

Leave Everything and Follow Jesus

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Date: 25 November 2018

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. My name is Matt. I study aerospace engineering at RMIT, and I'm here as part of the RMIT Christian Union, where we're on our mission camp.
- We arrived on Wednesday, and we've had a great few days playing a part in the life of the church and getting to know some of you. So thank you for your welcome.
- We really appreciate your openness and your hospitality. Now, I really enjoy reading the biographies of Christian missionaries from the past couple hundred years.
- I love reading the exciting stories of these people who have given up so much so that they can take the life-giving message of Jesus to those who have never heard it before.
- One missionary in particular named Jim Elliott wrote some words in his diary that have stuck in my memory. He said, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.
- [1 : 0 8] He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. The sentence strikes me because of its simple wisdom.
- Of course, that which is eternal is infinitely greater than that which is temporary. And these words of Jim Elliott's arose from his reflections on Jesus' words in Mark 8, verse 34, where he says, Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.
- This idea of seeking eternal life at the expense of our temporary lives, it's a theme that Jesus hammers again and again, and it's an idea that runs strongly through the passage that we read earlier in Mark chapter 10.
- Here, Jesus expects his followers to put their trust in him above everything else. So if we look back at the passage, we see the point of verses 17 to 22 is that eternal life comes by trusting in Jesus.
- In these verses, we see a dialogue between Jesus and a rich man. The rich man comes seeking eternal life, and Jesus shows him that the way to eternal life is to trust fully in Jesus.
- [2 : 3 0] The rich man comes with a question. His question is, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And we see in the way the man comes, he comes eagerly and with humility.
- He shows great promise rushing up, falling on his knees before Jesus. But his question also shows that he has a fundamental misunderstanding.
- He thinks he can gain eternal life by doing something. He says, What must I do? And Jesus responds to this misunderstanding.
- Why do you call me good? Jesus answers, No one's good except God alone. Jesus is pointing out that the rich man's not good, and there's nothing that he can do to become good because he's not God.
- This man's not good, and we're not good because we're not God. So this is the answer to the man's question. What can he do to gain eternal life?

[3 : 35] He can do nothing. Jesus also goes on. He uses the law to show the man his sin. He lists a few of the Ten Commandments, and the man thinks he's kept all of them.

But he really hasn't. He's missed something. He's missed the heart of the law. That is, he needs to love God above all else.

He needs to love God more than his money, but he doesn't. Look at verse 22. When he has to choose between loving God and loving money, he chooses his money. His wealth has become his idol because he loves his wealth more than he loves Jesus.

This means that he's broken the first of the Ten Commandments, the first commandment which says, you shall have no other gods before me. And he isn't loving God with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength, like we heard read earlier from Deuteronomy 6.

So this man, he thinks he can gain eternal life. He thinks he can earn it. He's not the only one with that problem. For example, at one point, I used to get up really early every morning.

[4 : 47] I'd get up 5.30 and read my Bible and pray, and I'd read my Bible multiple times a day and spend a lot of time trying to memorize multiple books of the Bible.

But the problem was, I thought that doing these things would make me good enough for God. So the rich man's problem was my problem too. Now don't get me wrong, of course, reading the Bible and praying, these are all very good things.

They're helpful habits, but you can't earn anything by doing them. So the problem was, I felt like I needed to do these things to be a good enough Christian.

And here, Jesus shows us that you just can't earn goodness. You can't earn eternal life. And if you can't earn it, how do you get it?

Well, we see Jesus is the source of eternal life. And you get that eternal life by putting Jesus first, by trusting in him above all else. We have the great privilege of knowing what happens at the end of the Gospel story.

[5 : 54] We know that Jesus saves us by his death and by his resurrection, and that we get eternal life by trusting in him. So for the rich man, it's not the selling of all his stuff that would give him eternal life.

It's coming to Jesus and relying on Jesus rather than his own goodness or his own possessions. Now, this matches what Jesus was saying earlier in Mark 8, verse 34, where Jesus says, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for me and for the kingdom will gain it. This is the same point. If you want eternal life, you must trust Jesus enough to give up everything and to follow him.

So the rich man needs to trust that following Jesus and gaining eternal life is worth more than his wealth. He needs to get eternal life from Jesus, but instead he settles for his temporary life.

And the question is, will we settle for this less or less as well? Are we able to trust Jesus above all else, or are we dependent on our temporary comforts also? We also see that it's hard to enter the kingdom of God in verses 23 to 27.

[7 : 21] If you've tried to be good, you'll know it's hard. It's really hard to trust that following Jesus is worth giving everything for.

It's worth more than our wealth. It's worth more than our family, the approval of others, worth more than a good career. It's hard to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus says this himself. He's not surprised by the man's refusal to sell everything and follow him. Jesus knows that without God, the man can't do it.

He knows the man's looking in the wrong place, so it's impossible. In verse 23, we see it's hard. In verse 24, again, it's hard. And in verse 25, it's impossible.

It's as impossible as shoving a camel through a needle. It's not just really hard. It's actually impossible. If you're like me, you probably find it hard just to get the thread to go through the end of the needle.

[8 : 27] A camel? There's no way. It's just absurd. You can't do it. No matter how hard you push, the camel's not going through. So, this is, yeah, this is not something that's really difficult, but if you try hard enough, you can do it.

I think of a cat going through a gap in the fence. I don't know if you've seen it too, where there's a really narrow gap and just somehow the cat manages to squeeze through.

This is not like that at all. It's just impossible. Camels just don't fit through needles. So, it's hard to enter the kingdom of God.

It's impossible. So, maybe, like the disciples, this gets you thinking. If it's impossible, who can be saved? This is a really, really important question.

Do we have any hope at all? With man, no, we don't. But with God, yes, we do. What's impossible with man is possible with God?

[9 : 35] See verse 27. We see that God gives eternal life to those with the trust and dependence of a child. We see this. Notice that in verse 24, Jesus addresses his disciples as children.

And this is significant because immediately before the story we've read, in verses 13 to 16, Mark's writing about children. addressing his disciples as children is drawing our attention back to these verses.

In verse 15, Jesus teaches that the only way to enter the kingdom of God is to receive, so the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven is to receive it like a child.

The great contrast between the children and the rich man is clear. Children are dependent on their parents, they're dependent on those around them to take care of them and to provide everything that they need.

This is very different from the rich man who instead of just receiving the kingdom, instead he's trying to earn it, to gain it for himself. We can't do this, we can't earn God's kingdom.

[10 : 46] We need God to give it to us. So when Jesus tells the rich man to sell everything and to give it to the poor, this isn't one more good thing to do before he's finally good enough that he deserves to enter the kingdom.

Instead, what Jesus is asking for is the childlike faith. You may be wondering if trusting Jesus is worth it.

And maybe this is what Peter's thinking as well. In verse 28, he says, Jesus, we've left everything to follow you. We see, it does cost something to follow Jesus.

There's a lot to give up. The disciples left their homes, their brothers, their sisters, fathers, mothers, children, their jobs to follow Jesus.

They actually walked around with him everywhere he went. They didn't hold on to their reputations, their possessions, their careers, and they didn't need them because they trusted Jesus.

[11 : 52] And the disciples understood the cost was worth it. As much as it cost, following Jesus and having eternal life with him was worth more. The rich man thought his money was worth more than Jesus and worth more than eternal life.

Is that the same for you? Does it just seem that following Jesus isn't worth it? Are you thinking of turning your back on Jesus and walking away from him like the rich man did? If you are, then it's worth thinking some more about the immense value that eternal life has.

Or, are you like the disciples? Like the disciples who have left everything to follow Jesus? The disciples who said, Jesus, you're more valuable than anything else and I want the eternal life that you have.

If you are like the disciples, you've probably discovered that it does cost something. You may have given up money, you may have given up your career, you may have lost your family and you may have been persecuted because following Jesus isn't very popular.

But all that stuff is temporary. I've had the pleasure of spending some time with some of you this week. I've seen younger people who spend time and money serving Jesus and I've seen older people who have lost their careers, they're losing their independence, their friends, their money is running down, but they know that these things are only temporary.

[13 : 22] They know that they can't be kept forever, certainly not beyond the grave, you just can't keep it. I think of a friend of mine from school, his name was Brock and he was always talking with people about Jesus.

One time I was working with him at a farm a couple years ago and he would just chat with all the workers around us about Jesus and go through a simple gospel presentation with them and he even started a Bible study during the lunchtime for those that would listen so every day they would read the Bible and discuss it together within earshot of all the other workers.

So because of Brock's trust in Jesus, he was willing for people to think that he was a bit weird and he did it because he wants others to follow Jesus.

He wants others to have eternal life as well. Another example is that of my mum. Although finances are tight, my parents have found that they can survive on one income, which frees my mum up to spend a lot of time just caring for people in the community.

She'll do things like take care of their kids, take them to hospital, look after them while they're sick, help them find jobs. And most of all, she just spends a lot of time listening to people, hearing their stories, praying with them and reading the Bible with them.

[14 : 50] So because of her trust in Jesus, mum's left a pain career, she's left the financial stability that that would bring in order to love her neighbours. Now, Brock and mum aren't doing anything particularly groundbreaking.

And when you live with your trust in Jesus above all else, you're not doing anything particularly groundbreaking either. You're just following Jesus. You're just making him your top priority.

And you're willing to give up good things for Jesus, for his sake and for the sake of those around you. Not only did you leave everything for Jesus, but you keep doing it because you're not fools.

You know that he is no fool who gives up what he can't keep to gain what he can't lose. What Jesus gives can't be lost.

Although the cost is great, the reward is greater. Though we release our holds on physical possessions, we gain spiritual riches. Every spiritual blessing is ours.

[15 : 57] I had the great joy of seeing a friend become a Christian earlier this year. he decided that following Jesus was worth it. And he was right.

It is worth it. He has gained forgiveness from God. He's passed from death to life. He's been adopted into God's family. He's become part of the bride of Christ waiting for the great wedding feast.

I saw him receive peace and joy because he knows that his future is completely secure. He is no fool. He has given up what he cannot keep to gain what he can never lose.

My friend joins us as we wait in joyful anticipation for Jesus' return. As we wait for what we can never lose. As we look forward to the coming of eternal life and the end of the time of losing.

This is described in Revelation 20 which says, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

[17 : 06] He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making all things new.

He is no fool. You are no fool when you give up what you cannot keep to gain what you can never lose.

Let me pray. Father in heaven, thank you that you make the impossible possible. Thank you that you offer us an eternity with you.

Please help us to trust you fully so that we might receive it. We want to so desire eternal life through Jesus that we'd be willing to give up what we cannot keep to gain what we cannot lose.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.