

MP5: Double Agent

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Faith Center

February 4/5

Mark 10:17-31 *The Story of the Rich Young Ruler*

Communion at the end

Superbowl Sunday

Baptisms (10 on Saturday, 4 at 9 a.m., 2 at 11 a.m.)

Introduction

Today is Superbowl Sunday. Across the U.S. sports fans will be glued to their televisions to watch the New York Giants take on the New England Patriots in the 46th annual game. Some will watch the game in order to see the multimillion dollar commercials. A very small number of people are looking forward to Madonna providing the half time entertainment.

I am mostly looking forward to the food, and I hope it is a good game.

In the game a hero will emerge. He will be given the title, Superbowl MVP.

That person will be young. That person will be rich. And they will powerful, by virtue of that one game. As was said of Spiderman, "With great power comes great responsibility." Children will look up to that athlete. Many people will unconsciously envy their celebrity, their success and wealth.

It will be said of them that they "have it all". They will have the world in the palm of their hand. They will be living the dream: young, wealthy and powerful.

What might Jesus say to a Superbowl MVP? What advise or challenge would He give him? I think it is probably the same thing that he said to the rich young ruler who

encountered Jesus. His story is told in Mark 10.

Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

The man described here has it all. He is young. He is rich. He is powerful. He has it all together. He is disciplined. He is noble. He is ambitious. He is a “go getter”. He has courage. He is determined to do all the right things. Yet, in spite of “having it all”, he knows something is missing from his life and he thinks Jesus might have the answer.

He comes to Jesus and asks the most important question ever asked: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“How can my life count for eternity? I have achieved my goals. Now what? There has to be more.”

This statement reveals the man’s goal: To **do** whatever it takes to be successful in every area of life. He could have written the book “Good to Great” and here he is gathering material for the last chapter.

¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.

You can’t flatter God. Jesus responds by saying, “If I am good, I am God.” With that statement Jesus holds a mirror in front of the man’s face, as if to say, “You think you’re good, but you’re kidding yourself.” This statement reveals the man’s problem: No one is good – except God alone. And he isn’t God. He wants to know how he can be good enough and Jesus right off the bat says “no one is good”. This is not what the “rich young ruler” is used to hearing. This is not what he expected.

I have met some good people. But I have never met a good person who really thought they were good.

Romans 3:9-24 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

There is only one who is good. Turn to your neighbor and say, “You’re no good you’re no good, baby you’re no good.”

¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

This good God makes great demands. Has anyone here kept the Ten Commandments perfectly? When He says, “Keep the commands”, what is your response? This man thinks he has this taken care of. He is righteous (in his own eyes).

At times, we may think that we have it all together.

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him.

I love this. Jesus has compassion on him. I think Jesus had a smile on his face. I think he chuckled a little. This is agape love. He sees the man’s sincerity.

“One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus lovingly raises the bar incredibly high. Here is command for you to keep: “ “. Here you go. Jesus just happened to know the one area of this man’s life that he is unwilling to let go of. Jesus rightfully demands that he surrender it and that he let go of that part of his identity. For this man, money and success are the things that he lived for.

Jesus makes it clear that he couldn’t be working both sides, standing on the fence. He couldn’t be a double agent serving money while following Jesus as a disciple.

I read a recent article about a couple that were both working as spies for the CIA, and they eventually had to stop. The job demanded that they lie to everyone about who they were and what they were doing. They said they were tired of being professional liars. If we try to be a Christian, while with multiple allegiances (ex.), we will end up living a lie both to God and to the other objects of our allegiance. A double life is the worst kind of life for a person to live.

What if the rich young ruler had said, “OK” and had sold everything?

Would he have earned salvation? Is that what God wanted? Did Jesus just want this man’s money or is he looking for something else? Was Jesus calling him to be a philanthropist? We respect people who are generous.

http://www.businessweek.com/interactive_reports/philanthropy_individual.html

Jesus here is not asking for a deed to earn salvation. This is not a “work”. This is a test of Lordship.

God lovingly raises the bar incredibly high.

What would be the hardest thing for you to give up?

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴ The disciples were amazed (terrified) at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Jesus raises the bar impossibly high.

It’s like doing the high jump and having the bar set at seven feet. Or five feet for that matter.

Jesus gave impossible demands to make a very clear point. Salvation is impossible as a human deed. First he tells the man to keep His commands. If you think you’re doing it, how about this one: _____ (he asks him to do the unthinkable). Try as you may a camel has a better chance of fitting through the eye of a needle than you do of earning your salvation.

Salvation is impossible except through Jesus Christ

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Let go of that thing you don't want to let go of. It will be worth it. God is keeping track. He will take care of you. He will multiply the blessings in your life if you will let go.

In a couple of weeks a religious tradition begins called Lent. It is part of the liturgical calendar observed by many Christians. This is a 40 day period commemorating the 40 days of fasting Jesus did in the wilderness and observed during the 40 days leading up to Palm Sunday (the beginning of "Holy Week"). It is meant to be a time of prayer, repentance and self denial. I have never observed Lent but my children have. In doing so if you can identify something or some things in your life that are hard to let go of, and do it for 40 days. This may be a way to apply this lesson, starting Feb. 22nd. Just a thought.

God keeps good accounts. Stop holding on so tight. It is going to be OK.

Are there hobbies that you need to let go of?

Are there habits that you need to let go of?

What impossible demand is the Lord putting in front of you?

I have always felt some identification with this man in the story. I come from a good, mid to upper class family. I tried very hard to be perfect. I knew that I was failing. I had my bio of perfection that I was trying to write. The Lord said to me, let go. Let go of your running. Let go of your plans. Let go of your family. Trust me. It was agonizingly difficult for me to do this. Once I did trust Him with those things, I felt a peace that I had never know before. And He made my failures into something much better.

If you let go of it, you'll be OK, and He will be your salvation.

The answer to the most important question ever asked (What must I do to inherit eternal life?)

Let Him have all of you. Only then will we truly have it all.