

06-10-12

Series: God's Economy

God's Economy (13)

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

[Matthew 19:16-22](#)

(Continuation from 05-13-12)

The Doctrine of God's Economy

How to Obtain Eternal Life ([Matthew 19:16-22](#))

The Request to Jesus

[Matthew 19:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

The young ruler could not have understood the full meaning of what he asked for, but he realized there was an important dimension to his present life, religious and prestigious as it was that was missing. Despite his high standing in men's eyes, he knew he did not have the God-given peace, rest, hope, assurance, and joy of which the psalmists and the prophets spoke. He may have sensed that he needed a closer relationship to God than he had. Simply by asking that question of Jesus he showed himself to be beyond the hypocritical religiosity of the scribes and Pharisees. He recognized a deep spiritual need that, for all his religious efforts, was unfulfilled. He knew he did not possess the life of God that satisfies here and now and gives hope for the life to come.

The fact that he came to Jesus publicly and asked such a personal and revealing question shows the man's sincerity. He was not haughty or presumptuous, but was humbly determined to find satisfaction for the overwhelming need he felt in his life, and he was oblivious to what people around him may have thought.

The young ruler not only knew his need but deeply felt that need, and he was desperate. Many people who admit they do not have **eternal life** nevertheless feel no need for it. They know they are not alive to God and do not care. They know there is no divine dimension to their lives but consider that fact irrelevant and unimportant. They have no hope for the life to come but are perfectly content to remain as they are.

The young ruler felt his need so keenly that, when he heard Jesus was in the vicinity, he **“ran up to Him and knelt before Him”** ([Mark 10:17](#)). He could not wait to ask this great Teacher how to find the answer to his deep longing. He was not embarrassed by the fact that he was known and respected by most of the people who crowded around Jesus. He did not mind the risk of losing face with those who probably considered him already to be religiously fulfilled and specially favored by God.

Although he was probably in the midst of the multitude of parents who had brought their young children to be blessed, this man was not ashamed to request a blessing for himself. He was saying to Jesus, in effect, **“I need your help just as much as these little**

06-10-12

Series: **God's Economy**

children.” Just as the children submitted to Jesus by being taken in His arms, the rich young ruler submitted by kneeling down before Him. He prostrated himself before the Lord in a position of humility. He appeared serious, sincere, highly motivated, and anxious.

This young ruler came seeking for the right thing—eternal life—and he came to the only One who could give it. **Him**, of course, refers to Jesus, who not only is the way to **eternal life** but is Himself that life. “**ran up to Him and knelt before Him**” ([Mark 10:17](#)). “**God has given us eternal life,**” John declares, “**and this life is in His Son,**” who “**is the true God and eternal life**” ([1 John 5:11, 20](#)). There was nothing wrong with his motivation, because it certainly is good to desire eternal life.

By addressing Jesus as **Teacher** (*didaskalos*), the young man acknowledged Him to be a respected rabbi, an authority on the Old Testament, a teacher of divine truth. Although the two other synoptic gospels report that the man also called Jesus “**good**” ([Mark 10:17](#); [Luke 18:18](#)), there is no reason to believe he considered **Him** to be the promised Messiah and Son of God. But he obviously considered Jesus to have a stature of righteous character above the typical rabbi. The authority of Jesus' teaching and the power of His miracles surely qualified Him as someone who knew the way to **eternal life**. Even though he did not acknowledge that Jesus was Messiah and God in the flesh, he had come to the right person (cf. [Acts 4:12](#)).

Not only did the young man come to the right source but he asked the right question: “**What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?**” ([Matthew 19:16](#)) Many interpreters have criticized the man for asking about what he must **do**, suggesting that his question was works oriented. Doubtlessly he was steeped in the Pharisaic legal system that had come to dominate Judaism and was trained to think that doing religious things was the way to gain divine favor. But taken at face value, his question was legitimate. There is something one must do in order to come to God. When the multitude near Capernaum asked Jesus, “**What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?**” He replied, “**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent**” ([John 6:28-29](#)).

The main point of the question was to discover how to **obtain eternal life**, and that is the most crucial question a person can ask. The entire purpose of evangelism is to bring lost people to Jesus Christ in order that they may **obtain eternal life**. The very purpose and meaning of salvation is to bring **eternal life** to those who, because of sin, face eternal death ([Romans 6:23](#)).

The issue on this occasion was the man's salvation, not some higher level of discipleship subsequent to salvation. Most of the work of evangelism is to bring people to the point where they sense their need for salvation, but this young man was already there. He was ready to sign the card, raise his hand, walk the aisle, or whatever. He was ripe and eager—what many modern evangelists would consider a “**hot prospect.**”