



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday's Gospel demonstrates a very important lesson to all strive to be true Christians. Much like the Rich Young Man of the Gospel passage, we too might consider that we observe the Commandments our Lord states, "...*You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Matthew 19:19) Indeed, we are, like the Rich Young Man, are lulling ourselves into a sense of false security when we think on the Commandments and say to ourselves, "Yes, I observe all these!"

We, unlike the Rich Young Man, may not have approached our Lord with the intention of testing Him, but we still exhibit the same kind of pride. How then, should we feel when our Lord challenges the Rich Young Man, by saying, "*If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me*" (Matthew 19:21). The subject of money,

especially in a society as materialistic as ours is often a sensitive one, and so, very rarely do people like to hear anyone's opinions concerning money. "It is my money," some might say, "what right do those who have not earned it have to tell me what to do with it?" This is in fact, the perspective taken by the Rich Young Man, who leaves Christ, dejected at having found a challenge he cannot accept.

The Disciples are shocked when Christ suggests that "*...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*" (Matthew 19:24). When Christ informs them that, "...*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26).

Let us remember that Christ does not condemn money in itself; rather, He condemns the pursuit of it, and considers closely what we choose to do with wealth. When this wealthy man sees the error of his ways and promises to restore four-fold from those he defrauded, Christ greets Zacchaeus as a member of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Christ seeks out Levi or Matthew the tax collector, who gives up everything to follow Him. Christ condemns the Rich Fool, in the same parable—not for the man's wealth, but because the man believed his wealth protected him.

Like the other Rich Man, the one who failed to exhibit generosity and pity to Lazarus at his gate, Christ condemns those who put all their faith in their wealth, because it is yet another form of worship of the self, and not of the Creator who blessed us with the means and talents to earn the money. As long as we seek to fulfill God's Will instead of our own, by using the money to the benefit of others, then we are truly living out the message of His Gospel.

**+ALEXIOS**

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