

Reasons and Rewards (v. 23-30)

- Verses 23 and 24 seem like they contradict each other:
23 – difficult; 24 – impossible ... Which is it?
 - 23: Jesus is illustrating what the disciples had just witnessed; when you have everything you need from money it is difficult to admit your need of God
 - 24: God demands utter perfection... and this is utterly impossible for us
- We like to glimpse the reward, but we don't want to stare at it too long because we think we need to do our religious duty for duty sake
- God has taken the time to point us to his rewards
- We should embrace these rewards, these promises, and give thanks for what God has purchased for us through Christ
- When all is said and done, there will be no loss in having followed Christ...
ONLY GAIN!

April 8, 2018

Encountering Jesus: A Study in Contrasts

Matthew 19:13-30

The Little Children Come (v. 13-15)

- Jesus loves little children
 - Children were not held in high esteem; insignificant; low on the societal scale, no standing, no status
 - Jesus has a special place in his heart for the 'nobodies' of the world
 - We're good about carrying our kids all over the place these days... But do we take them to Jesus?
 - God has designed his kingdom to work in such a way that making disciples should start in-house
- For to such belongs the kingdom of heaven
 - We have to humble ourselves if we want to enter the kingdom
 - Military dress uniforms tell a story...
 - We don't strut into God's kingdom with our heads held high glancing around comparing ourselves

A Rich Man Departs (v. 16-22)

- Late teens – early 40's; wealthy, well-known; possibly a ruler of a synagogue
- Seems genuine; eager to approach Jesus with respect; defers to his authority

Mark 10:21 -- *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him.*

- Asking something like, "How do I get to heaven? How do I get right with God? What do I do to be saved?"
- Jesus throws up a roadblock (v. 17)
 - The disciples were stunned; thought he was a shoe-in for the kingdom
 - Jesus is reversing their expectations; true Christianity always turns the world's ideas about religion on its head

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 -- *...But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world...*

- Jesus is asking him to consider the standard of good – "have you made the connection between goodness and me?"
- Jesus gives him the 2nd table of the Decalogue; deals with how we treat other people – the horizontal level (v. 18-19)

"I wish everyone could get rich and famous and have everything they ever dreamed of so they would know that's not the answer." –Jim Carrey

- He asked for some "good thing," but Jesus pointed to a goodness that was beyond his ability
- The point of Jesus' demand is not wealth divestment, but whole-hearted discipleship
- Calling us to look at our lives for anything we might be holding back, anything that might be serving as an idol; the young man's idol was his wealth

"What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give. ...A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. ...It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving "face" and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry." –Timothy Keller, Counterfeit Gods

- Jesus offered him the riches of heaven, but his desires were too small, too weak

"If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." –C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory