



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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THE RICH YOUNG RULER

MATTHEW 19

~ Brent Russell ~

- We continue meeting people who met with Jesus
- Last week Rod preached about this **madman** and the influence of evil in his life and the freedom that Jesus brings and the power Jesus has over the influence of evil, over nature and over death and illness
- Today we meet a **yuppie**
- Simple as that a yuppie, **rich young ruler**
- Perhaps a little like some of our **younger, affluent politicians in RSA**
- Wealthy, a little arrogant, dressed in the right suit and driving the right car
- **I am going to try to steer the sermon away from finances**
- **The story is about money at one level** – but I believe that it could be one of a multitude of things other than money and still not lose it's impact
- In this young man's case money was the thing that kept him from God
- **I think Rod and I have been pushing you enough about helping the poor**
- **And two weeks ago I preached on how hard it is for proud, rich people to get to a place of being open to receiving God's grace.**
- **So I do not want to make this sermon about the money**
- I do believe there are some important principles that we can learn from this story apart from the money
- **Principals about how God loves us**
- **And some principals about how we should love others**
- **So lets read together**

Read: Matthew 19:16-28

- This is a powerful story with another powerful person
- **This young man perhaps in his thirties has everything going for him**
- He is obviously **very bright** as even though he is young he is a ruler, unusual for people who usually put older men into power – the elders
- He is like a young politician
- **He is younger than his colleagues – perhaps especially bright and has made a meteoric rise to power**
- He would wear **Armani suits**
- Probably has a **Rolex watch**
- **And he would probably drive a Porsche with a bumper sticker that says "He who dies with the most toys wins"**
- Really the dictionary definition of a yuppie

- **This young man Meets this day with Jesus – travelling preacher who speaks of heaven and eternal life with God**
- **And as He meets with Jesus he meets not only a wise religious teacher but he is also faced with the most profound love in all the universe**
- **The love of God given to us through Jesus his Son**
- And despite standing before Jesus he **rejects the love of Jesus** and walks away

- **I tell all the couples that I marry that there are some misconceptions in our modern minds about love**
- **And I do believe that there are some issues about the love of Christ that we also have mistaken belief about**

- **I have said it again and will always say it - Jesus loves all people**
- **There is no sin that can separate us from Christ's love**
- He loves all people irrespective of their **race colour or creed**
- **He continues to love us even though we are sinful people**

- **The love of Jesus is always there**
- And it is **always the same**
- **Calling, drawing and persuading** us to come to him – to have life given to us
- Christ will continue to call us through the power of the Holy Spirit until the day we die

- **That is his nature – to love eternally**
- He will continue to call us into His arms, back to himself
- **2 Tim 2:13 Says that even if we are faithless, He will remain faithful for He cannot disown himself**

- **He will continue to love even if we choose to not accept that love**
- But the love of God given to us in Jesus is not a **wishy woshy kind of sentimentalism**
- The idea that the love of God is like a soft cuddly toy
- **The love of Jesus desires the best for us and sometimes it may mean being a little tough**
- **The love of Christ is not something that always fit's comfortably**

- **However there are places where our lives may have to be reshaped if they are to fit the love of Christ**
- We come to him with all sorts of **baggage** – all sorts of issues and for Jesus love to fit us well these things have to be left behind
- **This young ruler comes with all his wealth and power**
- And as he is faced with the fullness of Jesus love He is asked to leave these things behind

- **A little like buying a pair of shoes that fit perfectly except for one spot that causes you pain because of a plantar wart or something similar**
- And so for the shoe to fit you may need to have the wart cut out
- And so it is as this young man experiences Jesus love
- There are parts of his life that don't quite fit the love
- **And it causes him pain because Jesus love does not accept things in our lives that are harmful to us, or distressing to Him**
- **There is a place where Jesus love will not bend to fit you**
- **But rather our lives must be moulded and shaped to fit him**
- **There are attitudes and actions in our lives that will cause us pain and rightly so when pushed on by Jesus love**
- In this case the great love this young man has for material things does not fit in with Jesus love for him

- **Christ has higher expectations, higher hopes, greater dreams**
- **You see Jesus loves you just the way you are, but he will not leave you that way**
- As you come to Him there are things that must be **pruned away**
- Surgically removed if need be
- Jesus understands the **damaging nature of the value this man has placed on something** else other than God
- And rather than allow this things to stay behind and be enveloped by Jesus love he would rather separate himself from Jesus

- **Jesus because he love's simply will not accept some of these things in our lives**
- **They are destructive, damaging and will slowly smother spiritual life to death**
- I want to make this a little more practical for our own lives and hopefully illustrate more clearly what I believe this incident in Jesus life tells us about His love

Parents

- **Parenting skills these day seem to lack some aspects of Christ like love**
- **Sadly many parents in this day and age let their children get away with everything**
- **Young children demand** and parents respond by **giving**
- **Teenagers rebel** and parents bend to **avoid conflict**
- And **Young adults lose morals** and **parents condone** the behaviour

- James Dobson wrote a great book on **tough love**
- Probably the hardest thing a parent ever has to do
- But there are times when tough love is the only answer
- **Times when love has to be hard for it to be love or else it becomes a destructive influence masquerading as love**

- **It would have been easy for Jesus to tell this young ruler all sorts of things to make him feel better about himself**
- Jesus could easily have told him all the 'right' things to smooth over the issues in his life
- If Jesus had done this his words would have **appeared on the surface as loving and kind** - but would have in fact been a **lie** that would have led in any case to the eternal death of this young man

- **It's a little like a friend asking if there is traffic coming before stepping into the road and because you want to be affirmative and loving you don't want to speak the truth**

- **The role of a parent's love for children is not to be a friend of the child**
- **But for the parent to be a parent**
- This kind of real love is the kind of love that **gives the child what they need not what they want**
- **This young ruler wants an easy way to eternal life**
- **This young man wants the love of God without being prepared to change His life**
- **He wants the blessings of God but it not prepared to get his life to a place where God can bless him**
- **He wants God to give but is not himself prepared to give up**
- **Because Jesus loves** this young man he **tells him the truth not a comfortable lie**
- **Because Jesus loves** him he **lets him walk away** on his own path
- **Because Jesus loves him he does not give him what he wants when it would be a lie**
- **There are time when parental love will require that the parent speaks the truth in love**
- There will be times when you **give children what they need, not what they want**
- **There will be times when the correct discipline is to let a child leave home if they are not going to play by the rules of the home**
- **To accept destructive behaviour is not loving – because love builds up it does not destroy**
- And so sometimes love has to be tough for it to be love at all
- **I love the outdoors and almost as much I love outdoors gear**
- Let me tell you if I had all the money in the world I would spend it on outdoor gear, packs, ropes, boots whatever
- **A good hiking boot is not always comfortable for the first couple of miles**
- They are hard and stiff
- **A soft shoe seems so much more comfortable initially**
- But it provides **no protection** against sharp stones
- It **does not support** the ankles on uneven ground
- **And it will not last the distance it will fall apart**

- Real love sometimes has to be tough to get to the end for which it was created – seeking the best for the other
- **In this case the end of Jesus love – it's goal is that we might share eternity with Him**
- **God's purpose in sending Jesus was that we might have a glimpse of eternity and be drawn into it's eternal light**
- **Jesus came that we might worship Him in this life and the next**

Lovers

- **In our romantic relationships there are also times when love has to let someone go on their own journey**
- **These are almost always deeply painful, gut-wrenching decisions that hurt intensely**
- But there are times when real love has to say to someone enough is enough
- **There are times when partners will choose behaviour that is destructive to the relationship or destructive to their lover**
- It can be **physical abuse** of a spouse or lover or perhaps a child
- It could be **substance abuse** of either drugs, booze or prescription medication that destroys the mind and the relationship
- It could be **affection** for another person outside of that relationship – adulterous thoughts or actions
- It could be **inappropriate sexual intimacy** in a relationship between two teenagers in love or people unmarried
- **Real love does not tolerate these kinds of behaviour**
- **Abusive, manipulative or selfish or half hearted**
- **Real love rejoices with the truth**
- **It desires to turn the person around**
- It wishes for **restoration**
- It clings to the hope that the **wayward person will return to good sense**
- **It always hopes and believes that the loved will return to the lovers arms**
- **As 1 Corinthians 13 affirms Love always hopes, always perseveres love never fails**

- **However real love also says there are boundaries here over which I will not step**
- **For my sake and for yours**
- **Real love stands up for truth**
- **1 Cor 13:6 'Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth'**
- **This means that real love also knows that there are boundaries**
- Real love also says at some point **I will follow you no further on this path** that you have chosen because to do so would be to follow a lie
- Real love will wait patiently for that person to return but it will not follow that person down the road that leads to destruction
- Am I making myself clear hear?
- There is a point at which real love says I cannot do this
- I will not accept this
- I will follow you no further
- There is a place where real love says enough is enough
- For your sake and for mine I will go no further
- **In the life of the rich young ruler Jesus exposes the lie of his life and the true nature of what it is that holds his worship**
- Rod mentioned in a sermon some weeks ago that **you will worship something** in your life
- There is always going to be something that we will worship either God or something or someone else
- We cannot help it - we have been **designed by God for worship** and so we will worship something
- **And in this man's life it happens to be money**
- **It could have any one of a number of things, self, sex, drugs, status, nature, TV, music**
- **And Jesus by letting him go is saying my love has a boundary here**
- **The boundary is that you must love me and no other**
- **Anything other than that is not love but a lie**
- **And so when a lover chooses certain behaviour there are points at which we must be able to say – no further or this ceases to be love and becomes the lie**

- **To turn a blind eye to an adulterous partner is not loving it is a lie because you are afraid of facing the truth and losing that person – but you have lost them already**
 - **To allow a spouse who is abusing addictive substance to do it unchallenged is not loving it is a lie because you are afraid of the tough journey out of addiction**
 - **To allow a lover who is not married to you to be intimate with you even if you desire it is not loving it is a lie because it is no longer love but lust – love waits for marriage**
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- Are you with me here – there is a place of truth where love says I can go further or else this love becomes a lie
 - And this Young man is **left to go on his own journey**
 - And Jesus **does not call him back**
 - I imagine that as Jesus watched him there must have been a **tear in his eye** and a **lump in his throat**
 - Christ , filled with **disappointment, anguish & regret** – but standing at the point of truth
 - A deep sadness that this young man had stepped outside of the love of God
 - **An anguish that this young man would rather worship something than worship God**
 - In the story of the **madman from last week** Jesus leaves the village when they tell him to go
 - In the story of the **prodigal son** the Dad lets his son go
 - And does not go and find him
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- There is a place where God says to those who turn away **"My love will go no further down that road"**
 - **I will wait here – but I will not follow**

- **There is no indication in the passage that this young man ever returns**
- In my heart I hope that some days or weeks later in a low moment he realized that something other than God held his worship
- And that he was able to come back and worship God as he had been designed to do from the moment of his conception
- **Like the prodigal I hope that he came back to the father when at his lowest moment at rock bottom he realized that he must return to find that incredible love**
- **Returning to that place of grace where we find our true humanity**
- **I hope this young man did return to Jesus but we are never told ...**
- **The grace of God is such though that he waits at that place of departure for our return**
- I imagine in my mind the dad in the prodigal son always making sure that he is **never out of sight of the road on which his son may come back any moment**
- Always waiting, always hoping, always ready with open arms
- Nothing has changed in 2000 years
- **God's love is the same and His grace is the same**
- He for those who have stepped away from him
- For those who have said get away from me
- **He waits patiently**
- **Like a father waiting for the long lost son**
- **God's love will always persevere hoping that that the lost will come back**
- **Always hoping that those who worship other things would come back and worship Him**
- **1 Corinthians 13 says and so these three remain, faith, hope and love but the greatest of these is love**
- **God is love – he is the definition of love**
- **A love that never fails, a love that never ends a love that stands up for truth and hates evil**
- **A love That gives the model of love that we must mirror in all our love relationships**
- **A model of love that also says I will not accept that because it is bad for you and it would make love become a lie**
- **But I will wait - I will wait for your return**