

Do we own our things, or do our things own us?

Today we are going to look at the account of the rich young ruler. By all counts, he was an incredible fellow--who lacked one thing. His things owned him rather than the reverse. Let's be utterly clear: there is nothing wrong with owning things—unless the point of our existence becomes being owned by them in return... The thing that God requires of us is nothing more than a good old-fashioned word: Consecration: the requirement of a godly steward...

What does consecration mean? Well, from this passage, it means more than keeping the rules and upholding the law of God.

It means a fearless dedication to put God first.

The point of stewardship is that He be Lord of all...

THE BACKGROUND:

This is an interesting man. He was a ruler, he was rich and he was young.

This man was unusual in many respects—and it would be important for us to consider what kind of a fellow he was. The first thing that we need to notice about him is that he was wealthy—he was well to do with resources. Now that is a blessing in any culture, but in a conquered society with agriculture as the main resource, it was a rare thing by itself.

Now because of wealth, this man had options... He had freedom and independence that most of his peers did not have. He could use his wealth to bless God, or he could use it to please himself. It was up to him because he could!

- There are people who own a lot and their possessions run their life. But just as true a statement is the fact that there are those who own little, but *the little they have runs their life*.

Notice that this man was a Ruler. Put the word "Influence". Rulers influence people—usually lots of people, or he wouldn't be called a ruler. He has not only the power of influence, but the force of law. Rulers didn't just try to sway public opinion. Rather they would make the rules for people to follow, whether they liked those rules or not.

This man was a person of good character. We would likely call him a "good guy", a "nice fellow." This wasn't one who "lorded it" over others, because he kept the law of God.

More than this, he was young. Put down the word "time". He had time to develop and grow. His future is bright. Beyond this:

He has courage--he was a ruler, and because of that he would talk to other rulers. He was not intimidated by peer pressure; he doesn't go to see Jesus secretly or even at night. He goes up to the Lord and asks questions right out in front of a crowd.

He was spontaneous. This man ran to Jesus. This is a running ruler. You need to know, rulers don't run.

He was reverent. The fellow knows that Jesus is deserving not only of respect, but the highest regard.

He is open. As soon as he found the Lord, he plied Jesus for answers.

THE REPLY OF THE LORD:

The Lord, hearing the questions, goes right to the heart. He looked past the clothing and saw behind the mask. Most gatherings have those who wear a mask. The pain is too much to bear and so they hide it. When someone asks, we say "I'm fine, thanks. How are you?"

And we are not fine—we are in trouble.

Jesus looked past the clothing.

He found that this man was spiritually frustrated. This is where someone has done all the work, got it all together, and it still isn't enough. No matter what we do or how hard we try to get past the trouble it is still there.

He was spiritually immature. He wasn't a late bloomer in all other areas. He was socially mature, he had "business savvy", and he was an "in charge" kind of guy. But he hadn't figured out his walk with God yet.

Spiritual fulfillment is utter dependence upon God.

RADICAL THERAPY:

The Lord gives this man a two-part treatment, and the attitude of the Lord to him speaks of the way that he spoke hard words: He looked and loved him. Love is not soft:

- 1) Go and sell. 2) Come and follow.

The issue is not "Are you wealthy?" Rather the issue is "do the possessions have you?"

Top Level--Possessing: God controls me and everything that I have. Anything God needs, God gets...

Middle Level--Possessive: We control our possessions. This is the disciplined owner, but not fully given over to the Lord.

Bottom Level--Possessed: We are so caught up in owning, and ordering our lives around possessing and having, that our possessions control us.

At these words his face fell and he went away sad--and Jesus was also sad. Why? Jesus saw his potential--all he could have become, and he saw that he would never become that way.

The disciples were surprised. In fact, they were shocked. They had been reared in a culture that said, "If we kept the way of God, God will grant us his blessing—and that would include monetary possessions." It was the dominant world view that a rich man was closer to God than the poor. Jesus turned the table on them. Here is his point:

It is not *how much we collect* that makes us righteous;

Rather it is *our commitment to give* that makes us blessed.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" Acts 20:35b NASB

THREE STEPS TO SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT.

- 1) *It is impossible to find fulfillment in material possessions.*
- 2) *Jesus Christ alone can give spiritual fulfillment.*
- 3) *If we want spiritual fulfillment, then we have to give it all to Jesus Christ.*