The Life of Jesus (61)

The Rich Young Man (1)

Matthew 19:16-22

#1 The Rich Young Man

The man was young and rich, and he was a government official. From the point of view of this world, he was a successful man who achieved many things. He didn't seem to lack anything.

He heard the news about Jesus, and he was captured by a desire to meet Him.

"[The] man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him" (Mk 10:17)

"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (Mt 19:16)

That was the one question he really wanted to know the answer to, and it showed what his soul truly desired.

Even though he had enjoyed many good things in the world, he wasn't fully satisfied. There was still a desire that couldn't be filled with the things he had.

#2 The Desire for Eternity

This is the question we all have knowingly or not. What we find when we look closely at our hearts is the existence of the desire for eternity which God has put.

"[God] has also set eternity in the human heart" (Ec 3:11)

Because we were made in the image of God, we all have the desire for eternity. That desire is the proof that eternal life does exist. Eternal life does exist because God would not put a desire in us that couldn't be satisfied.

We have the desire for eternity because it does exist and because there's a way to fulfill it.

But since the desire is spiritual and eternal, it can never be satisfied with physical, temporary things in the world.

That was the man's situation. He had everything he needed. He was young, rich, and was highly regarded. But still, these things couldn't fill his desire for eternity. That desire led him to go to Jesus because he knew that Jesus was the only One who could answer the question.

#3 How to Have Eternal Life?

But it seems that the man misunderstood the way to get eternity.

He didn't ask Jesus, "How can I get eternal life?" Rather, he asked, "What good things must I do to get it?"

The man thought that there were particular criteria he needed to meet to get eternal life. The man didn't know that eternal life can only be obtained through a proper relationship with God.

Since only God is eternal, there's no way to get eternity other than remaining in Him. Only God can satisfy the desire of our souls for eternity. In other words, eternal life depends on who we are in God, not on what we do.

What God is really interested in is our 'being' not our 'doing.' But the man thought that he could get it by doing good things.

#4 Jesus' Answer

Jesus answered, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good…" (Mt 19:17)

Here, Jesus clearly stated that only God is good. It means that no one in the world can reach perfect goodness except for God. By doing so, Jesus implied the fact that there's no way to get eternal life by doing good acts.

Branches or flowers can't survive without being attached to their roots, which are their source of life.

We are only able to have eternal life with God if we remain in a proper relationship with Him, who alone has eternal life.

Jesus said that to enter eternal life, the man had to keep the commandments. But it doesn't mean that keeping commandments is really the way to enter life. What Jesus actually wanted to teach is the fact that it's impossible to perfectly keep God's commandments on our own.

#5 The Man's Answer

Then, the young man replied,
"All these I have kept, what do I still lack?" (Mt 19:20)

Here, we find two reasons the man failed to get eternal life.

1) Pride

First, he failed because of his pride. He was proud because he thought that he had obeyed all the laws and commandments.

2) Ignorance

His pride came from misunderstanding God's laws. He was ignorant about the true meaning of God's laws.

The man understood God's law as prohibiting only outward sins. He ignored the internal sin in his heart. For example, he didn't know that hating others in his heart was sin.

#6 The Man's Answer

But, the internal state of our hearts is more important than our outward actions.

"You have heard... 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment…" (Mt 5:21-22)

"Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him" (1Jn 3:15)

That's what the young man lacked. But because he was ignorant about his internal sin, he thought that he had kept all of God's laws. That gave him a false sense of righteousness.

But, he still had willingness to change his mind and behavior. Even though the man thought he had kept all the laws, he still felt a sense of deficiency. He wasn't sure whether he could get eternal life or not. His soul wasn't satisfied yet and he was desperate to seek eternal life.

#7 The Man's Answer

That desperation led him to Jesus. That's the desperation we need to have toward Jesus.

If there's just one thing that we must focus on in our relationship with God, it is eternal life. That's the purpose of Jesus coming to the world. That's what He really wanted to share with us.

Are you really desperate to have this life? Do you really believe in eternal life and want to find it?

If so, you should first be ready to listen to Jesus, who is the source of life and came to the world as the light of life.

Memory Verses

"Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him" (1Jn 3:15) (1)

"[God] has also set eternity in the human heart" (Ec 3:11) (1)

Refelction Questions

1) What kind of questions about your life do you have? Are they related to eternal life or your life on earth? Why do you think it is important to ask good questions in your life?

2) If you could ask Jesus one question, what would it be? Why would you want to ask this question? How do you think He would answer you?