

The Gentlemen Decide

Luke 18: 18-30 The Rich Ruler - "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me". When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

Matthew 8: 21-22 The Cost of Following Jesus – Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father". But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead".

[The Rich Ruler and the Disciple do believe in Jesus, but are lukewarm and not prepared to pay the price of commitment, whatever the rewards may be in the end.]

A Gentlemen's Club, circa 1930, Union Jack flying, drinking port, smoking cigars or pipes, moustaches and bow ties, being pompous. "Jerusalem" playing.

Henry sitting in armchair smoking, Charles walks over to join him.

CHARLES: Ah, good evening Henry

HENRY: Good evening Charles

CHARLES: *[reaching for decanter]* Top up?

HENRY: Yes, why not *[holds glass out, Charles pours two drinks, sits down]*

CHARLES: Anything much happening here tonight?

HENRY: No, it's pretty quiet. I've just been sat here listening to the wireless

CHARLES: Oh yes? What's the latest?

HENRY: Lots of talk about the continuing spread of Christianity throughout the Empire, despite fifty years of on-off persecution. What do you make of it all?

CHARLES: *[shuffles uncomfortably, mumbles]* Well, to be frank, I'm not ...against...

HENRY: *[relieved]* Phew! Neither am I! But I don't like to make a fuss about it, what with one thing and another...

CHARLES: Quite! I feel the same...Met him once you know, in my younger days, when I was a ruler out in the colonies

HENRY: Who?

CHARLES: That Jesus fellow, decent enough chap, but rather extreme

HENRY: What did he have to say for himself then?

CHARLES: He told me to sell all my possessions and give the money to the poor. Well, I was flabbergasted. Out of the question, I told him, quite out of the question. Why should I live like a pauper?

HENRY: Yes, why indeed? What good would it do?

CHARLES: He implied I would be exchanging my worldly possessions for treasure in heaven, but I don't see why I can't have both. And then the cheeky chappy said "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", looking straight at me! I was gobsmacked at his impertinence!

HENRY: Apparently, it's a question of priorities. The claims of Christ should have precedence over any other claims in our life, even our family's, and no excuse will do. I know because I had a run in with him to.

CHARLES: Oh yes? And what did he have to say to you?

HENRY: He told me to leave my family and follow him there and then, which would have meant missing my own father's funeral, and the old man wasn't even dead yet!

CHARLES: Good heavens! So what did you do?

HENRY: I couldn't do it, I simply could not do it - Jesus said I was wasting time staying with my family, who didn't want to know him, and that he had urgent work for me to do now. But there is no way he could have seriously expected me to go against all convention and social standards! I thought living by the law was hard work, but that Jesus demands control over every area of your life.

CHARLES: He does promises that everyone who leaves their home or family for him will be repaid many times over in this life as well as receiving eternal life in the age to come.

HENRY: I'm sure it's an incentive to the poor, but I've got everything I need and much more right here and now. We follow all the commandments, after all, that should be enough for us to inherit eternal life shouldn't it?

CHARLES: Yes! I don't see why not! There's no point in getting worked up about it, we're fine as we are: law abiding, do our bit for the poor, believe in God. I don't know why we are worrying about the chap! More port?