

Time Audit Chronicles: The Rich Young Ruler

(Mark 10:17-31)

Prologue: The Call to Follow Jesus

The Presswood family sat together around the kitchen table, their dinner finished and the evening calm. Ariel had just been reading Mark 10:17-31, the story of the rich young ruler, and she had a lot of thoughts racing through her mind. Alice, sitting nearby with Mr. Fluffernutter, was busy pretending her stuffed animals were making difficult choices about what to prioritize in life.

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, “why did Jesus tell the rich young ruler to sell everything and follow Him? Doesn’t Jesus want us to have nice things? Why is wealth such a problem?”

Ryan took a deep breath. “That’s a really important question, Ariel. The rich young ruler wasn’t a bad person. In fact, he was earnest and well-meaning. But Jesus saw something in his heart: the man’s wealth was standing in the way of his relationship with God. Jesus wanted to teach him—and all of us—that we can’t serve both God and money. Salvation requires putting God first in every area of our lives, even over material wealth.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “So, it’s not that having wealth is wrong, but when it comes between us and God, that’s the problem?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Let’s use the Time Audit Machine to go back and see this encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler, and how Jesus teaches about the dangers of prioritizing material wealth over God’s kingdom.”

The Journey Begins: The Rich Young Ruler’s Approach

The Time Audit Machine hummed, and with a flash of light, the family found themselves in the midst of a bustling crowd. Jesus was walking with His disciples, and as usual, people had gathered to hear Him teach. Among the crowd, a young man approached Jesus—he was dressed in fine clothes and had the confident posture of someone who had wealth and influence.

“There he is,” Ryan said, pointing to the rich young ruler. “This is the man who comes to Jesus asking about how to inherit eternal life.”

Ariel studied him. “He looks like someone who has it all—wealth, power, respect. But he’s asking about something deeper, something more important.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “This young man had everything that the world values—yet he knew there was something missing in his life. He wanted to know how he could be sure he had eternal life, and Jesus was about to show him the answer.”

The Question: “What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?” *(Mark 10:17)*

The rich young ruler ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him, asking:

“Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17)

Ariel looked at her father. “Why did he call Jesus ‘Good Master’? Wasn’t that kind of unusual?”

Ryan nodded. “Yes, it was a respectful title, but Jesus responded to that specific word choice for a reason. Jesus was helping the man recognize who He truly was—the ‘Good Master’ was not just a wise teacher, but the Son of God, and that’s an important distinction.”

Jesus’ Response: The Commandments and the Heart *(Mark 10:18-21)*

Jesus responded to the man’s question by reminding him of the commandments:

“Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.” (Mark 10:18-19)

Ariel was thinking. “Jesus started by asking him why he called Him ‘Good,’ and then reminded him of the commandments. Why didn’t Jesus just tell him right away what he needed to do to inherit eternal life?”

“Great observation,” Ryan said. “Jesus wanted to help the man realize that following the commandments is important, but it’s not enough on its own. The commandments were a starting point, but Jesus was looking at his heart, not just his actions.”

The young man replied, “Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” (Mark 10:20)

Ariel was impressed. “He said he had kept all the commandments. So, he was living a good life by those standards?”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “this young man seemed to be living in a way that honored God, following the commandments. But Jesus knew that there was still something in his heart that needed to change.”

Jesus’ Challenge: Letting Go of Wealth *(Mark 10:21)*

Jesus looked at him and, knowing his heart, loved him. He said:

“One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mark 10:21)

Ariel gasped. “Jesus told him to sell everything and give it to the poor? That sounds so hard! Why would He say that?”

Ryan nodded. “Jesus knew that the young man’s wealth was more than just money—it was the thing he trusted in most. His wealth was his security, his identity, and his comfort. Jesus was calling him to let go of what was standing between him and God. To follow Jesus, he needed to put God above everything else, even his wealth. The cost of following Jesus is that we must prioritize Him over everything else.”

Ariel thought for a moment. “So, Jesus wasn’t saying that having wealth is bad, but that when it gets in the way of following God, it becomes a problem?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Jesus wanted the young man to understand that true treasure isn’t found in wealth or possessions—it’s found in following Jesus and living for His kingdom.”

The Young Man’s Reaction: Grief and the Dangers of Wealth *(Mark 10:22)*

The young man’s face fell, and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” (Mark 10:22)

Ariel was silent for a moment, processing. “He was so sad because he had a lot of wealth, and he wasn’t willing to give it up. It seems like he wanted eternal life, but he loved his wealth more.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “The young man wanted eternal life, but he wasn’t ready to surrender his trust in wealth. He had a choice to make, and he chose his possessions over following Jesus. This is where we see the danger of materialism. When we value our possessions more than our relationship with God, we miss the true treasure that God has to offer.”

The Teachings: The Difficulty of Entering God’s Kingdom with Wealth *(Mark 10:23-25)*

Jesus looked around at His disciples and said:

“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23)

Ariel looked surprised. “Jesus said it’s hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God? Why?”

Ryan explained, “It’s not that wealth in itself is a problem—it’s the attachment to it. Wealth can easily become an idol, something we rely on for security instead of trusting in God. People with wealth may find it harder to depend on God because they are so focused on their riches. Jesus was teaching that it’s very difficult to enter God’s kingdom when our hearts are tied to our possessions.”

Jesus then illustrated this point with a striking analogy:

“And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:24-25)

Ariel laughed softly. “Jesus said it’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom! That sounds impossible!”

Ryan chuckled. “Yes, Jesus was making a powerful point. He was saying that it’s nearly impossible for someone who trusts in their wealth to enter God’s kingdom. It’s not that wealth is inherently evil, but that our attachment to it can blind us to our need for God.”

The Disciples’ Question: Who Can Be Saved? (Mark 10:26-27)

The disciples were astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27)

Ariel smiled as she understood. “Jesus said that with God, all things are possible! Even when it seems impossible for rich people to be saved, God can do it.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Jesus was reminding His disciples that salvation is not something we can earn or achieve on our own. It’s only through God’s power and grace that anyone can be saved. It’s impossible for anyone to save themselves, whether they are rich or poor, but with God, salvation is possible for all.”

The Reward for Following Jesus (Mark 10:28-31)

Peter, always quick to speak, said, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.” (Mark 10:28)

Jesus responded with a promise:

“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)

Ariel’s eyes brightened. “Jesus promises that those who follow Him will be rewarded—both now and in eternity!”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Following Jesus requires sacrifice, but the reward is greater than anything we can imagine. We receive spiritual blessings now—like a new family of believers—and we have the promise of eternal life in God’s kingdom. The sacrifices we make in this life are nothing compared to the rewards God has for us.”

Reflection: Trusting God Over Wealth

Back in the garage, the Time Audit Machine powered down, and the family sat quietly, reflecting on what they had just witnessed. Ariel flipped through her notes, while Alice lined up her stuffed animals, imagining them making decisions about what truly matters.

“Jesus taught us that following Him requires putting God above everything else,” Ariel said thoughtfully. “We can’t let our wealth, possessions, or anything else take God’s place in our hearts.”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “and Jesus reminded us that with God, all things are possible. It’s not about what we can do on our own—it’s about trusting God and following His plan, no matter what.”

Ariel smiled. “So, it’s not about how much we have, but about how much we’re willing to give up for God’s kingdom.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “And when we trust God and prioritize Him, we receive more than we can imagine—both now and forever.”

Takeaway: Prioritizing God Over Material Wealth

In Mark 10:17-31, the story of the rich young ruler teaches us that salvation requires putting God above all things, including material wealth. Jesus challenges us to prioritize God’s kingdom over earthly possessions and comforts. While wealth in itself is not evil, when it becomes an obstacle to following Jesus, it can blind us to the true treasure of eternal life. Jesus reminds us that with God, all things are possible—salvation is not something we can achieve on our own, but only through God’s grace. When we choose to follow Jesus, even if it means sacrifice, we gain an eternal reward that far outweighs any earthly possession.