

“Someone Who Had It All, But Didn’t Have What He Really Wanted”

5/9/10

Mk. 10:17-27

Mothers’ Day

9 & 10:45 am

Series, “*Ambassador to ...*”

INTRODUCTION

“Millard Fuller sold everything from rat poison to cook books while he was in law school, and he became a millionaire by the age of twenty-nine.

He said that he had bought his wife, Linda, ‘everything’ she possibly could want, but his obsession with amassing wealth pushed her away. But, one day in the 1960s he came home to a note that announced that she had left him.

Millard went after her and caught up with her on a Saturday night in a hotel in New York City.

They talked into the wee hours of the next morning as she poured out her heart and made him see that the ‘things’ that our consumer-oriented society says are supposed to be so satisfying had left her cold.

She told him that her heart was empty and her spirit was burned out. She was dead inside and she wanted to live again.

Kneeling at their bedside in that hotel room, Millard and Linda decided to sell everything they had and dedicate themselves to serving poor people and to working for justice for the oppressed.

The next day being Sunday, they found the nearest church and went there to worship and thank God for their new beginning. They got to church early, hunted up the pastor, and told him about what had happened to them and the decision they had made.

To their surprise, the pastor told them that such a radical decision was not really necessary.

Millard said, ‘He told us that it was not necessary for us to give up everything. **He just didn’t understand that we weren’t giving up money and the things that money could buy. We were giving up a whole way of life that was killing us.**’”

Millard and Linda went on to found Habitat for Humanity.

The Fullers learned, first hand, that a life focused on more and more and more money is toxic. It will kill you. Now and after death.

This is not just the Fullers' experience, it is the teaching of Jesus, and it's a lesson we must grasp if we are going to represent Him as His Ambassadors.

There have been a few times in my life when I have spent time with wealthy people whose wealth is obvious. I have seen some of the very nice things they own.

Many years ago when Sharon worked for someone like this, I allowed myself to be somewhat intimidated in this way: I found the thought running through my head, "Why would *they* sense a need for the Lord?"

That's one reason I so appreciate this story. It reveals that even when someone has seemingly everything the world can offer, they still need a relationship with God; just like everyone else, they need Jesus to rescue them from what's stealing their lives.

OPEN to Mark 10:17 (**PAGE** 1570)

READ Mark 10:17-22

To be an effective Ambassador for Jesus you must ...

I. Believe that Having Everything the World Offers Cannot Satisfy the Soul (Mark 10:17a)

Ecclesiastes 3:11b "(God) **has planted eternity in the human heart ...**" (NLT)

It is obvious in this man who is pursuing Jesus.

This story also appears in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke:

- All three accounts mention that the man in the story was "**rich.**"
- Matthew 19:20: "**young**" (24-40 years old)
- Luke 18:18: "**ruler**" (a leader in the synagogue or a member of the Sanhedrin. This also made him a community figure)

He's young, he's a leader in his church, he's looked up, respected in his community. His wealth not only gave him social standing and special opportunities, but in the Jewish religion, wealth was considered a sign of God's favor. So, in anybody's eyes, he had a lot going for him.

In fact, from outward appearances, he seemed to have *everything* going for him.

But, for all he had in his favor, he was also unsettled in his spirit.

He is concerned about his personal eternity, his relationship with God. In fact, the way he approaches Jesus reveals that he was desperate to find the answer to a question that was tormenting his soul, “*Am I right with God? Will I go to be with Him when I die?*”

He was so serious, so consumed with finding the answer that he forgot who he was. He ran up to Jesus and bowed down to Him. Not a common thing, especially with the divided opinions about Jesus amongst the religious rulers.

This man’s story and the story of Millard and Linda Fuller, tell us that **having everything the world offers cannot satisfy the soul**, cannot replace the need for a relationship with God.

** For us to be effective ambassadors for Jesus, we have to be sure that we get this! In the money-focused, “get more and more” society in which we live, we must “get” this!

We must believe that a good, moral, religious and even wealthy life cannot fill the place God has put in our hearts that yearns for eternity ... for a relationship with God.

Everything this world offers is *nothing* compared to having peace with God through surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ!

To be an effective Ambassador for Jesus you must ...

II. Speak the Truth in Love (Mark 10:17b-20)

The passion of this man’s heart is a relationship with God ... and he knows that something—something he has not been able to identify—is in the way.

So, He begs the question, “**Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?**”

Let’s see how Jesus speaks the truth in love:

v. 18: “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good - except God alone.”

A. “Look to God” (v. 18)

This young man has been learning from “good teachers,” religious teachers, his entire life. He is now looking at Jesus as another teacher. Maybe this one will have the answer.

Jesus tells him to stop looking to teachers and to look to God.

B. Look to God's Word (v. 19)

Commandments 5-10 quoted (9 & 10 "**You shall not lie, ... covet**" are combined into: "**do not defraud**")

So, Jesus responds, "*Look to God,*" and "*Look to God's Word.*"

C. The man's response: (v. 20)

"I've done all that since I was a boy."

"My life has been characterized by obeying these commands since I was young."

"Isn't there more?"

D. Jesus' loving and honest response: (v. 21)

"Jesus looked at him and loved him." (v. 21a)

Jesus isn't frustrated with him, He isn't looking down His nose at him with an attitude of superiority. He sees the sincere yearning of his soul and He loves Him.

(He loves you, too, regardless of your struggle!)

Then Jesus told him how to attain the passion of his soul.

v. 21b: "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow Me."

That's *a shocking* answer. That seems extreme, over-the-top, awfully unreasonable.

Think with me, here ...

If Jesus had said, "*Give up your addiction to alcohol. Go home, pour out every bottle into the sink, and never drink again.*"

We'd say, "Yup. That's what you have to do if you're an alcoholic!"

If Jesus had said, "*Give up your addiction to pornography. Throw out every magazine, cancel all access to the Internet, destroy every file.*"

You might think, “It would be better if there was another way, but if that’s the only way to break the addiction, it needs to happen.”

For me, Jesus said, “Surrender your will to Mine. Surrender to Me.”

If money and possessions are the person’s addiction, we might say, “Man, isn’t there another way? Does it have to be so extreme?”

What is Jesus driving at? Jesus is saying that *whatever* is standing between us and Him has to go. There can be only one Lord in our lives.

Jesus was saying, “Quit depending on Money and start depending on Me.” “You have surrendered control of your life to Money. Your addiction is so deep and so controlling, you have to get rid of it all and surrender control of your life to Me.”

You cannot have a relationship with God on your own terms.

You must surrender whatever it is that stands in the way of complete surrender to Jesus.

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus helped this man to see something in himself he had never seen before; or had not been able to put together.

Please catch this: Jesus didn’t want his money; He told him to give it to the poor! Jesus wanted his heart!

Remember how Jesus quoted commandments 5-10 of the 10 commandments? He intentionally left out commandments 1-4 until this point in the conversation.

The man had specifically violated commandment #1:

Exodus 20:2a, 3 **“I am the LORD your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.”**

Money was this man’s true god.

In another place, Jesus said that a person cannot serve both God and Money.

This is why he has an empty soul.

The man has asked the question and he has received the answer...

To be an effective Ambassador for Jesus you must...

III. Accept that God Can Save Anyone, but Some People Say “No” (Mark 10:23-27)

READ v. 23-27

The young man walked away from eternal life that day.

He surrendered his **soul** for all *eternity* in exchange for **money** in this *brief lifetime*.

Mark Twain had a way of putting things. One time he said, *“It ain’t those parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it’s the parts that I do understand.”*

“What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?”

You know what “profit” is? In business, “profit” is what is left after you deduct all the expenses you have running the business from all the income you receive from selling things. Expenses minus income equals profit.

Jesus is asking if you gain everything the whole world can give you, but lose your soul, where is the “profit” in that? Answer: there isn’t any.

It isn’t any breaking even, either. The one who exchanges a relationship with God for anything else loses. They will spend all of eternity apart from God and everything that is good. That does not equal a neutral existence. That means they will be in the presence of absolute, unyielding, never-ending evil for all of eternity.

That isn’t God’s fault. The person chose to reject Him; they didn’t want a relationship with Him. God sent His only Son to die a cruel death to pay the penalty for our sin. He demonstrated His love like this, in history, with witnesses. The one who rejects a relationship with God, rejects God and chooses eternity without Him.

This doesn’t have to be because Jesus came to set us free!

So, what is God’s message that He calls us to carry? God loves you. Jesus died for you. Confess and lay aside what is replacing God in your life. Surrender your life to Jesus!

CONCLUSION

To be an effective Ambassador for Jesus you must...

I. Believe that Having Everything the World Offers Cannot Satisfy the Soul

II. Speak the Truth in Love

III. Accept that God Can Save Anyone, but Some People Say “No”

“Lord Jesus, I need You! Please forgive me for putting other things at the center of my life instead of You. I surrender my life to You! Please fill me with the Holy Spirit so that I can be Your Ambassador! Amen.”