true riches are and what we can do together. Jesus answer to the rich young ruler's initial question concerning what must I do to inherit eternal life was simply about priorities: follow me. Walk with me, be blessed by me, and bless others for me.

(For you my Beloved)