

Encountering Jesus

From Self-Reliant to Sad

Matthew 19:16-26

This morning I want to conclude my series on Encountering Jesus. Jesus changes everything. You and I are not the same as we were when we came to Christ, and even as we look at our life today we are becoming different people as long as we give access of our lives to God.

1. We saw that Jesus delivered a demon possessed man, one who was out of control, to grant his life peace and purpose.
2. We saw that Jesus reached out to the neglected, the outcast, those who people do nothing but judge, and called him by name and spent time with him and allowed his acceptance and message of hope to give a fallen man a second chance.
3. We saw that Jesus welcomed the worship and honoring of sincerely remorseful people, who knew who they were. He showed forgiveness to them, while the religious people questioned his intentions.
4. We saw that Jesus crossed cultural boundaries, talked about being able to worship God from their hearts instead of a man made building, showed a Samaritan woman that he knew who she was, and yet he was still offering her something that would quench her eternal thirst.
5. We saw that Jesus selected men, men who knew how to work hard, men who he wanted to promote from being mere fishermen to Fishers of men. He showed himself to them, he got to know them, he spent time with them and then gave them the greatest call of their lives – to pursue a life of leading others to eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Each one received an opportunity to change their lives, to find purpose, to find acceptance, to find freedom, to find hope, to find the life changing power of Jesus. I wish I could say that my sixth and final story was just as glamorous, but I think we all know by now that there will come times when Jesus will require of us something difficult. **There will be times when God will challenge us for our own good.**

We live in a world that only wants to hear what it wants to hear, but Jesus came so that we could live a real life and not simply compromise for an empty alternative. If I was to ask the question this morning, “What is the one thing that you cannot live without?” what would you say? Would it be something you like to eat or drink, or would it be a source of entertainment, or an object? What can you not live without? I think of my favorite pillow, I enjoy my pillow. Can I live without it? Yes, but I would sure miss it.

In our western society there are a lot of things that we would consider necessities, that others around the world seem to do just fine without. So, can something become so important to us that it can stand in the way between us and God? Let’s read our story this morning in **Matthew 19:16-26:**

16 Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, * what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” 17 “Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep* the commandments.” 18 “Which ones?” the man asked. And Jesus replied: “‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. 19 Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself.’*” 20 “I’ve obeyed all these commandments,” the young man replied. “What else must I do?” 21 Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 But when the young man heard this, he went away very sad, for he had many possessions. 23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. 24 I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!” 25 The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked. 26 Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”

Here we find a man in turmoil. Look at **Mark 10:17** tells us about the way in which this young man approached Jesus:

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

This man knew where to turn to get the answer and out of desperation he pleads with Jesus to tell him how to receive eternal life. Jesus doesn’t simply want this young man to understand that he has the answer but that he is the answer. That is why he makes the statement, “There is only One who is Good.” In other words, “Do you realize who you are talking to, I am God in human form. I am not merely a teacher, but the ultimate teacher. God’s whole purpose is to teach us more about ourselves and more about who he is.

You know many times God teaches us a lot about ourselves by responding to our questions with questions that cut right to the heart. God has a way of cutting right to the chase and expose our inner most and sometimes darkest secrets. **Two things were stopping this young man from finding eternal peace – his self-reliance and his wealth-reliance.** These two core issues of the human soul continue to stand in the way of relationship with God – I am good on my own, and I have everything I want. These two core issues speak to us today.

1. Self-Reliance

First, let’s deal with self-reliance. This young man was keeping the law, the commandments, which was a noble thing. Keeping the Law could either be a

meaningless exercise in self-control or something greater – a life of loving God. In **John 14:15** Jesus said:

15 “If you love me, obey my commandments.*

To Jesus it was about living a life of love not only for God but for others as well. In **Romans 13:9-10** Paul writes:

9 For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”* 10 Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.*

God’s call to live a life of love shows through how we respond to God and those we live around. This ultimately leads to God’s purposes for our lives, and if we truly love ourselves (not in a prideful and arrogant way) in a valuing and honoring way we will live a life of loving others and giving all we have to God. **Love for God, leads to love for others, which leads to true healthy self love.**

Even though the young man in our story followed the law, there was still something missing, something he knew he was lacking thus leading to the question, “What must I do to receive eternal life?” **The young man missed the motivation behind keeping the law, the whole intent behind it and was merely looking for a way to take care of his eternal problem.**

That leads me to ask this simple question: Is that how you come to Jesus today? Do you merely come to Jesus because you see him as a solution to your problem of sin and eternity? I pray that you will see it more as a loving response to his wanting to be with you and save you out of love. Don’t fall into the same trap this young man made. Don’t just see him as a solution to your problem, but see it as an opportunity to love your creator.

Our story tells us that the young man claimed that he was keeping all of the commandments – remember the commandments were about loving God and people – yet when Jesus asks him to give his wealth to those in need that was where he drew the line. Was he keeping all of the commandments? Clearly not, because to God people are more important than things. The young man missed the relational part of life. In his own self-reliance he was willing to give up control and rely upon God.

There comes times in all of our lives when we become more reliant upon ourselves than we are upon God. Especially when we refuse to admit any weaknesses or inabilities and we think we can make it without Him. We try to solve our own problems our own way, and we end up making a bigger mess of everything simply because we rely upon ourselves too much.

“The more I see how God works, the more I understand that I better come to the end of myself or prepare to face the self-imposed consequences awaiting me on the other side. I have learned to run faster and faster to God each time I face something bigger than me.”

The other thing that stood in the way of the young man’s relationship with God was his wealth-reliance.

2. Wealth Reliance

The young man was willing to give up true peace that surpasses all understanding from God, for a false sense of peace that would only last for a period of time. Many put importance on what they possess. In fact, I find that the more you have, the more you have to manage and the more it controls your life. The Adam’s Clarke commentary tells us:

Earthly riches are a great obstacle to salvation because it is almost impossible to possess them, and not set your heart upon them.

Our story tells us that the young man went away sad. He didn’t follow Jesus but went right back to his circumstances, even though Jesus was offering a way out, into true and right motive and dependence and peace. Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:10**:

10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

People will give up real peace for a cheaper counterfeit. Instead, God wants us to focus on the wealth of heaven. Jesus states that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of heaven, in other words, “when pigs fly”. But the answer to the problem of wealth reliance lies in the power of God. Look at **verse 26**:

Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.

Only God can turn the heart of materialism to a heart of sacrifice. God alone can take the love of the world out of the human heart.

Are we people this morning who are willing to let him do it in our own lives? Are we people who are tired of doing it on our own, who are still trying to find real peace in the wrong place, instead of going to the Prince of peace who will calm all of our fears? Are we still trying to find satisfaction in things, or are we willing to give our lives over to God, for him to show us why he has put us here on earth, and for him to instill real life once again?

God knows what is best for us. Some of us need to just let him be God in our lives instead of trying to figure everything out. The young man in our story was unwilling to

let go of his self-reliance and his wealth reliance and we find that he remained sad. That term “Sad” in our text, in the original Greek meant he was “grieved with heaviness, uneasy with a troubled conscience.” This sounds like a lot of people in our world today, doesn’t it? But nothing is impossible with God.

He loves us enough to do the impossible in you and me, we just have to be willing to let him.

An encounter with Jesus is an encounter with a God of change. He loves us just as we are, yet too much to let us stay there. His goal is to bring growth, faith, trust, and hope. We can welcome him into our lives, or we can ignore and continue to live in our misery. The choice is yours, and yours alone. He does not force himself upon you, yet waits for when you are ready.

Personal Story (The American Dream)

What happens when we put too much emphasis on our own efforts?

Why do we put so much emphasis on Material things?

What has been troubling your conscience? Are you willing to let God do the impossible in your life?

How has Jesus changed your life?