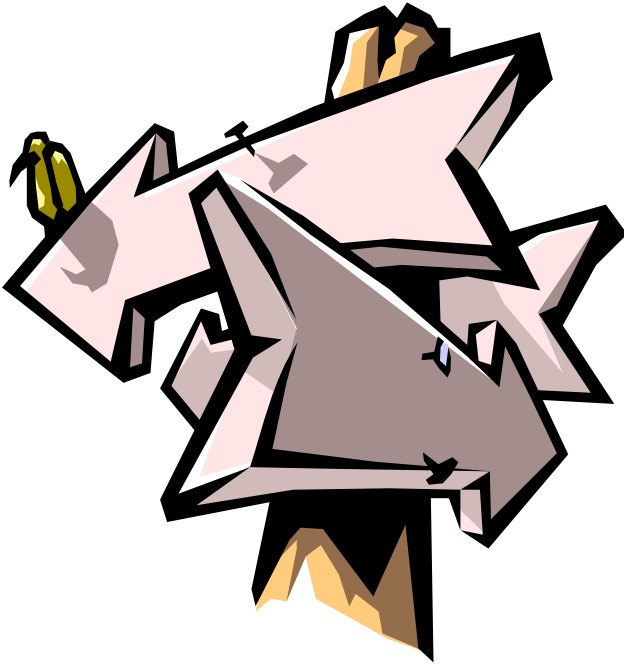


AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, September 17, 2006



Mark 10:17- 30

17. As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples

were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "**Then who can be saved?**" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "**Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.**"

It is easy to discard the story of the rich young ruler as a good story of long ago – but of very little value for our times. After all, most of us are not rich at all. The idea of giving everything we have to the poor in order to follow Jesus, will soon have us begging on the streets. Obviously, that is not how things work any more – if it ever did! It takes a lot of living to discover the real depth and importance of this story. Yet, when you and I understand and accept this message, it shines new light on the joy, the beauty and the power of our faith. It gives away the secret of living. It helps us to evaluate our faith, our attitude towards life, and gives new meaning to being a Christian in our times. We now know that this youngster's crossing of paths with the Man from Nazareth was indeed the day when he made a decision that would determine everything he said and did from that moment onwards in his life!

It is now 2000 years later. You and I are living different lives under different circumstances ~ yet the reaching of crossroads is still happening ~~ and it might be happening for one or all of us ~ this very day.

I used to understand the story of the rich young man as a very clear and direct message. Possessions play an important part in our lives. It is amazing to see how many people would do almost anything - tell any unbelievable story - lie, steal, ruin their lives, their marriages, their relationships with others and sacrifice their pride, their honor - anything - just for money!

An old mountaineer was on his deathbed. He called his wife to him and said, "Go to the fireplace and take out that loose stone under the mantle." She did as instructed, and behind that loose stone, she found a shoebox crammed full of cash. "That's all the money I've saved through the years," said the mountaineer. "When I go, I'm going to take it with me. I want you to take that box up to the attic and set it by the window. I will get it as I go by on my way up to heaven!" His wife followed his instructions. That night, the old mountaineer died. Several days after the funeral, his wife remembered the shoebox. She climbed up to the attic. There it was, still full of money, sitting by the window. "Oh" she thought, "I knew it. I knew it! I should have put it in the basement instead of the attic!"

Of course, this story is anything but true ... but it does make an excellent point. Recently, a very rich person died - and the question was asked, "How much did she leave behind?" Someone answered, "Everything!"

A man of some wealth overheard a woman saying, "Oh, if I only had fifty dollars I would be perfectly satisfied." He thought about that for a few moments. If the woman only had fifty dollars, she would be satisfied. He thought, "Well, I can help her out." Therefore, he walked up to her and handed her a fifty-dollar bill with his best wishes. She really appreciated his gift and thanked him repeatedly. But, as she walked away he heard her mumble under her breath, "Why on earth didn't I say a hundred dollars"?

A wealthy young man came to Jesus seeking the way to a better life and future. "Keep the commandments," Jesus said. "I have," said the young man, -- since my youth." "You lack one thing," Then, Jesus, who clearly understood what was going on in the life of this "searching for meaning guy" said, "Go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor -- then, come, and follow me" The Bible says: The young man sadly turned away. Sad but determined - parting with my rich and idle life? "O No!" Jesus said to his disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

That sounds like the deal of a lifetime. To invest one and receive a hundred sounds like the best possible investment. Nevertheless, the rich young man turned it down. Why do you suppose he did that?

There are many possibilities. Was it only youth and inexperience? Was he nothing but a spoiled brat? Obviously, he came to Jesus because his life was without fulfillment. O yes, he was used to fine clothes. His wine cellar was stocked with fine wines. His home was richly decorated. He was accustomed to the best of everything. However, he was unhappy. He missed something in life and he knew that.

He stated his need and received a truthful answer! **Re-arrange your priorities!** There are things in life far more important than money. Get rid of the things that separate you from God and you will receive a hundredfold return on your investment!

Recent polls show that an overwhelmingly percentage of Americans value financial-success above all else. That could be the main reason why so many people find it so difficult to make a choice for the Spiritual security - living water that only Christ can give! When advised to rearrange their priorities, they only see what they are giving up, and not what they will be gaining.

The rich young man could have won a victory for humanity. He could have made a difference with his life. Even more significantly, he could have experienced what it was to have his life transformed by a faith that would have sustained him throughout his life. He had the opportunity to walk with the King of Kings, but all he could see was what he was losing, not what he would be gaining.

People still overestimate the value of material possessions. We do need to work for and have financial security in a society like ours. As someone said, "Having money is good, if only for financial reasons."

However, possessions are only one element in a good life! When it becomes an end in itself, then life gets out of kilter. Possessions are a great servant, but a terrible master.

Many have learned the hard way that wealth is not the key to happiness. Money will buy a **bed** but not **sleep**; **books** but not **brains**; **food** but not **appetite**; **finery** but not **beauty**; a **house** but not a **home**; **medicine** but not **health**; **amusement** but not **happiness**; **money** will buy a **crucifix** but not a **savior**

Even today, at the crossroads of life ~ many sad choices are still being made. Are you at a cross road in your life?

Jesus simply says, "Follow me!"

AMEN