

In our Gospel story today we see a man who comes searching – he's rich and yet he's poor, he has all that he needs and has his fill of life and yet he's empty, he comes already knowing the law from childhood and yet he has actually not matured.

And now as he asks, He gets an answer that he doesn't expect and actually has no idea how to handle it. It is an answer that many in today's society struggle with.

### **Planning for the Future**

Those that have meetings with me know that I like to be well organised. If I don't have a plan for how I think I'm going to get from A to B then I'm completely out of control. I need to know that I have everything in order, and that nothing is going to slip. But life isn't always like that is it.

We plan all the time. We plan projects, we plan what our meals are going to be for the rest of the week, we plan ahead for our retirement. It's that sense of control that we have over our future.

Have you ever thought about what your ultimate goal and plans are in life? What is it that you are here to do? Where is it that you invest your time and energy in the most? I actually don't think that many of us have worked that out. We invest so much time just getting from one day to the next, that we can easily neglect our investment for our eternity?

You know, we still have our house sitting in Garvagh, and it now sits empty for 95% of the time. Why do we have it? We have it because ultimately it's a security blanket. When we invest and plan for the future, is it securing something that may never come to be, or are we securing something that will be for eternity?

The young ruler in our Gospel reading had everything, and yet he realized his investments were not enough. In his encounter with Jesus he was seeking the answer to eternal life - to have a real "LIFE" – FOREVER! Real life – joyful, satisfying, contented, and abundant life.

His desire for life is what everyone of us really wants. Isn't it or is it? It isn't money or is it? It isn't stuff or is it? It's that deep sense of peace and contentment we call joy. Or have you really thought about it? The problem is whether each of us wants to do something about it. The problem for the rich young ruler wasn't figuring out what his ultimate goal and plans in life should be. The problem was realizing the steps that he needed to carry out to achieve that goal. And these were going to be big steps. This man was doomed to fail because... because of where his value system lay.

He really saw himself as a good person. And he is not unusual. There are lot's of people in this world who are counting on their goodness to give them what they are ultimately looking for. He used the word good in front of Jesus, and

Jesus corrected him. He then went on to justify his goodness in that he had kept to the laws of Moses his entire life, and again Jesus in love said that he was still lacking.

He viewed “goodness” as a generic term reflecting a station in life. In society there have always been good people and bad people. We think that just because we go to church and live a life above the law, that makes us good? We’ve turned our faith into some superficial image of something that is about being good. And Jesus corrected the man. Jesus said that none of us are good. God’s the only one who is ultimately good. That’s because Jesus understood goodness as a radiant quality of inner rightness with everyone and everything.

Ultimately when we encounter Jesus we really are confronted about every aspect of our lives. In order that we invest in our futures with him, we have to surrender everything that we consider as valuable.

The word everything makes it tough, because there are no exceptions to the list. Jesus said, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven.

You may have often wondered what that actually means, because after all a camel will never be able to go through the eye of a needle. But actually its meaning is far much more than that. It’s more the sense that God knows we cannot do the things that he expects of us, without us first truly relying on him to help us, and laying aside our wealth, position, status whatever. Only through him are all things possible. Our humanity will always drag us back to human desires, but the more we rely on God the more we realise we don’t need those things.

And so today, do we really need God, or have we got everything we need. I think all of us, like the rich young ruler ultimately knows that eternal life is sought when we lay everything down before God. Is that our ultimate goal, that we are willing to invest in for our future? As we finish let’s consider one area of our lives that today we need to ask God to help us hand this over to his Lordship rather than cling on to it for our own security.