

Is Life Worth the Living?

by Russell DeLong

The sermon teaches us that material wealth is not the key to happiness and fulfillment, and that we must seek a deeper, spiritual connection with God to find true happiness.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Matthew 16:26, Matthew 19:22-23, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "True Happiness", "Eternal Life"

Description

Russell DeLong preaches about the story of the Rich Young Ruler, a young, rich, and influential man who sought eternal life but struggled with spiritual emptiness despite possessing everything nature could offer. The sermon emphasizes that true happiness and fulfillment cannot be found in material possessions but in virtue and a relationship with Christ. It delves into the concept of guilt as the root of unhappiness and the importance of confession, repentance, and receiving forgiveness from Christ to experience true peace and joy in life.

Transcript

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (St. Matthew 19:22)

The story of the Rich Young Ruler is recorded in three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. From the three accounts we are able to get a vivid picture of the earnest seeker after eternal life. Three things are apparent -- he was young, rich, and influential. This young man came to Jesus already possessing everything that nature could bestow upon him -- wisdom, riches, power, authority, youth, and health.

It is also a striking fact that he was religious. He kept the law. To the query of Jesus concerning the commandments he replied, "All these things have I kept from my youth up."

What more must he do? He was the keeper of the Law -- a moral man. He asked, "What lack I yet?"

Yes -- what could such an ideal person lack? But he was dissatisfied -- "he came running." He was in a hurry to meet Jesus -- he wanted and needed something.

So it is with all human beings. Nature can satisfy an animal. But give man the best of food, a palatial mansion, a high-powered automobile, money, and clothes, yet he will walk out at eventide as the sun drops beyond the western horizon longing and craving for something nature cannot give. Why? Because he is "super-nature" -- made for a higher, better clime than this.

So with the Rich Young Ruler -- so with all persons created in the image of God. We want -- we need -- we must have something more than things.

In Miami some months ago a multi-millionaire, sixty-three years of age, committed suicide. Life had given him money, mansions, travel, romance, position, power, education, pleasure - but not happiness.

Happiness cannot be purchased. Happiness is a by-product of virtue. The source of happiness is within -- not without.

Unhappiness, discontent, condemnation, dissatisfaction with life are the result of personal, subjective states of my soul. We get all snarled up -- domestic conflicts, business upsets, financial reverses pull the spirit to pieces. It is reported that every second hospital bed in the United States is for the mentally afflicted. The personality "falls to pieces."

What is at the bottom of all of this? It is a fact that all schools of psychiatry agree that

behind every "anxiety neurosis" is a sense of guilt. A psychiatrist probes the personality to locate the cause of guilt. When it is found and confessed, there comes a relief but not a cure. Phillips Brooks once said, "It is an awful hour when the first necessity of hiding anything comes. The whole life is different thenceforth. When there are questions to be feared and eyes to be avoided and subjects which must not be touched then the bloom of life is gone. Put off that day as long as possible. Put it off forever if you can."

Sin produces guilt. Only confession and repentance can bring one to forgiveness. Christ can speak peace, sin is forgiven forever, and guilt is removed. Life becomes happy, radiant, buoyant, colorful, purposeful, meaningful, and worth while.

The Associated Press carried a story recently of an eighteen-year-old girl who committed

suicide in New York leaving a note behind saying, "I have found nothing in life worth while." Without Christ life is worthless.

One of the most beautiful stories I know had its setting in London many years ago. A

magnificent cathedral in that great city housed the finest pipe organ in all the world at that time. The sexton was an old man who had served for more than half a century. He was very proud of his position, and doubly so, to be the sole custodian of that finest of pipe organs. One day a young man knocked at the door of his home and said "Mr. Sexton, I would like permission to play upon your great organ."

The old man replied, "That is the finest pipe organ in all the world. We do not allow everyone to play it. I cannot grant your request."

But the young man replied, "I have come hundreds of miles for the express purpose of playing the finest organ in the world. Please permit me to play."

The old man again refused.

But the young man persisted. "Please permit me. I have come hundreds of miles. Please, just one piece."

The old man relented and said, "Very well, young man. But remember, just one piece."

Together they walked to the great cathedral with its massive pilasters and spires pointing heavenward. They entered the large archway and walked down the long aisle to the console of the organ which the old man unlocked and said, "Now remember -- just one piece and we'll be going."

It was a glorious setting. The sun was casting her gorgeous rays through the stained glass windows filling that sanctuary with all the colors of the prism. The old man sat down to wait. The young man ran his fingers over the keys and from the organ came the most beautiful melodious music ever heard in that cathedral. The old man lost himself. He was a barefoot boy running over his father's farm up the hills and down the dales. Now he was at the old swimming pool. He could hear the shouts of glee and the splash of water as his boyhood pals dived in. Then the music changed to a more somber tone. He stood at the grave of his mother and the tears flowed down his cheeks. Suddenly the music broke forth in a more jubilant outburst. And then -- it stopped. The old man came back to earth, arose, rushed up the aisle and cried, "Please, please play one more piece. Please, another piece for me." The young man's fingers ran over the keys and the old man sat down and again was lost in the beauty and grandeur of it all. Again the organ stopped. He rushed down the aisle and said, "Young man, that is wonderful playing. What is your name?"

Now the young man was hesitant. But the old man insisted, "I must know your name."

The young man finally yielded and said, "My name is Mendelssohn."

The old man cried, "Mendelssohn -- Mendelssohn -- to think that I might have refused to have allowed the great Mendelssohn to play upon my organ."

But a greater than Mendelssohn confronted the Rich Young Ruler. He confronts you. The

One who made us -- the One who made the pipe organ of your soul -- can sit down at the console of your life in the Inner Sanctum of your being and upon your heart strings, ambitions, desires, instincts, and talents can bring forth harmonious notes so that life will be beautiful and worth while and all who contact you will be elevated and lifted heavenward.

Or else -- the devil can sit down at the console of your life and bring forth sour, discordant notes that will make your home a hell and your life a misery.

Jesus can make life worth while. He can make you happy and content. He can make you rich.

Dr. Haldor Lillenas, the famous hymn-writer, has written one of the finest poems I know

which beautifully illustrates the truth of my message. It is entitled, "Poverty."

POVERTY

If in my heart there is no love for those by sin defiled
And if I lack compassion for a wayward, wand'ring child;
If I possess no strong desire to help him in his need,
To lead him back to paths of peace, Then I am poor indeed.
If I have lost the tenderness, the grace I once possessed,
If I cannot appreciate another soul's distress;
If I have not within my breast a willingness to feed
The hungry multitude of earth, Then I am poor indeed.
If I have not the strength to feel another's burden sore,
If I am blind to all the needs that clamor at my door;
If I am deaf to all the cry of hearts that break and bleed
Without the sympathy of love, Then I am poor indeed.
If I cannot appreciate the good in those I meet,
If in my blindness I abhor the outcast on the street;
And if my hard, cold heart desires to crush the bruised reed--
Then know that I have lost my wealth, Then I am poor indeed.
And if I thrill not at the touch of dimpled baby hands,
Nor feel the wealth my humble home and all its love commands
And if the finer things of life are lost in grasp and greed
Then in my heart a beggar dwells, And he is poor indeed!
If I have love for those who hate and tears for those who fall, If I have mercy for the one
who loves me not at all; If I have patience with the one who holds another creed, A heart for all the wide,
wide world, Then I am rich indeed!
The Rich Young Ruler was materially wealthy but he was spiritually poverty-stricken.
He chose to commit spiritual suicide. He went away sorrowfully. We never hear of him

again. He missed the golden moment. He might have been another St. Paul or St. Francis or John Wesley. He decided to refuse. It was in reality "the great refusal."

Christ stands before you this very moment. Let Him take the controls of your life. Let Him sit at the console of your heart and make your life worth while.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/russell-delong/is-life-worth-the-living/>

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