THE MISSING INGREDIENT”
(One Thing Thou Dost Lack)

Today, there is a sociological phenomenon known as the “Yuppy”. Technically, that stands for Young Urban Professional. Practically, it means a whole generation of college-trained young people, whose professional skills have earned them big bucks to start out where their parents left off. They do not have to wait to have the nice house, the BMW with cellular phone, the fashion-designer clothes (expensive washed out jeans), and fairly extravagant life style.

They have arrived pretty high up the ladder of worldly “success” at a very young age. They leave old dad scratching his head, when they start bringing home a bigger paycheck than he ever made and when they spend it like there is no tomorrow, which is the opposite of the way dad was trained.

There are whole communities of yuppies. There are entire industries, which market their products just for yuppies. And I’m sure there are political groups, which are trying to win the votes of “yuppies”.

Would it surprise you, if I said that one day our Lord Jesus Christ came face-to-face with a “yuppy”? I believe the footnotes in your Bible may call Him the “Rich Young (Matthew 19:20) Ruler” (Luke 18:18). I’d call him a “Yuppy”. He had a position and he had possessions. And he had risen to this place on the social/economic ladder at a very young age.

But apparently, something was missing in his life. He lacked something to make him truly contented. There was a missing ingredient. And he came to Jesus for help in finding it.

Let’s look more closely at his search for the missing ingredient. Perhaps we will relate to his story.
Notice:

I. **HE CAME TO THE RIGHT PERSON** (VS. 17).

At first, it seemed strange for this prosperous young professional to come running to a penniless preacher. People probably looked in amazement. Why would he come to
Jesus?

He, whom many of them envied—who seemed to already have everything life could offer—came running and flung himself at Jesus’ feet. “Why?” they asked.

“I can understand why the poor heard Jesus gladly,” you might say. They had nothing here on earth. They were glad to hear Jesus talk of the kingdom of heaven—of “pie in the sky, bye and bye”. But this young man had everything that this world can offer. He had it made!

Well, apparently all his possessions and position didn’t really make him feel any more sure of himself.

You never know what is going on behind that part of a person, which we see on the surface. But Jesus sees deeper. Man looks at the outward appearances, but Jesus sees the heart.

And so this young man came to Jesus for the answers to the puzzle of life. He certainly came to the right person.

And it says, “Jesus loved him” (vs. 21). I can see why. He was a wonderful young man—a super guy!

Notice:

He was ENTHUSIASTIC—he came “running” to Jesus. I love that enthusiasm! I wish more in church would be that enthusiastic. Many just sit there and endure the Christian life.

Some roll their eyes around and look at the ceiling, when you talk about the wonderful Kingdom of God. I thought that meant that they were bored. But one lady told me that her husband did it, because it had been so long since he had been in church that he was looking to see if the roof was going to cave in.

I see some in church with a sign hanging around their necks on a chain. “Please do not disturb. I am perfectly content. I don’t plan to make any changes”.

Thank God for this young man. He was eager and enthusiastic.

And he was also HUMBLE. He knelt before this homeless, penniless prophet of God. With all his possessions and positions, gained at such a young age, he was not proud.

Listen, it is pride that will keep more people from coming down this aisle to meet Jesus Christ than anything else. Please don’t let your pride come between you and Jesus.

He was also COURAGEOUS. He didn’t care who saw him come to Jesus … the godless gang nor the Christless clique. He was not afraid of their snide remarks nor gossip. No wonder Jesus loved him!

And he was DISCERNING. “Good Teacher”, he said. HE recognized goodness in Jesus. He was discerning.

Unfortunately, there are far too many cynics around. They know the price of everything and the value of nothing. He recognized goodness in Jesus.

He was MORALLY CLEAN. He tried hard to keep the commandments—at least outwardly—from his youth. He had never been wild nor undisciplined. He would
have been a good neighbor. You’d never have to worry about him stealing from you nor lying nor making a move on you wife.

He was a super guy. If he had walked this aisle to join this church, we would all feel fortunate to have him on the team.

But there was something missing. He was not confident that he understood what life was all about, nor that he was ready for what lay beyond that ever-present grave.

And, thank God, he came to the right Person for help. Notice also:

II. **HE ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTION** (Vs. 17). “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life”?

This successful young man knew that the missing ingredient in life was spiritual. He had rightly concluded, “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of THINGS he possesses”. He had the houses, the clothes, the finest in transportation, the position and the power that goes with it. But there was emptiness inside—deep down in his soul.

Thank God, he didn’t ask: How can I make more money? How can I gain more power? How can I have continuing health? How can I win friends and influence people?

No, he realized there is more to life that what is on the surface. We are made in the image of God, with an eternal spirit.

There is a life to live and a death to die and an eternity to face. And he wanted to be ready.

He was thinking about what really really, really mattered. He was asking the right question of the right person.

But, like many others I’ve met, he may have worded it in the wrong way. There was a typical confusion in his mind. He asked, “What must I do to inherit my place in eternity”? What must I do to earn my place in God’s favor?

Don’t be too hard on him. That’s the way most people think. They believe that they will “inherit” heaven as a reward for the things, which they do.

This is “the way that seems right to man,” which “ends in death” (spoken of in Proverbs 16:25). This is the basis for all false religions and philosophies, which will lead men to a hopeless hell. It “seems right” to them that I earn. Or deserve, my place in eternity.

It was most natural for this young man to feel the same way. After all, he had “made it” in the physical realm by his own efforts and abilities. He had earned the respect of his fellow man by his virtuous lifestyle.

Naturally, he just assumed that he could do the same thing in his spiritual realm. He was going to “do” something to inherit eternal life. What he wanted from Jesus was to find out just “what must I do to earn my place in heaven”?

He figured that he just needed to be put on the right path, in order to get there—So notice how…

III. **HE GOT THE RIGHT ANSWER** (Vss. 18-21) from Jesus.

Jesus loved him so much that He had to set him straight … even if it meant a **shock treatment**.
This morning, I love you. I am not trying to ignore your good qualities. I am not unappreciative of your sincere religious efforts. But, if I love you enough to want you to go to heaven, I may have to show you just how flimsy is the religious foundations, upon which you have built your hopes. I must “speak the truth”, to you, “in love”.

This is exactly shat Jesus was doing. Jesus had to show that young man that nothing of his own doing could earn for him eternal life.

First, Jesus shocked him by saying that “There is no good except God” (vs. 18). When you first read it, it almost sounds rude. He calls Jesus “Good Teacher”. And Jesus responds by saying: “Why do you call me good? There is none good but God.

What is Jesus driving at? He is trying to show him that no one is really “good” enough to deserve to go to heaven. No one is inherently good, through and through, except God. Jesus is trying to shock him into seeing that he can’t just “do” something to buy a ticket to heaven.

So many folks tell me that “I’m basically a good person”. Friend, there is no one, who is that good. Are you awake? Are you really hearing what I’m saying? There is none good, except God. Romans 3 tells us that “there is none righteous, no not one”.

So the whole idea of earning a place in heaven, by our goodness, is a lost cause. No one is good enough!

By the way, some have questioned if Jesus was refusing to be called “good” Himself. To the contrary, He was using this to point out that He was God. This is one of the best proofs the He claimed to be God. He never denied being good nor being God!

The second way that Jesus tried to get this sincere young man on the right road to heaven was by showing him that he did not really keep the commandments of God, after all (vs. 19). Most people think that you can earn a place in heaven, by keeping the Ten Commandments.

This man must have thought that, also. When Jesus named off the last five commandments, the man answered: “All these I have kept from my youth” (vs.20). So Jesus, in love, had to probe until he hit a raw nerve. He told him to “sell all his possessions and give his money to the poor. Then come and follow me.”

Did you notice that the commandments, which Jesus named, were the commands, which deal with our responsibilities to our fellow men?

Remember? Earlier, Jesus summed up the entire 10 commands in two: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart. And love your neighbor as yourself”. Love for both God and your neighbor is the fulfilling of the law.

Here Jesus points out only the commands about loving your neighbor. And the man said: “I’ve always done that!”

So Jesus—in love had to probe until he hit a raw nerve. He told him to “sell all his possessions and give his money to the poor. Then come and follow me.”

Jesus was laying it on the line. If you really have perfect love for your neighbor, who is poor, you will share your plenty with him. And, if you really love God, whom I claim to be, then you will follow me. And, if you refuse to do these things, then you are breaking all 10 commands in spirit, even if you have always made an outward show of
not breaking the more obvious ones.

Jesus was forcing him to look at this heart and see that it was not all that sinless and selfless as he had assumed for all those years. And if he was going to “earn” his place in eternity by his own efforts, then he’d better think again. He really had nothing good enough, in himself, with which to bargain for his entry into heaven.

Oh, listen to me, “Mr. Moral Man” and “Miss Fine Upstanding Lady”: God doesn’t see as man sees – outward appearances. God sees our hearts.

If I were as skillful as Jesus, I could lovingly put my finger on the area of your life, which proves how far short you fall of the glorious expectation of God. For you, it may have nothing to do with possessions. It may be lust or greed or hate or bitterness. But it would clearly show that “all our (supposed) righteousness like filthy rags” in God’s sight.

And it would clearly show us that we’d better look elsewhere—outside of our own efforts—for what we need, in order to get into God’s heaven. We’d look to Jesus for an undeserved gift!

Try to look at it this way. Every man theoretically has three chances to get to heaven. It’s like a baseball game. You get 3 strikes, then you are out.

The first chance to get to heaven is to die before the age of accountability (see Vss. 13-16). Children, who die before they understand right and wrong, automatically go to heaven. Read Samuel 12:15-23.

Since we have all, obviously, lived beyond that point in our lives, that option is no longer available to us. So it’s strike one!

The second chance a person has going to heaven is to perfectly keep all of God’s commandments, in heart and life. Now, theoretically, you “could” earn heaven, if you were perfect and never broke any of God’s laws—not even in your mind. Then you wouldn’t be a sinner and you could go to heaven. That is, theoretically.

But practically – in the real world—that will never happen, because none of us has been that good. The sad fact is that “there is none good but God.”

Tell me, is there any one here who honestly believes that he has never sinned? Please raise your hand. I’d love to see you.

(One man told me that he had been told of such a perfect person. It was his wife’s first husband!)

But seriously, none of us would have the audacity to think that we had never sinned. So, we’ve struck out on the second chance to make a hit with God.

That’s what Jesus was trying to show this young man. He had struck out. He didn’t really love his neighbor enough to share, he didn’t love his God enough to follow.

In fact, he had an idol (and idolatry was one of the worst sins, to a Jew). He had another god, whom he loved and I whom he trusted supremely. It was his wealth and position. “How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom God” (vs. 24). What you trust in is your idol!

Do you want to see if you have an idol? … Anything you fear more than God…
Anything you trust more than God… is your idol!
    Yours may not be riches. It may be a possession, some person, some ambition, some desire.

    But you cannot hold onto an idol and be a real Christian! God will not play “second fiddle” to anything or anyone!
    This fine young man had an idol…his wealth. Thus, he had broken God’s commands. So –“strike two”! His second chance for heaven was gone.

Then is there a third way to get to heaven? If we’ve passed the age of accountability and we have already failed to keep God’s laws perfectly, how else can we inherit eternal life? “Who then, can be saved’? (Vs. 26).
    “With man, it is impossible”! (Vs. 27) It is just as impossible as it would be for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. “But with God all things are possible”.

**God can do something for you, supernaturally, which you cannot do for yourself. He can “save” you.** He can “give” you what you could not “earn”. He can perform, in you, the miracle of “the new birth”.
    Heaven can be yours, if you will **stop trying** and **begin trusting** God to give you His “unexplainable (unspeakable) gift” of salvations (Romans 10:13).
    But if you and I refuse this gift from God, there is no other way to be saved! It is “three strikes, and we are out”…. for eternity.

    This was the right answer! Yes, Jesus gave him the right answer. And the battle began to rage in his mind. He wipes his brow and bites his lip. He thinks about it. He realizes his own inability. He recognizes Christ’s ability to give him a new kind of life, which will never end. All he must do is to completely trust and follow.
    The Angels are watching, ready to inscribe his name in the book of life. The demons are whispering: “Don’t be a fool. Don’t sacrifice all these ‘things’. Don’t stop trusting what has gotten you this far in life. Don’t cast your all on Jesus. Don’t be a fool”.

Finally…
**IV. HE MAKES THE WRONG DECISION** (Vs. 22)

    He looks into the face of the Son of God and shakes his head and says, “No—I’m not going to do it. I can’t just walk away from my past and follow you”.

    He walks away sadly. And he missed the kingdom of God! Today, he is in Hell – living out his eternal existence in that horrible place, where there is no love and where no one cares about his neighbor.
    He could have been in God’s “Who’s Who.” Now he’s in God’s “Who’s Not!”

    Just why would anyone refuse Jesus’ gracious offer of salvation? I don’t understand, but so many do.
Billy Sunday was like Billy Graham, in my father’s time. Billy had once been a major league baseball player. Then he got saved and was called to preach the gospel. His ministry eventually reached across our nation.

At one city, he was asked to visit an old friend, who had once played ball with him. The man was dying. Around town he was known as the “Old Timer.”

Sunday said, “Sure,” and he went to see his old friend. They talked of the old days.

Then the “Old Timer” said: “Do you remember that time? We sat on the curb and talked about the things of God. You said that you were going all the way with Him, and you urged me to come along. But I refused. I wanted to continue with my own plans. And I went the other way.”

“It’s been a long time,” the Old Timer continued. “You went the right way, Billy, and God has made you great. I made a bad mistake for not going with you.

“But it’s not too late,” Billy said. “God is a God of grace. He will save you now. You don’t have to die and go to hell!”

“No,” said the Old Timer, “this is the way I lived. This is the way I’ll die!”

“But you don’t have to,” Billy pleaded. “No,” said the Old Timer.

Thinking back on that conversation, Billy said that it seemed like they were in a great stadium. It was the bottom of the 9th. The “Old Timer” was at the plate. He had two strikes, and it was the last pitch.

It came right across the plate, big and soft. Everybody shouted: “Swing, Old Timer!”

But, for some unexplainable reason, he never lifted the bat from his shoulder. The umpire said: “Strike three! You’re out!”

The Old Timer missed out on the only chance he had to go to heaven! I fear that this will happen to someone here today. You’ve passed the age of accountability, and you’ve failed to perfectly keep God’s commands. There’s only one other chance—Cast yourself on Jesus’ mercy.

In Man’s strength—your own strength—it’s impossible. But with God it is possible.

You need a miracle—a new birth. God is ready to give it to you now. I beg you: go for it! Every Christian in this audience is shouting from his heart, “Do it! Call on Jesus to save you NOW!”