

One Thing You Lack January 27, 2019

One of my many careers was being the activities director at the Norwegian Christian home for the elderly.

I had those little old people just a hoppin'!

I had a big day planned, a field trip the botanical gardens in Brooklyn.

I had all my ducks in a row.

I'd done all the advertising.

I got the bus there at 9:00 sharp.

I got 50 residents safely to their seats.

Spirits were high as we as we made our way into downtown Brooklyn and up to the entrance to the botanical gardens.

It was then I realized there was a ONE THING I had failed to do.

I had failed to see if the botanical gardens would be open.

It was Monday.

I have done everything, but I lacked ONE THING, one essential thing

I wasn't the first person to miss the ONE THING . . .

Let's listen to a story that raises more *questions* than it answers.

Meet the Rich Young Ruler . . .

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YehxfK8oXx0>

Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

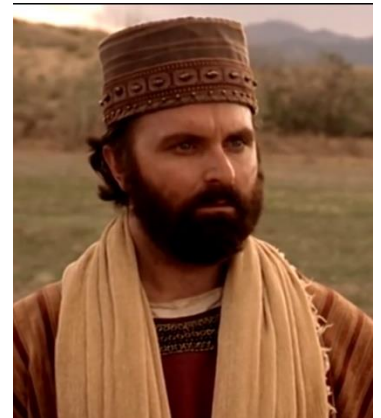
²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said.

"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"



²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said,

“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

(Sentences in bold are commentary which were not included in the video)

ONE THING you lack:

“ONE THING you lack,” he said.

“Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

He got an unexpected jolt, just like I did.

What questions does this story raise?

What does the Rich Young Ruler (RYR) have in mind when he says, “eternal life?”

Was he worried, “What will happen to me after I die?”

Like, “Do I get to live forever heaven when I die?”

Of course, *these* questions are locked into our conception of time as linear.

It starts at one point on the line and then just keeps going.

I’m not sure if this is how the RYR understood eternal life,

but I know it’s *NOT* how Jesus understood eternal life.

Here’s Jesus in his own words, spoken to the Father, John 17:3

Now this is eternal life:

that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

When does Jesus expect that this will happen?

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life,
but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Eternal life is something the person who believes HAS -- present tense.
It's a spiritual quality that surpasses physical life.
It is a quality, a vibrancy in life that is of such essence
that it can't be destroyed by physical death.

I'm not sure which understanding of eternal life the RYR had,
but in either case he's not sure that he has it.
Either he's not sure he has his ticket to heaven OR
The vitality of life he sees in Jesus.

What made the RYR uncertain he had eternal life?

- Did he have a gut feeling that something was missing?
- Perhaps he was a good person and very successful, but didn't give him the satisfaction that he had expected?

We don't know, but *he* knew *something* was missing.

What does asking, "What must I *DO* to inherit eternal life?"
reveal about his religious assumptions?

If the RYR is thinking eternal life means going to heaven, then, "What must I *do*"
means he assumes heaven is something to be earned by good behavior."

You know, if my good outweighs my bad, I get to go to heaven.

Most of you grew up believing that.

Even if it wasn't what you were taught, it's what you believed, may still believe.

And as far as being good is concerned, the RYR thinks he's right up there with the best.
The guy very proudly says, "Check, check, check, check; I've done *all* that."
But he's worried, maybe it isn't good enough.

However, if the RYR more accurately understands eternal life as that vibrant life force,
then he's assuming that the deep satisfaction and vitality he's looking for
can be obtained by *doing* more good things.

In either case, his assumptions are wrong.

Pristine performance can't guarantee either one of the desirable goals.

He's wrong in his assumption that goal of religion is to make people good.

If being good is the goal of religion, then the atheists make a really good point, namely, an atheist can be as good as a religious person.

You don't need to believe in God to be a good person.

Jesus upends all of this obsession with being good and declares the goal of faith is very different.

I have come that you may have life (eternal life) and have it more abundantly.

Not, I have come to make people good so God will be happy.

It's not our goodness that make God happy;

It's our being full of JOY and LIFE is what makes God happy.

Jesus' heart's desire is that we *experience* eternal life, right here, right now.

And eternal life is **KNOWING GOD and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.**

If our focus is on our own goodness as the goal,

we will never get close to knowing God and Jesus Christ.

Striving for goodness may make me more commendable in my own eyes.

but the transforming power of Jesus won't have touched me.

Granted, once you have experienced following Jesus, walking with Jesus, you will desire goodness in your life, but the goal will not be goodness, but closeness to the Lord.

Then you instinctively want to get rid of anything

that interferes with the beautiful rhythm of walking with Jesus.

The entire game plan changes!

Which of the 10 commandment does Jesus leave out, and why?

He mentions 6, numbers 4-9.

He leaves out commandments 1, 2, 3 and 7.

He leaves out number 7, do no envy, because it is a motive, and not observable.

He leaves out one two and three because they are about loving God, not being "good"

Jesus is hoping for a moment of self-discovery.

which leads to the next question . . .

What did that the RYR actually lack?

Loving the Lord with all his heart, all his mind and all his soul.

The RYR thought the goal post was doing good things.

And he's got the ball and is running hard to the goal posts.
It's just he couldn't see he was running toward the wrong goal post.

(Good day for a football metaphor.

I, on behalf of John, say,

Go Patriots!

And most of you probably are saying, "Wrong goal post!")

Let me tell you a story about mixing up goal posts.

I was a waitress at Alphy's restaurant in California.

I prided myself in how fast and efficient I was.

I could wait more tables in an hour's time than anyone in that restaurant!

I could carry 4 glasses of water in one hand and not spill a drop.

I could carry 6 plates on my arm and flawlessly set them down before the customers.

One day the owners came in to do a review of the staff.

I was anticipating how impressed they were going to be with my performance.

I was stunned when I got one of the lowest performance grades.

You know why? I was running toward the wrong goal posts.

I thought speed and efficiency was the goal, or at least *SHOULD* be the goal!

Nope!

There was ONE THING that was important to them.

It was *consistently* using this large orange tray to carry all the plates.

BUT, I was *faster* just stacking the plates on my arms!

Speed was good . . . but speed was the wrong goal post.

What was important to *them* was the ORANGE TRAY!

The orange tray said class and style which trumped speed and efficiency.

This RYR had excelled in good works

He could DO lots of things really well, which was good,

but it was the wrong goal post.

He missed what was *most* important.

Love, Love, Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart.

Don't show me what you can *do*.

Show me how much you *love*.

Follow me, walk with me.

Did you know the average New Jerseyan checks their phone 150 times daily?
How would your life change if you checked in with Jesus 150 times daily?
You might just experience eternal life, [Knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he sent](#).

10

Why did Jesus tell him to sell all his possessions?

Why did Jesus put his finger on *that* for *this* person?

He never said that to his dear friends Lazarus, Mary of Martha,
who were wealthy land owners . . .

He never told Nicodemus, a well-to-do religious leader,

That he had to sell all he had in order to be born again . . .

He never said that to anyone else for that matter.

Why does *this* man have to sell all his possessions
and give it to the poor in order to have eternal life?

Cause Jesus could see that the RYR didn't have money.

His money had him.

It's what he depended on for his self-esteem.

It was the measure of his success and accomplishments

It's what he depended on for his security.

It's what gave him standing and influence in his community.

His identity was all wrapped up in his wealth.

It's the ONE THING he valued more than God himself.

I don't think he knew that about himself – but Jesus did.

Why are we told that Jesus loved him? (narrator comment)

I think we're told this because what Jesus is about to say may seem cruel.

Certainly, it seems foolish if you're trying to grow your following!

Hey, this is our model congregant.

Every pastor's prayer come true.

He's rich! And he admires you!

He probably believes in tithing!

He's in good standing in the community, (has contacts and influence)

Wouldn't we love someone so eager for good works!

Why would Jesus want to make it difficult to join the ranks?
Hey, roll out the red carpet and say, welcome!

But no, sell everything and give it to the poor,
Can't you hear the disciples?
Jesus! We could use some of that money! HA!

But no!
Jesus loved *him*, not what he had to *offer*.
And we're a bit surprised what LOVE looks like.
Apparently love is telling someone the unvarnished truth.

Why does he walk away sad?

I think he hears Jesus words like we would hear them
 There ONE THING I have to give up so God will be happy with me?
Nope!
 There's ONE THING that's standing in my way
 of experiencing eternal life, the precious knowledge of God, right now.

Jesus isn't looking at the giving up part; he's looking at the gaining part.
(for the joy set before him, he endured the cross)

The RYR sees the outcome of doing what Jesus suggested as severe deprivation.
 At one point you see him looking at this rag-tag group of disciples.
 They are probably less educated
 Certainly, making less money;
 Most likely in a lower socio/economic class.
 And he's saying . . .
Looks like a life of deprivation to me!

Jesus wasn't what I hoped he would be.
He didn't say what I hoped he would say.
He didn't help me to become more successful,
 show me how to get a better job,
 get a better husband or wife!
If I do what he suggests, I'll be worse off, not better off.

But our RYR only can see the deprivation,
 and he walks away sad.

But Jesus takes no delight in deprivation for its own sake.
Jesus is about getting rid of the obstacle to his greater satisfaction.
Jesus wasn't asking him to deprive himself; he was asking him to free himself.
We hear "take it away" as deprivation.
Jesus sees "get rid of it" as freedom.

We're not being called to deprivation, but to freedom.

And now for the biggest question of all . . .

What's the ONE THING YOU lack?

What's the ONE THING Jesus is putting his finger on
that's keeping your heart from being wholly devoted to God in love?
What's the ONE THING that is standing in the way of completely following Jesus
and experiences eternal life?

It may be so hidden from your eyes.
You might even say, There *is* no ONE THING.
Or maybe you just can't see it.
We all have our blind spots, and so we shout out, "I WANT TO SEE!"

WT come up

Coming for communion is always an an opportunity to say YES to Jesus
It always represents a point of decision in our lives.
Maybe God has put his finger on something in your life this morning that is
standing in the way of your greatest happiness,
standing in the way of your greatest usefulness,
standing in your way of experiencing the Lord's presence to the fullest.

What's Jesus putting his finger on?

- Money
- Control
- Prestige
- Honor and admiration
- Gossip
- Playing the victim
- self-indulgence
- An unhealthy relationship
- Drug of choice – alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, food, gaming,

Like with the RYR, Jesus will bring you to a defining moment.
A point of decision that may change a massive part of our life.
A moment that could change the entire trajectory of your life.
A moment which may not come again.

Jesus went first.
From Philippians 2
he made himself nothing
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

He gave it all . . . and why? For the joy set before him . . .

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Perhaps you don't know how to give it up – next week; now, just be willing