

The Rich Young Ruler

by Daniel Punnose

This sermon emphasizes the concept of a spiritual mirror, comparing the reflection we see in a physical mirror to the reflection of our hearts and intentions revealed by God's Word. Through the story of Jesus and the rich young ruler, it delves into the importance of recognizing and addressing the motivations and desires of our hearts, even when it requires letting go of material possessions or worldly attachments to fully follow Christ and secure our eternal destination.

Scripture: James 1:23, Hebrews 4:12, Mark 10:17, Matthew 6:19, Psalms 103:15, Philippians 3:7, 1 John 2:15, Matthew 16:26, Proverbs 16:18, 2 Corinthians 6:2

Topics: "Spiritual Reflection", "Heart's Intentions"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the concept of a spiritual mirror, comparing the reflection we see in a physical mirror to the reflection of our hearts and intentions revealed by God's Word. Through the story of Jesus and the rich young ruler, it delves into the importance of recognizing and addressing the motivations and desires of our hearts, even when it requires letting go of material possessions or worldly attachments to fully follow Christ and secure our eternal destination.

Transcript

For most of us we look into the mirror to see our reflection and usually it's to see our hair or our face or what we need to do in regards to makeup and fixing ourselves up for the day. Our eyes look tired and so we put some concealer on, we need to put our necklace on, we fix our hair, put gel or oil, whatever it is. We prepare ourselves for the day based on looking in the mirror.

The mirror shows a physical resemblance of who we are so we can see what we look like and what other people see. If there was a mirror that not only would show our physical appearance but would show our thoughts or show our heart's intentions or show our motivation, it would be a very frightening mirror. We would never want anyone to see us looking into the mirror because we would know that others would know our thoughts, our motivations, and what we really think about.

There is a mirror like that. It is not a physical mirror but the Bible tells us that the Word of God is like a mirror that reveals our hearts and our intentions. God's Word is supernatural and it's spiritual so it can perceive things beyond just the physical and it can understand what we are in our heart.

God has allowed us to be able to study His Word, look into it to see the examples, good and bad, of people who lived, commands that God has given, promises that we are to take and hold on to, and direction for our life. We often will read things like, for example, the Bible tells us that we need to forgive because God has forgiven us and when we read that the Holy Spirit convicts our heart and reminds us of names that we have not forgiven. The Bible tells us we are not to slander or gossip or speak wrong and when we read those things in God's Word the Holy Spirit will use that and convict our heart and remind us, remember that one time you gossiped, remember that one time you slandered, remember how you said those things that were wrong and it was a lie.

And what we are to do is take that conviction and go make it right with God's help. In a physical mirror you look into the mirror and you see your face needs to be washed, your hair needs to be combed, makeup needs to be put on, your earrings need to be put in, and you go and wash your face and take the soap and get yourself ready. The spiritual mirror of God's Word is not to drive us to the sink to wash our face but it is that our hearts will be washed through God's help.

We have an interesting story found in Mark's Gospel chapter 10 of Jesus interacting with a rich young ruler. I want you to listen very carefully as I read it. As Jesus started on his way a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Now this is a very good question to ask. Other people ask really dumb questions to Jesus. Should we pay taxes or not? All kinds of ridiculous things.

Who is my neighbor? And they would ask these things to trap Jesus. But this young man has a very good question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? That is a life question.

You know, as I teach students, one of the things I appreciate about students is asking questions. There are two kinds of questions. Questions that students will ask to derail the class and has nothing to do with them learning.

It's simply they are asking and we do our best to answer those questions. But then there are questions that the students ask based on what we are studying and they want to ask the question to help themselves understand it further. And here this young man comes to Jesus and asks a very good question.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? First of all, he recognized that Jesus was the right person to ask. Second, he asked the right question and so now Jesus gives an answer. Why do you call me good? Jesus answered, no one is good except God alone.

Now Jesus is not saying that he's not God. He's simply asking this young man to think. Why are you asking me this question? Why are you calling me good? Because no one is good except God.

Jesus is saying this kind of hinting to this young man, listen carefully to my answer. Because if you consider me to be good, there's only one that's good, and that's God. Pay attention because I'm going to give you what you are looking for and you need to listen very carefully.

He says, you know the commandments. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. Teacher, he declared, all these I have kept since I was a boy.

This young man responds to Jesus with a couple of things. One, he says, teacher, I have kept all these things since I was a boy. By calling Jesus teacher, he's saying, you are the master, I am the student, you tell me the answer and I will believe it's the truth.

It's a relationship term, it's a title of relationship. If I say to someone, you are my teacher, that says I am your student, I will listen to you. If I call someone my boss or my leader, that means I am employed under them.

If I call someone captain of my football team, that means I am a player. Or if all the players say coach, then they are identifying the relationship. This man is basically putting himself in a place of humility saying, you are the teacher, I am under you.

And so this man's heart is in the right direction, he's asking the right question. And Jesus tells him, have you done this, don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't lie, honor your father and mother. And the man's response is, since I was a boy, I kept all those things.

Which also tells us he was raised very well. He was taught and disciplined and his parents taught him the things of God. This man is a very honorable, respectable, genuine, kind, very loyal kind of person.

A friend that you would want to normally have. And the question he asks is, what do I need to do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus says, listen, why do you call me good? There's only one that's good and that's God. And saying basically, listen very carefully.

Have you done these things? Don't lie, don't steal, don't cheat, don't be mean to people, honor your father and mother. He says, I've done all these things. Then Jesus said, Jesus looked at him and loved him.

One thing you lack, he said, go sell everything you have, give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. Here Jesus points out one more area of his life that this young man possibly did not see.

Just like I mentioned that God's word is a mirror, until we look into God's word and ask God to reveal our character through what we read, the examples, and supernaturally the Holy Spirit begins to convict and direct and teach our heart, oftentimes we are blind to certain areas of our life. This young man is asking the right questions. He's asking the right person these questions.

And he has been raised well and he has done everything right up to this point. And Jesus says, one more thing that you lack. And I'm sure this young man is listening.

Okay, one more thing I lack. Just tell me what it is. He says, go sell everything that you have and come and follow me.

Go sell everything, give it to the poor and come and follow me. Do you realize there were very few people that Jesus directly said, come and follow me. This young man could have been one of the disciples and one of the apostles that would continue the ministry even after Jesus.

And yet we find the response of this man is this, at this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth. Now the point Jesus is making here is not whether you are rich or poor, but where is your heart's desires.

Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount, speaking about different areas of our life, that all of it is a motivation of our heart, whether it's prayer or anger or hard work, fasting, giving to the poor, whatever it is, the main, main issue is our heart condition and motivation. Revelation chapter two, Jesus writing to the church tells them, I appreciate you for doing all these good things and how faithful you are, yet you have left your first love. Your motivation is off.

This young man, the problem that he had was that his heart was where his riches were. And that's what Jesus was talking about on the Sermon on the Mount. He said, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

For some people, their treasure, the most important thing in their life is sports. For others, food. For others, position.

And for others, money is the main thing. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. This is why Jesus said, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

Why? Because your heart will follow that. Is our heart materialistic focused or is it focused on heaven? It is not an issue whether you have money or not. I have met some very rich people who are extremely generous and extremely godly.

And I have met some rich people who are extremely carnal and materialistic and can care less about anyone else. I have also met some very poor people who have hardly anything and they are so gracious and giving and godly. And I have met some poor people who are extremely angry and bitter and jealous and they hold on to everything that they have more than anyone else.

So it does not really matter whether you are rich or poor. The question is, what is the motivation of the heart? This young man went away sad because where his heart was, was in his riches. See, Abraham was tested in a similar way.

Not exactly the same way, but in a similar way. He waited for a very, very long time for God's promise that he would have a child. And finally, him and Sarah, in their extremely old age, has a child.

And what does God say? I want you to sacrifice that child. So Abraham, I don't know if he was in agony for some weeks, but he finally goes with Isaac after he is a little older. And in his heart he is convinced, even if I lose this son, God will raise up children, even from the rocks, if that is necessary.

And while Abraham and Isaac are walking up Mount Moriah, Isaac turns to his father and says, father, we have the wood, we have the fire, where is the sacrifice? We have done this before, where is the sacrifice? And Abraham, speaking prophetically about the coming of Jesus, says God will provide himself a lamb. Jesus, being identified by John the Baptist as the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And there on top of that mountain, Abraham you see, with a knife, about to kill his son, in obedience to God, God stops him and says, Abraham, stop.

Now I know that you love me. Did God already know that he loved him? Of course he did. Did Abraham realize how much he loved God? I don't think so.

It was a test to prove to Abraham that his heart was loving towards God. And of course, God said, look in the thicket, there is a ram, not a lamb, but a ram caught by its horns, take that as a sacrifice. What was God asking Abraham to do? Abraham, are you willing to give up the thing that you love the most for the

sake of loving me more? And Abraham said, yes, Lord.

I'm willing to give up everything, including my son, where my heart is. This is the promise that you gave me. But if you are asking me to give this up so that I can love you even more, then that is what I will do.

And of course, it was simply a test. God did not want Abraham to actually kill his son. Jesus is asking this young man to do the same thing.

Young man, you have a lot of riches and a lot of wealth and that's fine. God has given it to you. But your heart is so wrapped up into that, go and sell everything and give to the poor and come and follow me.

Are you willing to love me more than your riches? And it says that this man's face drops. It means he was surprised. He's like, oh my goodness, you're asking me to do that? Can't you just ask me to do something else, anything else? And Jesus said, go sell everything and give to the poor.

All the things that this man thought that was important was on the outside. Don't murder, don't lie, don't cheat, honor your father and mother, all outward things. And what Jesus asked had to do with the character on the inside of his heart.

Jesus asked a question like a mirror revealing the motivation of this young man. He was sincere and he was honest and he asked the right questions and he asked the right questions to the right person. And he asked Jesus saying, you are my teacher.

And the answer Jesus gave, he did not like it because it dealt with something in his heart and the man walked away sad. Rev. Zacharias is saying that one of the most difficult challenges today is not presenting a indestructible defense of Christianity. It is not showing that Jesus has risen from the grave.

It is not proving that God created the world and that evolution is not true. It is not proving that the Bible is supernatural and that it is inspired by God. It is not simply philosophically defending the faith or showing that the Christian worldview is the only answer to answer man's questions of life.

All those things are true. What Rev. Zacharias says as the most challenging aspect today is this, that truth is relative. People believe that your truth is as good as my truth and this truth is as good as anything else.

So 2 plus 2 can be 4, 2 plus 2 can be 5, 2 plus 2 can be 6. It depends on you. But we know when it comes to mathematics and science and physics, things are absolute. And he will have people who will come up to him afterwards as he always graciously does.

He says, I have time. Afterwards, please come to the front and we will discuss and talk. He is always very inviting, very kind.

I always appreciate him. And he says there were these young men who came to him and they said this, we understand what you say. In fact, we believe what you say because we know it is right.

But we don't want to change. We want to live our life the way we want to live our life. What is happening is it used to be if you understood something to be true, you would line up your life with that truth and your decisions would be based on that.

Now, we can intellectually understand and believe something and yet depart from that and not have anything to do with it. It's like saying, yes, I believe in gravity that anything you throw up will come down.

So you know what? I don't care.

I'm going to go to the roof. I'm going to walk off the roof and it doesn't matter. It will matter when I hit the cement and I splat.

Truth being considered to be relative is one of the greatest challenges. If this young man genuinely was calling Jesus his teacher, whatever Jesus said, this man should have said, right, I will do that right now. Can you wait for me that I may be able to sell everything I have and to follow you? Let me ask you a question.

And most probably we would answer just like this young man by walking away sad. But here's the challenge for our own life. What is more valuable? The things that this young man owned or having eternal life? Which is more valuable? Let me ask you another question.

Would you sell one of your eyes for a million dollars? How about both of your eyes? Give you a painless operation but you will be blind for the rest of your life. Would you sell both of your eyes for two million dollars? No one in the right mind would say, yes, I will sell my eyes for two million dollars. They wouldn't do that.

Why? Because we consider our eyes to be precious. We consider them to be so sacred because we can see the world and interpret the world and understand the world. This young man asked the right question but yet he considered his materialism as more valuable than his need for eternal life.

Too many people, they ask the right questions even to Ravi Zacharias and others and they read the right books from C.S. Lewis and Schaefer and others and they know what is truth and yet they choose to live what they want to do not considering the eternal consequences. My brother, my sister, the question is this. What holds you back from giving your life to Jesus? The Bible tells us it's appointed for man to die once and then comes the judgment.

Once we die, there is no second chance. You stand before God, the almighty judge, and your life will be revealed and it will be considered whether you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior or not. And either he will say, enjoy heaven or he'll say, depart from me to hell.

It's a choice that we make on our own. God does not do this to us. We have free will.

But once we cross over after we die, there is no second chance. So the question is again, what holds you back from accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Is it materialism, riches like this young man? Is it some relationship that you're not willing to let go of? Maybe it's a boyfriend or a girlfriend that you're so in love with. Are they worth your eternal destiny? Is it some job? Is it education? What is it that holds you back from saying, Lord, I need salvation.

I need the forgiveness of sin. I need the gift that you offer through what Jesus has done on the cross at Calvary. This young man foolishly walked away.

He considered the answer Jesus gave as less important than his materialism. The Bible tells us something very discouraging, but also very realistic. It tells us in Psalm 103 verses 15 and 16, man's days are like the grass.

The wind blows over it and the place of it remembers it no more. Simple terms. Our life is extremely short and when we die, we do not take anything with us.

The car, the riches, the degrees on the wall, the house that we have, the gold watch, the beautiful clothes, our positions, our money, our bank account, our credit cards, none of those things will be with us in eternity. The only thing that will matter in eternity is whether I am a child of God by accepting the free gift of God of salvation, the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross for me. Again, I ask the question, is that little thing that you are holding on to worth your eternal destination? Are you willing to give that up in light of eternity? I beg of you, look at the example of this young man who walked away from Jesus because he considered his wealth more important than the answer Jesus gave.

And yet he asked the right question, he asked the right question to the right person, he had lived a good life, a very honorable life, he called Jesus his teacher, considering himself to be a student, putting himself in the right attitude to listen, but when the answer was given, he refused it and walked away. He did not want to understand the truth in the way that it would make him change his life. So what holds us back? Oftentimes it is pride that we think we know better than God that holds us back.

The Bible tells us pride comes before the fall. The Bible also tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may lift us up. And that is God's promise.

If we would humble ourselves, say no to those things that hold us back, say yes to Jesus and say, Lord, save me. I have sinned. I repent of my sins.

I turn away from my old life. Let me experience the purpose of this life, this abundant life, this life of a relationship with you. My brother and my sister, it is worth to give up everything for the sake of knowing you are secure in your eternal destination.

I know people who will sell their house, their car, everything that they own to pay for the cancer treatment because they fear cancer so much and they want another chance to live a little bit longer and they will go into extreme debt to be able to pay that off. Why don't we consider our eternal destination as valuable as that? Because that is where we will spend all of eternity. Let's pray and ask the Lord to help us understand these things and to make the right decisions by listening to the truth and being willing and brave enough to trust God and to consider that the most important decision of our life ever.

Father, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you for the examples in your word that show us our own hearts.

We read the story of this young rich ruler who had so much and we see ourself in there that we consider sometimes things as more important than our eternal destination. I pray for each of my brothers and sisters or those that do not know Jesus as their personal Savior that today they would make that decision. The Bible tells us today is the day of salvation.

And I pray for those of us who do know Jesus as our personal Savior that we would tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ that we would not be ashamed. And Lord, help us to live our life not for materialism, whether you give it to us or not, but let us live for you and using whatever we have for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

My brother and my sister, if you have questions about how to receive the gift of God of the forgiveness of sin into your life or you want a further explanation of what it means to give up everything in order to follow

Christ, please write to us or call us and we will be happy to help you with this. Remember this, the Bible has the answers for life. It truly does.

And God's promises always comes true. May the Lord bless you as you experience God's grace in your life today.

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