

What Is More Important?

By: Justin Witt

Consider **Mark 10:17-22**.

We know that this man that comes to Jesus is referred to as a young man in Matthew's account (**Mt 19:22**), and he is referred to as a ruler in Luke's account (**Lk 18:18**). All three accounts speak of him as having great possessions.

He asks what he must do. He states that he has kept all of the commandments from his youth. Certainly this demonstrates faith in God and it demonstrates some love and fear of God. But Jesus tells him that he still lacked. He needed to sell all that he had and give it to the poor and he would have treasure in heaven. And of course he was also told that he must take up the cross and follow Jesus. Is it really that easy? Can we suggest today that if someone wants to end up in heaven that they simply need to sell their possessions and give it to the poor and follow Jesus?

Jesus wasn't teaching all men to sell all they have to arrive in heaven. After all we know Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace through faith and that it is not of any works that we do. This would certainly seem to be a work in an attempt to "purchase" eternal life. Jesus, knowing this man and his heart before he ever came near to Jesus, told him what he, specifically, must do. Not that it was important that he live in poverty, but because Jesus knew that there was something in this man's heart that was more important to him than following God. Jesus knew this man had great possessions and I am certain He even knew what this man's response would be to the answer that Jesus gave. Perhaps some might think it mean that Jesus chooses the one thing that this young man could not bear to do and made that his condition to get into heaven. But the point is that the difference between God's children and those of the world is whether or not we have one thing in our lives that we could not bear to do, even if we were given the assurance of heaven as a result.

And this difference is not a theoretical difference, it is absolutely one of practicality. Do we give as we have prospered to the church (2 Corinthians 9:7)? Do we help brethren that are in need (James 2:15-16)? Do we give of our time to study (2 Timothy 2:15) and to prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? Do we give of our time to help others (Galatians 6:10), to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2), to build up our brethren (Hebrews 10:24)? Will we stand up to preach even with the threat of ridicule or harm to our reputation or denial (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)? Are the souls of strangers and friends more important than the loss of relationships that could be caused by bringing them the gospel (Mark 16:16)?

The point that Jesus made was not that men must live in poverty. It was that we can not let earthly things become more important to us than spiritual things. And it makes no difference at all whether we say they are more important or less important to us. Faith in Jesus and in His word and in all He brings means that we must continually demonstrate which is more important to us.

If Jesus had asked this young man if he would be **willing** to give up all that he had to enter into heaven I would guess the young man would have given a definitive yes. But when told that he **must** give up all to enter into heaven, he walked away grieved.

It is easy to say that Christ is absolutely first in your life and that everything else comes second. Just as I am sure this young man could have said about God, after all, he did follow all of the commandments from his youth. But the question you must ask yourself is this: Does the life that you live demonstrate that Christ comes first in your life?