

Matthew 19: Children, Salvation, Reward

Vss. 13-15 – The Children

I know these couple of verses are easy to overlook when we read this chapter. Especially given that Jesus had just spoke about a the more difficult topics of divorce and abstinence. But I encourage you to consider the promise being taught here. Just as Jesus demonstrates here, we cannot be so quick to overlook the children. So often we see the children as beneath us or not worthy of the time necessary for sharing the message of the gospel. However, if we take this approach in ministry, in our homes, here at church, then we miss out a grand opportunity to take part in placing the words of the Bible into their minds. Will young infant children understand what is being taught. Not likely. But the more they see the adults in the room participating in their little worlds, the more they will see and know that the Christian life is significant. Most Biblical scholars, and rightly so, also use these verses to encourage parents considering divorce, to think long and hard about the results a divorce will have on their children. One of the biggest obstacles our children face is that of being raised in single-parent homes. Being shuffled form one home to the other. Children need consistency from both parents, and they need to know they are genuinely loved. The actions of Jesus in these moments speak more than words could have. Marks account says that Jesus blessed them before sending them away. If the kids were important enough for a blessing, then they are important enough to include in our lives and in our ministry.

Vss. 16-22 – The Rich Young Ruler

How does this young man approach Jesus? Does he see Him as Lord? I love the way Jesus replies to his question. Jesus says to the young man if you see that I am good, then theirs is so much more to it than just seeing it. Jesus informs the young man that He is good because He is God, the only one perfectly good. Jesus then proceeds to provide an answer to the young man's question. He directs the young man to the back portion of the 10 commandments. Bonus points if you can tell me which of last six commandments Jesus excludes. (See Exodus 20) Jesus was presenting Himself to this young man in hopes that he would enter true life in this moment. He was pointing out the difficulty associated with upholding the high standards of God and believing that one could get to God based on one's own merits. Upon hearing this, the young ruler declared that he was good. He believed that he was righteous because he had not broken any of these laws. What did Jesus tell him in response? The young man, filled with self-righteousness, refused to admit his own sin. He simply didn't recognize that his sin, was his love for self, which broke the first commandments, which speak about our relationship with God. Unfortunately, this young man, with the gospel literally staring him in the face, refused to willingly surrender everything for the sake of Christ. The young man simply couldn't justify the need to follow Him.

Vss. 23-30 – Rewards

Let's address this saying first. There are 2 trains of thought on this. First, and perhaps the most obvious is the literal translation of what Jesus is saying. He is presenting a scenario that is impossible for man to accomplish. He wanted to prove that salvation can only come through the gift of divine grace, and it didn't matter if they were poor or wealthy. Some people believe this passage is referring to a gate in Jerusalem called "The Eye of the Needle", where camels had to kneel and crawl to get through the gate. People use this to teach that humility is required to enter heaven. Which do you think is more accurate? I believe, given the context of this passage, Jesus was referring to a real needle's eye and the impossibility of passing a camel through it. Why? It makes more logical sense when considering salvation. Only God can make someone new. Only God can regenerate someone. Not the efforts of man.

Look at Peter's reaction. Peter wasn't being selfish. He was acknowledging that he and the other disciples met this requirement. He was wondering what they would receive for the devotion to Jesus. I know Peter wasn't being selfish here because Jesus didn't scold him as in the past. Instead, Jesus told him about the great reward awaiting them. This is a prophetic promise to them as well as to us. If we faithfully follow Jesus, one day, we too will receive our ultimate rewards.