

“A Picture of Real Need”
Luke 18:18-24

Ours is a day when peoples’ needs are many and great. There are physical needs, psychological needs, social needs, spiritual needs. All of our needs – whether we want to admit it or not – are tied to our spiritual needs. Our greatest need is our spiritual health. As I understand the Gospels, our spiritual health was foundational in the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ.

In Luke 18:18-24 we have a picture of real need – spiritual need.

Many people have studied this special event in the life of Jesus and have produced “inventories” of what the man in our Scripture lesson had. He had a lot going for him – possessed some outstanding qualities in his life.

1. He had wealth – lots of things. He is described as being “very rich.” In the material realm, he could get all he wanted. In a material sense he certainly had it made.
2. He was a young person. Matthew 19:22 describes him as a “young man.” He possessed all the qualities that youth brings to life.
3. He had authority over other people. He is described as a “ruler.” Apparently he could speak the word and get things done.
4. He had a great interest in real life – eternal life. He asked Jesus: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
5. He had a certain amount of reverence for God. Mark 10:17 tells us that this young man of wealth and position came “running to Jesus and kneeled down before him.” His action reveals his reverence for God and for the divine qualities manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus.
6. He had morality. When the young man asked Jesus about eternal life the record tells us that Christ answered by saying: “Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor thy father and mother.” And Luke 18:21 tells us that the man replied: “All these have I kept from my youth up.”

Here was a young man who had lived a wholesome life. Jesus Christ who had and has the ability to look beyond what a person claims to be to what he really is did not question the reply which the man made to the Lord’s inquiry about keeping the commandments. Evidently, Jesus knew something of this man’s quality of life and he must have liked some of those qualities.

One of the major spiritual truths proclaimed in the Scripture lesson is this: Here was a man who had everything – everything BUT what or who he needed most. He had everything BUT GOD. On this great occasion in his life this young man had the opportunity to follow Jesus and get right with God, but he was not willing to turn desire into positive action. To him Jesus said: “Young man, you lack one thing: sell all you have and give to the poor and come follow me and you will have treasure in Heaven.” But the man turned and went away with sorrow because he was not willing to turn loose of the things that were standing between him and God and keeping him from a right relationship with God.

News reports indicate that 2006 will end with the stock market at the highest levels in our history. At the same time, far too many people are living in spiritual poverty. One of our greatest needs is to be more concerned about our spiritual standard of life and less about our economic standard of living.

The Bible says in Exodus 20:3: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Whatever comes first in our lives is our God. The rich young ruler made wealth (things) his God. What or who is your God? With the hymn writer, I take my stand:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold,
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,
I'd rather be held by His nail pierced hand,
Than to be the king of a vast domain,
Or to be held in sin's dread sway,
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.