

February 13

Scriptures: Read Matthew 19 & 20

Key Verse: “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Matthew 19:30)

Overview

A rich young man comes up to Jesus and says, “What must I do to get eternal life?” Jesus’ response is a little strange. He says, “Why do you ask Me about what is good? There’s only one who is good.” The initial impression is that this is a bit of a put down. But then again, maybe Jesus is just trying, as he often does, to shock His listener into attention by saying what He least expected to hear. He then gets into the expected answer. “If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” He asks which ones, and Jesus says such and so. And the young fellow says, “I’ve kept all of these.” Jesus then tells him that if he wants to become prefect, to go, sell his possessions to the poor, and then he’ll have treasure in heaven. Well, the young man left him sadly, because he had a lot of money.

At this point, Jesus uses the opportunity to teach His disciples that it’s very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The disciples want to get a little deeper into this. In fact, they’re greatly astonished and ask, “Well then. Who can be saved?” And Jesus says, “Naturally speaking, in the human realm, it’s impossible to be saved. Only with God is it possible to be saved.” Peter says, “Look, we’ve left everything to follow You. What’s going to be in it for us?” Jesus then tells them that whoever has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, will receive one hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Then He throws in a disclaimer. Many who are first shall be last, and many who are last shall be first. This is, perhaps, to avoid any attempt on the disciples’ part, or on ours, to reduce entry into the kingdom of heaven to a legalism such as” if you leave what’s valuable to you, or sell what is valuable, you’re guaranteed eternal life. Jesus says, “Not necessarily so.” A lot who appear to have done all this, in God’s eyes still will be lost. And many who have appeared to have neglected this, will be found. Obviously, He’s telling us, among other things, that what He said to the rich young ruler was a specific instance and shouldn’t be overly generalized.

Prayer

Your ways, oh Lord, are so much higher than ours. Thank You that you’re in control and know best, even when Your ways conflict with our earthly values.