

## Almost A Disciple

Franklin Church of Christ  
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PM Assembly

### Introduction:

We know him as “the Rich Young Ruler”. He was almost a disciple, but the cost of discipleship was simply too high. We have read the story before in **Matthew 19**, **Mark 10** and in the text we will be using today, **Luke 18:18-23**. We have read this passage numerous times and asked lots of questions about that rich young ruler. What was his motivation? What kind of man was he? What was his background? This time lets ask questions about ourselves. These questions will force us to leave behind the surface issues about possessions and strike at the heart of whether or not we are truly devoted to Jesus or only almost disciples?

### Discussion:

- I. Do I live as though Jesus was merely good, or as though He is truly God?
  - A. Before answering the ruler’s question, Jesus comments on the young man’s statement: “Good Teacher” (**Luke 18:18**). Jesus is not questioning His own deity, as some suppose. Rather, He is expressing His goodness and His Godhood. The ruler recognized Jesus as a good man, a man whose teachings were worthy of great consideration. But Jesus wants the ruler to know the full truth. He is not speaking to one “good teacher” among many. He is talking to God in the flesh. He is talking to the only “good Teacher”. His words are not advice. They are directives.
  - B. The rich young ruler, however, did not recognize Jesus to be God. From the beginning of this tale to its end, he saw Jesus as nothing more than a good teacher. A man whose advice he should hear and consider, but His words were not commands to be followed. Thus, when Jesus explained the ruler needed to sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Him, he did not obey. To the ruler, these were not the words of God Himself. These were not the commands of the Almighty. So, in the end what Jesus said might be important, but unnecessary.
  - C. That is the ruler’s story. But what about me? What about you? Our view of Jesus is not demonstrated by what we say, but by what we do. No doubt you and I argue doctrinally for the deity of Christ [**John 1:1**; **Colossians 2:9**; et.al.]. We believe Jesus was more than man. He was God and man at the same time. That is what we say, but how do we live? In our lives, is Jesus merely good or truly God? As **Luke 6:46** demonstrates, when we see Jesus as Lord, we will do what He says. If we do not do what He says, then we do not view Him as Lord.
  - D. When Jesus says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” do you get baptized for salvation? Or do you think it is only a nice thing to do if you want [**Mark 16:16**]? When Jesus says you should lay up treasure in heaven, do you do it? Or are you trying to serve both God and mammon [**Matthew 6:19-24**]? When Jesus (remember that the entire Bible is the word of Jesus) says you are to submit to your husband, do you obey or claim that advice doesn’t apply to your situation [**Ephesians 5:22**]? When Jesus says you are to love your wife as yourself, do you obey or do you continue in selfishness [**Ephesians 5:28**]? How do you live? Is Jesus merely a good man to you, whose words are weighty but unnecessary? Is He someone you want to follow, so long as His words are pleasing and He doesn’t ask too much? Or is He God, someone you follow because He is your Lord, whether you like where He leads or not?
- II. Who is my god?
  - A. I am intrigued by the list of commandments Jesus set before the ruler. Jesus referred to five of the commandments about man’s relationship with other men. From **Exodus 20:12-17**, Jesus reminded the ruler he was not to commit adultery, murder, steal, bear false witness and he must honor his father and mother. According to the rich young ruler, he had kept all these commands from his youth up.
  - B. But what about the other commandments? Had the rich young ruler kept them? No doubt, he thought he had. Surely, he was not being a stickler and thinking in his mind, “I sure am glad he didn’t mention the commandment about graven images.” He recognized Jesus was giving a representative list and not an exhaustive list of the only commandments he had to follow. The young man believed he had kept the law and asked, “What else?” Jesus cut to the quick, demonstrating that despite what this man thought, he had not kept the Law. In fact, the rich young ruler had violated the very first command. “You shall have no other gods before me”

(**Exodus 20:3**). The rich young ruler had a god that was keeping him from following Jehovah God. He had a god that caused him to turn away in sadness from the very Jehovah God who stood before him, teaching him: his possessions. The young ruler was trying to serve God and mammon at the same time, and as Jesus had earlier taught in His Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 6:24**), he couldn't do it.

- C. That is the ruler's story. But what about me? What about you? Who is our god? Is Jehovah our God? Or is something else our god? Is there something in your life that keeps you from following Jesus wherever He leads? If there is, then know you can boast, as did the young ruler, of all the commandments you have kept, but your god is not Jehovah. Is there some part of your life you are unwilling to surrender to Christ? Then do not claim Jesus is your God.
- D. Remember Jesus' words from **Matthew 5:29-30**. If your hand or eye causes you to stumble, get rid of it. Let us not spend so much time explaining the figurative nature of this command that we miss the point. Jesus is giving the general principle in **Matthew 5:29-30** that He applied specifically to the ruler in **Luke 18:22**. Don't let anything get in the way of your service to God. If materialism is a stumbling block, get rid of your materialism. If sexual lust is a temptation, purify your heart and cleanse your mind. If friends or family are coming between you and Christ, then strengthen your love for God. If your boss or co-workers are leading you astray, then start leading them on the right path. Do not be distracted by any of these other "gods". Rather, love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind (**Luke 10:27**).

### III. What do I value?

- A. At first glance, the rich young ruler appeared to value eternal life. Despite his status as a ruler among the Jews, he came kneeling before Jesus (**Mark 10:17**) asking how to inherit eternal life. Additionally, he believed he scrupulously kept the Law. Further, we find that was willing to go even beyond keeping the Law and asks Jesus, "What else?" At this point, who would question that this man values eternal life?
- B. But in **Luke 18:22-23**, we learn despite all of this show of man's works, he did not value eternal life. Perhaps I should not describe it that way. He did value eternal life. But he valued his possessions more. For him, giving up his money, land and possessions in exchange for eternal life just wasn't a fair trade. He would be giving too much and receiving too little in return. Despite appearances, gaining eternal life wasn't a driving core value of this young ruler. It was only an aspirational value. That is, he had aspirations of gaining eternal life. But that desire did not so drive him that he would do whatever it took. He would long for it, he would do some things for it, but he had limits. There were some things he simply wouldn't sacrifice for eternal life. So, he went away sad. His driving core values focused on material things. Therefore, he would sacrifice everything, including eternal life, to keep his possessions.
- C. That is the ruler's story. But what about me? What about you? What do we value? No doubt, we all value eternal life. That is why we are attending this assembly and listening to a sermon. But, do we value eternal life above all else? Or is there something else out there that we value more than even eternal life? Is there something we wouldn't give up if Jesus asked us to? This is a truly soul searching question. It is a difficult question to ask. It is difficult, because if we value something more than eternal life, we typically blind ourselves so that we do not see that the way we are living is in opposition to Jesus' teaching. We convince ourselves we would surely give up anything Jesus' asks, and then read the scriptures in such a way we don't think He has asked us to give up anything. Frankly, I can hear the saddened rich young ruler walking away from Jesus muttering to himself, "You can't show me in the Law where it says I have to give up my possessions."
- D. There is a simple way to determine what you really value. But you have to be brutally honest with yourself. You see, when asked in a Bible class what we value most, we will say, "Eternal life." We will say, "Saving the lost." We will say, "Edifying the saved." We will say, "Helping a brother or sister in need." But our actual values are not demonstrated by what we say. They are demonstrated by what we do. Consider Paul; he claimed knowing Jesus was of surpassing value to everything else in the world (**Philippians 3:8**). Was that really what he valued? Or was he just saying that? Read the rest of **Philippians 3:4-11**. He gave up everything else in order to know Jesus and be in the resurrection. We know what he valued, not because he told us, but

because of what he did. Just so, if you want to know what you truly value, look at how you spend your time and your money. Do you spend time studying, praying, teaching, serving, etc.? If not, don't say you value eternal life. Do you spend your money to serve God, further the spread of His gospel or help your brethren? If not, do not say you value eternal life. It is not enough to say you value eternal life, you have to live it. I guarantee you, the place, work or aspect of your life where you spend your time and your money is what you value most. What do you value?

**Conclusion:**

Too often we sit in our easy chairs looking back at this rich young ruler who was almost a disciple. We sit in amazement that he wasn't willing to give up all his possessions in order to gain eternal life. Let us not be so busy thinking about the rich young ruler that we don't ask the important questions this story brings up about our lives. Do we live as though Jesus was merely good or truly God? Who is our God? And what do we value? These are the questions that pull us beneath the surface, taking us from the shallow end of God's pool to the deep end. Being honest with ourselves on these questions will drive us to greater devotion and lead us to eternal life. What is your answer to these questions? Are you only almost a disciple or are you all the way a disciple?