

RICH YOUNG CONFIRMAND
Confirmation Sunday – June 5, 2011 – Communion
Mark 10: 17-22
The Church of the Covenant

This scripture has special significance for me. It was the story of the Rich Young Ruler that when I read it made me give up my own agenda for my own life and take up the Lord's agenda for my life. I was in law school at the time. For whatever reason, for all the years I had been in church, for all the Bible passages read to me over so many years, for whatever reason I had never heard this scripture before. I was in law school and was sort of in a down period, my spirits were down, I didn't feel fully alive, and I had no energy for new things. I started reading the Bible for myself.

For the very first time in my life I was reading the Bible for myself, *as an adult*, not for some purpose other than for God to speak to me. When we begin to mature in our faith we stop waiting for someone else to spoon feed us the scripture and we start digesting it ourselves. When we grow up we make the Bible our own. And for whatever reason I was placing myself in each Bible story I read. I was there as Jesus spoke; I was there as He fed the 5,000; I was the person coming up to Jesus with a question; I was the doubting disciple or the brash bold one. It is a good thing to picture yourself as you read scripture seeing yourself in the story. So I happen to begin reading this story of the Rich Young Ruler and, of course, I am the young person coming to Jesus to ask Him a question. I came up to Jesus and asked Him: *"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10: 17)* Let's cut to the chase, Jesus, I want to know what I have to do in order to get the prize at the end; I don't want a lot of verbiage; I don't want a lot of stuff; I just want to know what I have to do to get into heaven. You see, I'm rather good at doing stuff. And then Jesus quotes me some of the commandments and I respond, *"Good Teacher, all these I have obeyed from my youth."* (v. 20) Jesus, see, I'm a pretty good person when all is said and done. Not only do I want to get it right in terms of getting into heaven, I also feel like I am doing a pretty good job of being a fairly good person; I'm not perfect, mind you, but I am better than most people. Because you see, Jesus, I have been raised right; I come from a nice home; I've been given a lot of advantages; I come from a nice family and a long line of nice people; my parents have pressed me to attend the Confirmation Class and me, being a reasonably good person, said "OK" even though maybe I really didn't want to go. See, I'm a good son, I'm a good daughter, Jesus, I try to do what I'm told and measure up to what my parents think. I'm going to go one day maybe to college and then get a job and get married and have some nice children who I'm, going to require to go to the Confirmation Class also when they get old enough, because, see, Jesus, that's what basically good people do. If I have to go to Confirmation Class in order to please my parents and in order to get to heaven then I'll do it. Because, you see, Jesus, I'm a basically good person and all. Me being the rich young confirmand and all...

But see, the problem is this –Basically good people, who think they've obeyed all the commandments from their youth, DON'T GET to GO to HEAVEN. People who think they have no need of Jesus, have no need for God in their life, have no need for a SAVIOR, don't inherit eternal life –only those who know they need Jesus do. *"I am the way and the truth and the life", says Jesus, "No one comes to the Father but by me."* (John 14: 7) *Rich young Stu –do you need Jesus? Do you need a Savior or not?????*

No, no, Jesus, see I'm self sufficient and all. I have this perfect plan for my life already. I've figured it out already. I know what school I'm going to, I know what my profession is going to be, I have a pretty good idea where I'm going to live and the car I'm going to drive and the life I'm going to lead. Of course, I'll be a member of a church and have my name on the rolls, because basically good people always do, and, of course, when I get married I'll get married in church, because its so pretty and all and basically good

people always get married in church. And then if I have a baby, of course, I'll want them baptized because I want them to go to heaven, also, and I wouldn't want someone to think I was a bad parent because I didn't get my baby baptized. And then someday I'll pass away and then, of course, I'll want a nice funeral in the church and the preacher to say a few kind words over me and then, of course, because I'm such a nice person and all, you'll just have to grant me eternal life, right Jesus??????

So Jesus then in effect says, so if the first commandment is *"You shall have no other gods before me"* and if you've obeyed that from your youth, and you're not into idolatry, not into worshipping things, not into putting material things over your relationship with God, not into your own life plan so much you cannot see God's life plan for you, then Rich Young Confirmand you ought to have no problem whatsoever just giving up everything of value in your life –your things, your plans, your future—in order to COME and FOLLOW ME??????? Right? I mean, says Jesus, if all that stuff just means nothing to you, like you said it doesn't, you can throw it all away today...and follow me, right????? Stu –*"You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor...and come, follow me."* (Mark 10: 21)

And then there is the saddest sentence in all of scripture. Having never read this story before I didn't know how it ended. I figured out there would be a happy ending –you know, young man does what Jesus says and rides off happily into the sunset. "The End." But that doesn't happen. The young man turns and walks away from Jesus, *"his countenance fell"* and *"he was sorrowful"*. He turned and walked away from Jesus and in his turning away he turned away from eternal life in Christ, as well. When he turned he answered his own original question. I remember the moment well. I was reading this scripture in my law school dorm room in the Saddler Curtelege. I was stunned how the story ended. And I remember saying out loud: "Lord, I don't ever want to turn away from following you..." Confirmation Class, never turn away and fail to follow Jesus...

We lack one thing. Its not education. Its not a nice upbringing. Its not anything material. Its not friendships or a future. Its not nice parents or a nice home. We have been given everything. As Americans the poorest person here is rich by the standards of the rest of the world. But we lack ONE THING. Or should I say, we lack ONE PERSON. We lack Jesus. The very thing the rich young ruler needed was standing right in front of him. We need God in our life; we need a Savior. People need the Lord. We're in spiritual trouble when we think we don't. And what Jesus was really asking the rich young man was not so much to give up all his material possessions as Jesus was asking Him to give up his own plan for his own future and his own life...and to take on the agenda and the plan and the life Jesus had in mind for him. The young man couldn't envision his life any way other than the way he had planned it. Giving up his agenda was too great a price for following Jesus and so he turned away...

"Is Jesus Christ your Lord and your Savior?" we will ask. He's not your Lord if you do not follow Him. He's not your Savior if you don't think you need Him every day. He's not your Lord **and** your Savior if you're not willing to lay down your life, your own personal agenda, your own plans for your own life...and follow Him and take on HIS plan for your life...TODAY...

Today, whether you knew it or not, you've come up to Jesus and said: **"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"** Are you really ready to hear His answer? Will you follow Him, today and tomorrow and in every tomorrow? Or will you turn and walk away? It was a question posed to me, in a dusty law school dorm room, a long, long time ago. And it is the same question I pose to you today... Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*