

(1) "One Thing Thou Lackest"

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Scripture Lesson:- Matthew 19: 16 to 22.

Text:- Matthew 19: 20.

Introduction:- We of today are not greatly disturbed about our sins. Though we may confess that we are "Sorry", our confessions, as a rule, are not red with shame nor wet with tears. Somehow it seems hard for us to believe that even God is greatly grieved over our very respectable and decent sins.

But if we are not disturbed by any deep sense of guilt, we are disturbed by hungers and thirsts. The day laborer has luxuries of which no ancient monarch ever dreamed, we are still restless and dissatisfied. We still often say, in the language of the rich young man, "What lack I yet!"

I.

What indeed did he lack? At first glance, nothing at all. He seemed to have had everything. Of all those who came face to face with Jesus, none seemed more to be envied than this man. Who was he? We are not told. But men have come to give him a name. He is called the Rich Young Ruler.

He was rich. Of course we are aware that no amount of money can satisfy the deep longings of the heart. Yet wealth is not something to be despised. Money is power. It may be a source of vast good or of vast evil. It is dangerous only when we relate ourselves to it in a wrong way. As a master, it is the very devil. . As a servant, it can work wonders. This man, being rich, was therefore possessed of great power to do evil or to do good.

He was a ruler. This does not mean that he was the governor of a state. It rather means that he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. He was a part of the highest court of his day. As such he was an aristocrat. It is a great privilege to be well born. It is fine to have an excellent family tree. This is the case, in spite of the fact, that if we climb high enough up any family tree, we are likely to find something hanging there that is not an apple. This young man, being wellborn, had for that reason

(2) added power either to hurt or to help.

He was young. His faced life with shoulders unbent by burden-bearing, with eyes undimmed, either by years or by tears. He had a whole life to invest in the service of the highest.

In thus emphasizing the importance of youth, I am not minimizing the importance of middle age and of older age. There is a great deal of tommyrot talked about youth. Some think it is the ^{only} ^{young people} part of life worth living. ^{can accomplish anything} This is emphatically not the case. A certain man was on the train the other day when a young mother was trying hard to manage her obstreperous small boy, who was disturbing everybody in the car. At last, a sweet old lady broke in with this word: "Let him do as he pleases. Remember, he won't have a good time after he has grown up!"

What nonsense! An old man was listening, and found it a hard job to keep still, and keep from telling her how dead wrong she was. He had had a normal youth, and a normal middle life. But I am prone to believe that you can have a still better time when you come to life's afternoon.

He was further possessed of a deep moral courage and earnestness. When he heard that Jesus was passing, he gathered his garments together and ran to fall at Jesus feet. He ran when no one else was running. He knelt when no one else was kneeling. It does not take much courage to stampede with the crowd. But to run alone and to kneel alone, that takes courage of a high order.

He was a religious man. When Jesus put to him the moral law, he was able to look into his eyes and say, "All these I have observed from my youth!" Do not think he was not telling the truth. What he said was so true that the heart of Jesus went out to him with a deep love of approval. "And Jesus looking upon him loved him!"

We may not be surprised that this young ruler had kept himself free from murder or stealing, but he has also kept the seventh commandment, which is so often not taken seriously by youth in any age.

Now, it was this young man, rich, religious, clean,

and lovable, who said, "I have missed something. What is it? Jesus answered him and said, "You lack one thing." What was it?

II.

What did he lack? It was not decency, uprightness, integrity. It was not earnestness and high courage. It was not reverence; he was able still to bend the knee. What had he missed? He had missed eternal life. He had missed the life that comes from knowing God through Christ. "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He had missed the one and only thing that can satisfy in time or eternity.

A minister, an unlettered man, but a man of deep consecration, tells this story. He went one day to visit a brilliant and rather cruel agnostic, who took delight in exposing the ignorance of certain ministers who came to his backwoods village. He found this minister an unusually promising prospect, so he led him into his spacious library. Here he handed him one heavy volume after another, asking him, "Have you read this?" No, the minister said, I did not know there was such a book!

At last, when there was a moment of silence, the preacher said, "Now I have seen your books, I'd like to show you mine. I have a book here that I deeply love. If you don't mind, I would like to read a word from it." So he read,

"He was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon Him was the chastisement that made us
whole,
and with His stripes we are healed!"

Then the minister prayed. His prayer went something like this: "Lord, this is the smartest man I ever saw. He knows everything, it seems. That is, he knows everything except you. Lord, that is what breaks my heart!" Then, said the preacher, "he just fell on his face and got religion!" This young ruler had everything but God. But as he knelt at the feet of Jesus, our Lord told him how he might find what he had missed.

III.

What did he tell him? His answer was drastic. He

(4) said, "Go, sell what thou dost possess and give to the poor, and come, follow me!" He was to part with his vast wealth, wealth not only of worth in itself, but of a high sentimental value, since it had come to him, touched by the fingers of his father.

Why did He demand this of the rich young ruler? Because he saw what came first with him. He saw that, while he was eager for eternal life, he was yet more eager for things. He had great possessions, but his possessions had him.

He also said, "follow me." That was the one essential. The rich young ruler might have complied with the first part of this command, and yet might not have become a disciple. He might have sold everything, he might have given everypenny away, and yet missed eternal life. "If I give away all I have, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." What Jesus was after was not primarily the selling and giving. What he was after was the young man himself. He was after obedience. That is Christianity, the whole of it.

IV.

What response did this man make? "He went away, sorrowful, he went away." He did not have to go. But though feeling deeply the appeal of Jesus, he of his own choice went away. No wonder our Lord looked after him and said with an aching heart and a sob in his throat, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Conclusion:- The disciples could hardly believe what they saw and heard. They turned on Jesus with a question, "Then who can be saved? Who cannot? In all sober sense, no one who refuses to meet the conditions, no man who turns away from him who is the life. Every step away from him is a step of death.

Who then can be saved? Anyone who will meet the conditions, any man who will obey, or even be willing to obey.

Matthew was also a lover of money. He loved it so deeply that he had sold his good name for it. He had sold his patriotism. He had sold his faith. But when he came face to face with Jesus, his sorry bargain

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began to break his heart. When Jesus said to him, "Follow me", he followed him gladly. Did he sell all his goods and give to the poor? I do not know. But this one thing I know, He did the one essential thing that brought him newness of life. He "arose and followed him". Thus by obedience he won what the young man longed for, but had missed.

Have you missed something? Have you come, oh so close, but not quite. Is that something you missed, the knowledge of God through Christ. You can have that peace that passeth understanding, if you will only obey him.

Have you given yourself completely to Him. He wants you, Have you put Him first in your life. You may do all the other things as the rich young ruler did but if you havent given yourself to Him you will miss all, happiness here + Heaven over there.