

The Character of Jesus 63
Riches
Matthew 19:16 – 20:16, Mark 10:17 – 31, Luke 18:18 – 30

- Characteristic: Setting boundaries on both sides
 - Following the Matthew account
 - (19:16 – 22) Rich young ruler
 - (17) The rich man used “good” thoughtlessly. Jesus focused on the thoughtlessness rather than the self-centeredness. Calling the action good skipped the source of good, focused on the action rather than the One to whom the actions was aimed.
 - (18) “Which ones?” Strange question.
 - (20) Again a thoughtless answer. Not that we should focus on our shortcomings, or revel in them as do some, but it seems unwise to make a blanket claim to loving one’s neighbor.
 - (21) If you want to be consistent (not flawless) in regard to the claim to following the Law, demonstrate it. The Law promised bounty to the faithful.
 - (22) The rich ruler could not see beyond human endeavor. He had no faith in the promised bounty.
 - (19:23 – 26) Camel through the eye of a needle
 - The application that this referred to a small gate adjacent to the main gate was invented by Lord George Nugent in 1845-6. The strong teaching needed an excuse.
 - The teaching is simple but difficult to accept because it is humanly impossible. The disciples were correct in their assessment. Jesus required that they trust that God would make the impossible happen.
 - (19:27 – 20:16) Day laborers
 - Peter went to the opposite extreme. If the rich cannot overcome their dependence on riches, what of those (working people) who do put the kingdom ahead of their finances?
 - The point of the parable is that all who work in God’s field will be equally rewarded because God is generous, not because all earned the same. Don’t be jealous that others received a gift.
- Application: Setting boundaries on both sides
 - Do church folks in general depend on “good things” that they do for acceptance by God? Our response should be to the goodness of God, not the goodness of our acts. I forgive because I have been forgiven. I comfort because I was comforted. I love because He first loved me. “Pay it forward.”
 - How did the early church overcome the “rich man” syndrome? Acts 2:44, 3:32. They did not divest of all capital, but considered their custody of assets to be for the benefit of all. Some are better with money than others; let them manage the assets. Do we rationalize asset retention or do we trust that the impossible will happen?
 - Do church folks in general assume that everyone must work equally for an equal reward?