

**SERMON: Matthew 19:16-26**  
**THE BALLOON THAT WILL NOT BURST!**

*Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

When I was young, maybe three or four, I distinctly remember going to the annual Firemen's Picnic, or the annual Cheesemakers' Picnic in Juneau, WI. Juneau was about the size of Lemmon. I was there with my family and Grandpa on my mother's side. Grandpa bought helium filled balloons for my older sister and me! That was something—a balloon that stayed up in the air! But then I got a little too close to Grandpa's face POW! The balloon touched the end of his lit cigarette. I was surprised and sad! I think everyone else was too. I suppose Grandpa bought me another one—I don't remember. It's always a bit of a "downer" when someone's balloon bursts. Maybe your girlfriend or boyfriend said, "It's over." Maybe your dear cat or dog got run over. Maybe your first car got wrecked. Maybe hail ruined your crop a week before harvest. Maybe you got sick right before a planned trip. Burst "balloons" all around.

In our text, a certain young man's "balloon" was burst. This account is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke—each providing a few different details. Matthew tells us that he was a "young man." Remember at Jesus' time a man was not considered an adult until age thirty. Luke also tells us he was a "ruler"—perhaps a synagogue ruler, like Jairus, whose twelve year old daughter Jesus brought back to life, or perhaps some sort of civil magistrate. That being the case, he was likely a bit old than a simple "thirty." The man was full of energy, eager, and what we might call a "high-achiever." Mark tells us he came "running" to Jesus. Mark tells he knelt before Jesus, if nothing else in a willing show of respect. He wanted Jesus to help him. He addressed Jesus as "Good Master"—seeking to win Jesus' favor. He had a very important question. *What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?* "Eternal life" was not just a later development among the early Christians. The people at Jesus' time knew from the Old Testament the truth of life after death—eternal life! This young man, a high-achiever, was very pleased with his prized "record" and his "self-achievements" in life. He had worked his way "up." He was intending to do the same to find his way to God's side in heaven. He wanted some extra input and special input from this famous teacher and prophet, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus, however, knew all things—and knows all things. He began by correcting the young man's assessment of who and what He, Jesus, really was. *Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.* In other words, if this young man considered Jesus to be just a "good" teacher who could teach him how to be "good," good enough for God, then the young man needed to know that there was no mere man who could teach him how to be that good to win God's favor on his own. That is only something God can and does teach. *No one is good but One, that is, God.* Only God can reveal that truth to you and implant His righteousness through Christ into you.

The devil seeks to implant in you and your heart the same self-sufficiency that was in the young man's heart. Maybe you're not as much of a high-energy guy or self-achiever, but the devil lies to you and leads you to think "I can do this." "I've got this. "I don't need help." It's human pride and stubbornness. Such pride shows up in life whether it's fixing a problem with the cows, in the shop, in the kitchen, or with the kids. "I don't need any help." And it certainly happens before God. When you go to bed, is it, "Sigh. God have mercy on me the sinner." Or is it, "Today was not my best, but I can and will do better tomorrow." Or is it, "Today turned out OK. There were a few bumps in the road, but I got through them. I figured them out and toughed them out. I'm glad." Beware!

Jesus steered this young man where He needed to go—to God’s Word—to find out about getting self to heaven. *“If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”* But the young man wanted to double-check and specifically asked “Which ones?” Jesus repeated for him all the commandments that have to do with one’s fellow man—4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>. In place of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> which forbid “coveting,” Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus knew exactly where this was going. The high-achiever said, “Got that! Done that--ever since my youth.” Talk about being self-confident before God! But such an attitude is not that far-fetched. “God will take me because I . . .” are thoughts that easily slide from the serpent’s tongue into your head and heart, don’t they.

The high achiever wasn’t quite satisfied. *What do I still lack?* He wasn’t quite sure. That’s the one big issue with SELF-works to get to heaven. “Is it enough? What if I’m still a little bit short? His conscience was still working. Thank the Lord for the conscience God gave you, as it prods you day by day. “You did bad. You’re not good enough.” The man was headed in the right direction by asking what am I still lacking ?—but he didn’t want to hear or admit the truth. Jesus put it right out-front for him, *If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. -- But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* The man loved His wealth and material possessions. He had only thought of getting to heaven in terms of a list of rules to check-off. He had never considered his heart and its humbly submissive repentance and love to God, instead of himself and his money. His balloon was burst, he was sad, and he left in a very dejected lack-luster way. All the things that were important to him, his wealth and his own achievements, were in his way—blocking the road between him and God.

The young man now saw he did not measure up to the bar that Jesus had set. Jesus made him sad. Was that bad on Jesus’ part? Have you ever thought, “What kind of God makes people sad or makes me be sad?” Please know, He’s not a bad God, but a loving God! Mark says “Jesus loved him.” God wants your heart to let go of everything in life other than Jesus your Savior from sin and death. It’s because He loves you. Would it make you sad if Jesus said to you, “Your wealth has to go. *If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*” Why would this make you sad? In Jesus, you are perfect before God—justified, forgiven, reconciled to the Father’s highest expectations! Jesus is your life, your Savior, and your Life to come. It is not your wealth and possessions—bank accounts, vehicles, land, property, house. It’s also not your good reputation. It’s not your recreation, entertainment, and fun time. It’s not your cell phone, your TV, your devices and games. It’s not your “crutches” and coping remedies for life that you fall back on—whether food and treats, or alcohol and drugs. Are any of these more important to you than Jesus? What if God were to say, “I know your weaknesses. I know that for you to stay close to me, it is best to take away your health, your parents, your little one, or whatever blocks the road between you and Me.” Would you go away from Jesus sad and disappointed? Or would you say, “Thank you Lord for having my eternal best interest at heart. Thank You for getting punished for my sins, and for drawing me closer to You! You lead. I will follow.”

Whether this man went home and thought about what Jesus had taught him and shown him, the Bible doesn’t say. I surely hope that he did. And I pray that you do. In Jesus you have forgiveness, in Jesus you have direction and guidance through all the sadness of life and your own personal shortcomings and sins. In Jesus you have eternal safety and sanctuary--even for death. The Great Resurrection at the Last Day and eternal life in heaven await.

Jesus told the disciples, *“Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”* Whatever comes between you and God, be it riches or any other thing, by human strength is impossible to correct it and make yourself right with God. All such balloons burst! *When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”* Good question, “How can I possibly get to heaven?” *But Jesus looked at them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* Simple answer.

Cling to Jesus. Live your life and keep His commandments, not to stockpile credits for self, but to honor Him, your God your Savior. Hear Go say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” Serving self, nothing you do in this life is acceptable to Him. You will walk away sad every time. But in Jesus-----bring out the balloons! No bursting there!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---