

Luke 18:18-34 "Traveling Light with Jesus"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

The Spinks are really glad to be back with you this morning after several days of driving from Huntsville up to South Dakota and eventually to Denver and all the way back again. When you take a trip like that where you're in the car for hours on end, when you span 60 plus degrees of temperature changes over the course of the trip, the hardest part of the whole trip is what?

Packing. It's like when you take a baby to the beach. You want to bring the whole house with you. You just think you might need everything. And so every activity that you don't take in the car, you're afraid will cost you your sanity at some point during the trip that you don't have it. Every article of clothing you decide to leave behind, you're afraid will cost you your comfort at some point during the trip. But you're forced to leave some things behind and travel light, so to speak.

[1 : 16] You can't take it with you. It happens when you fly too, doesn't it? You go to an airport and you may be holding any number of things when you get there, but by the time you hit airport security, you have to toss that water bottle you've been drinking along the way.

The only suitcase you're allowed to keep has to fit in this little bin that's right there. You have to make sure it fits or you've got to leave it back. And that little pocket knife that's always on my key chain, I forget to take it.

That's not going. You lose it. You can't take it with you. You have to let go of some things to get on that plane. That's true when we journey with Jesus too.

It's always hard, isn't it, to let go of things that we find value in, things that bring us comfort, things that we just might need for the journey.

We'd rather hold on to them. But Jesus is going to require exactly that this morning. That if we are to follow Him, we will have to travel light.

[2 : 24] You can't take it with you. It challenges someone about that in a way that we must listen to well. Let's follow the story in Luke 18 as we go this morning.

You may have heard this story called the story of the rich young ruler. Luke 18 at verse 18. And a ruler asked Jesus, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Now, right out of the gate, here we are. He comes within many ways the right question to in every way the right person. Jesus has been teaching about eternal things, hasn't He?

How important they are. He's been telling some surprising stories as we've been going through this section of Luke about who's in and who's out in His kingdom. And now here comes this guy for an answer about eternal life to the one who Himself gives eternal life.

Another man asked Jesus the same question just a few chapters ago. And Jesus eventually answered him with the story of the Good Samaritan. Do you remember that? Hey, what should I do to inherit eternal life?

[3 : 46] And Jesus tells him that story. It's interesting because we see Jesus in both of these cases not content merely to give an answer to a seemingly straightforward question, but to go to our hearts.

He knew that the man who asked the first time needed to have his vision of neighbor love expanded, right? And his heart exposed for its weaknesses there.

Jesus is eager to do that. And the same is true here. Notice how Jesus takes any opportunity to cut straight to the heart. And we could learn a lot from Jesus' intentional love in relationships.

In this case, he leaves this simple straightforward question for a minute to talk about the word good. Jesus said to him, why do you call me good?

No one is good except God alone. Why did you say good, teacher? Only God is good. Now, back to your question, verse 20.

[4 : 57] You know the commandments. How are you going to get eternal life? You know what the Bible says. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. What's Jesus telling him? It's the whole second panel of the law about neighbor love, isn't it? Except do not covet.

He didn't mention that one. But all of those things where God tells us, here's what it looks like to love your neighbor. And the ruler doesn't bat an eye.

Yep, I've been doing all of those. He said, all these I have kept from my youth. Not just recently, but for a long time I've been doing those things. Jesus, but stop and think about this for a minute, how the conversation is going.

Jesus says, only God is good. And then, now remember how God tells you to live. Only God is good.

[5 : 58] And how does the ruler respond? I'm good. What? Are you listening to the conversation? Do you see what Jesus is saying?

See, he's come to the right person to ask a question about eternal things, but his heart is still very deceived, isn't it? We can see it easily.

Perhaps the people around could, but he doesn't see his own self-deception. He hasn't considered deeply what the true treasure of his heart is.

We have to consider that reality this morning because God knows what we truly treasure. That's what we see here as Jesus interacts with the ruler, isn't it? God knows where the treasure of our hearts is.

In this case, I believe it was fairly apparent to many. As we'll see, this man was extremely rich. But it wasn't obvious to him.

[7 : 05] Jesus wants to expose his self-deception for him. And so he asks him to do something, verse 22, to help him out. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, Jesus gets to the answer to his question, so to speak.

Here he is. You just need one more thing. And this is Jesus packing for the long trip, isn't it? Taking him through airport security, if you will. You've got to have empty hands to follow me.

It's clear from the rest of the passage that Jesus is not asking the man to earn his salvation by doing yet one more good thing. Rather, what he's asking him is to let go of one treasure to embrace another.

Notice the implication in this verse that his treasure is not yet in heaven. He doesn't have treasure in heaven, does he? Jesus says that's what you lack is treasure in heaven.

So do this thing and then you'll find treasure in heaven. And only then can you follow Jesus. If your heart can release these things you're holding on to, then you will have treasure in heaven.

[8 : 37] You can hold on to that tightly. See, it's impossible to follow Jesus where he is going with your heart full of earth.

And Jesus knows that. He challenges the ruler to consider what that would look like for him. And how does the ruler respond?

It was just one thing that he lacked and he could have treasure in heaven. He could follow Jesus.

Does he eagerly do the one thing he lacks for the glorious privilege of following Jesus?

Verse 23. But when he heard these things, he became very sad for he was extremely rich.

Very sad. Extremely rich. He hears what's required. But he can't do it.

[9 : 38] Luke is telling us that he wanted to carry all his riches through the door into Jesus' family. He couldn't stand to set his lavish things down to travel light.

And the heartbreaking reality that we read is that he comes to Jesus and leaves how? Sad. Sad. He comes to the right person to ask questions about eternity.

And Jesus brings good news of great joy. And he leaves sad. Because he learns that he can't attach himself to both Jesus and his wealth.

Jesus makes an observation that he makes in many places. Material wealth makes following him difficult.

Jesus, seeing that this man had become sad, said, How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

[10:51] For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Some people have tried to make this complicated. The picture's not that hard.

It's a very large animal in a very tiny space. And it's not happening, is it? You can't squeeze through there. There's no way.

Wealth keeps people from Jesus regularly, he says. It's not an unusual struggle here in this passage, is it? Jesus has addressed it many times in Luke already.

Story after story, we feel like he keeps pressing on us here. He said, These are direct words.

They're meant to be convicting enough words, in fact, that we would despair. Verse 26, Those who heard it said, Then who can be saved?

[11:57] If not the rich, how will anyone get God's favor? Wealth was a sign of God's blessing in these times, right? Perhaps you don't think we think about wealth that way, but I'd suggest we often do.

We say, God is just blessing my business. Things are going really well. And it may just be God being gracious, not condoning your business practices as better than someone else's.

Conversely, have you ever had the thought or said, If they'd just make more godly decisions, they'd have more money. Jesus reminds us in this passage, that's not how his kingdom operates.

Level of godly living does not equate to level of material blessing. Don't just look at the ways God has been gracious to you and conclude that means you're eternally safe and walking closely with him.

That's not what it means, necessarily. This passage suggests, in fact, we ought to consider something different. That material prosperity should even make us stop and carefully evaluate how full our arms are.

[13:12] Wealth itself can be very dangerous. Why? It's very easy to hold on to and hard to let go of to follow Jesus.

Proverbs tells us this about wealth. The wealth of the rich is their fortified city. They imagine it a wall too high to scale.

It's a good image, isn't it? It's going to keep me safe. Nothing can get to me. I'm protected. Rich tend to believe their wealth buys them safety and security.

Maybe that's what you're really holding on to. Security. Self-sufficiency. Control. Power. Influence. Or reputation. And those are the things we're clinging to, but money is just a means to get them.

This passage does focus on money.

[14:13] But Jesus mentions later in a couple more verses letting go of homes, spouses, children, parents, whatever we're trying to carry on the plane that we won't put down for Jesus.

Good things. But things we're clinging to. Can we ask ourselves honestly this morning, what's keeping you away from Jesus?

Pastor Derek asked us helpfully last week to consider what hinders us from coming freely to Jesus. You've come again this morning to the right place with questions of eternal importance, but do you at times walk away from Jesus sad?

Because you have great comfort and He leads you into uncomfortable places? You have great plans for your life and His seem a bit different?

You have great security in your resources and He seems to want you to trust Him alone? You have a great boyfriend and you're afraid if you follow Jesus' design for your relationship, you'll lose Him?

[15:32] What are you refusing to put down that's keeping you from traveling with Jesus? In a city and church blessed with material prosperity, we must consider if our treasure is on earth or in heaven.

Jesus says it's one or the other. And don't just say, like, let's go a little bit deeper than just saying, oh no, my treasure's in heaven. That's easy to say you're in church. I get that. When we're reminded in this passage how easy it is to be deceived about our hearts.

Jesus' challenge to the ruler pushes us to consider our actions, doesn't it? That show us and show others often where our treasure is.

You can be honest because God sees it, doesn't He? He knows. It was really cool when I was a kid to go around saying, your epidermis is showing.

At least I think I remember it as being cool. And we would say that all the time. And yep, sure enough, our skin is usually showing. So is our treasure, isn't it?

[16 : 49] It's usually showing. It was for the ruler in this passage. Can I probe for just a minute? What are you going to say?

No? If you spend more on funding vacations than funding mission trips, your treasure may be showing.

That may seem unfair the Sunday after fall break, but me too. If you can't remember the last time you prayed for God's provision, your treasure may be showing.

If you give more money to your car or to your clothes than to your church, your treasure may be showing. And just so none of us misses out, Jesus never gives a dollar figure for the rich young ruler's salary, does He?

He just tells us that He wouldn't put down His possessions to follow Jesus. God isn't trying to scold those who make six figures. He's trying to pry all of our fingers off the things that we're clinging to.

[18 : 03] So maybe you're like me, and you're trying to take pride in the fact that you don't love money, and you don't have to be rich to be happy, but your heart also knows what it's like to find security and comfort there.

So a couple I've been struggling with lately. If you're noticeably calmer when your bank account is higher, your treasure may be showing.

If you're sad, which often looks or feels like being anxious, if you're sad or anxious when asked to give money away, and I mean any amount, a thousand dollars to a foreign mission, or a dollar to a homeless guy on the side of the road, if you're sad or anxious about that, your treasure may be showing.

If you think you might be treasuring something, and you're not sure anything at all on earth, try actually giving it away, and see how your heart responds.

How does it make you feel, even now to think about letting go of it, giving some or all of it away? Jesus is utterly serious about our hearts.

[19 : 24] It's what he cares about, isn't it? He goes right there, and we must hear him. This is the spiritual equivalent of the evacuation order that many of you heard this week, and believe me, it was serious.

Why don't we take Jesus as seriously as we do the National Weather Service? He says, danger. This is a serious warning.

When you heard that warning this week, sadly, but without hesitation, many of you headed back home to be here for physical safety.

Jesus says, for your spiritual safety, for your eternal safety, evacuate your money and find true safety and true treasure in me.

Give your stuff away until you are sure that I'm what you treasure. Until we see our poverty, we will never see Christ's value, Thomas Watson said.

[20 : 32] See, wealth can be dangerous because we have so much in our hands that there's a lot we have to put down to travel with Jesus. There are a lot more things insulating me from my need, my spiritual poverty.

And Jesus is warning the rich young ruler and he's warning us of the danger of having something to offer when the Bible says the Christian life is having nothing to offer and finding everything in Jesus. Right? Are you willing to see your heart truly this morning? God's heart for us is to remove the self-deception, to expose the reality so that we can let go of our treasure on earth to have treasure in heaven and then follow Jesus there.

Does that challenge of Jesus convict you? Give it all away. Have treasure in heaven and follow me. We're not through with the story yet, but I want to do something God's teaching me lately and just stop to reflect and pray.

Here. Give you a minute to consider your own heart and then I'll pray for the Spirit to work in our hearts and then we'll finish the passage. Just pray for a minute.

[21 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.

Let go of. Show us what it is that we'd rather have than Jesus. Would you work in our hearts?

Would you show us those things?

And then would you show us Jesus? We ask in his name. Amen. Amen. It can be painful to see our sin, to have the Spirit put a finger on an idol in our heart.

Listen, this is what the Christian life is all about, y'all. This is how it works, that the Holy Spirit brings conviction. It's not a bad thing. It's a good thing. He's going to wound in order to heal.

[23 : 38] He brings conviction to our heart, shows us our idols, our deep-seated sin. And at the same time, he shows us Jesus so that we might have somewhere to turn from our empty pursuits, someone fulfilling to travel with once we lay down those things we're clinging to, some place for comfort when we're convicted.

If you feel like the crowds, then who can be saved? Certainly not me. Look at how I love the things of this world more than God at times.

Pick back up at verse 27. They said, who can be saved? But Jesus said, what is impossible with man is possible with God.

He says, you're right. You can't do it. It's impossible. The camel's never going through the eye of that needle. It's not just hard. Impossible. But God can change even your heart.

Salvation comes not from being more generous, but from being regenerated. A new life. A new heart. And God is able.

[24 : 58] There's comfort there. But Peter jumps in. We're pretty good though, right, Jesus? I don't know Peter's heart, but it sounds a lot like that.

Verse 28. Peter said, see, we've left our homes and followed you. Jesus said to them, truly I say to you, there's no one who's left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.

Maybe you feel a little bit of this. I mean, I've given up a lot for Jesus. And maybe you're feeling bad for feeling that. Jesus doesn't pound you for that.

He speaks words of comfort, doesn't he? I know you've sacrificed. It's worth it. Jesus says. He refills us here and in this life and overflowing in the age to come.

I've seen a picture of that with our family. When God called us to Southwood 10 years ago, one of the things we knew was we wouldn't be in the same town with any of our family.

[26 : 19] Maybe not the biggest thing ever, but a bit of a sacrifice, especially when you have a new baby, right? And God has so kindly given us family here.

Brothers and sisters, we can't imagine doing life without parents for us, grandparents for our kids who love us. That we're so thankful for. But can you imagine for just a second how much more we'll experience that in the age to come?

That's just a little taste, isn't it, of how God can provide eternal life that Jesus is talking about. In the age to come, eternal life, it's not mere existence.

He's not just saying you'll survive forever. It's fullness of life that we were created for. Relationship with a perfect heavenly Father.

Restored relationships free from sin with brothers and sisters and parents and grandparents, many of whom you haven't met yet. All of us in a home prepared just for us in our true homeland with our Father forever.

[27 : 34] How richly can our heavenly Father repay? How extravagantly He loves and provides for us beyond what our meager resources could do.

Isn't He awesome? Won't He provide? Won't He refill? Can't He give more than you could get for yourself? But that's not even the greatest comfort here.

Verse 31, no matter how much we give, Jesus gives more. Peter sacrificed a lot, but Jesus takes the twelve aside and says to them words of comfort one more time.

See, we're going up to Jerusalem and everything that's written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

And after flogging Him, they will kill Him and on the third day He will rise. But they understood none of these things. The saying was hidden from them and they did not grasp what was said.

[28 : 46] Jesus talks about giving things up and being filled back up as He goes to give His own life. Beyond what we understand, Jesus gives Himself, doesn't He?

He gently reminds them and us that this is the way of the kingdom. We're called to let go of things we value in order to cling to Jesus because that's the way the king himself is operated first.

His kingdom has always been about holding wealth in an open hand and about being willing to give it away. And He has always been the true treasure.

Jesus lays aside the glories and comforts of heaven. He travels to earth with empty suitcases as it were. Why?

Why? Why would He do that? To fill them with you and me. Because He loves us so far beyond what we deserve.

[29 : 59] Because He's committed to rescuing and restoring that relationship with us. The hope of the gospel, after all, is not that you will successfully cling to Jesus every day.

But that you're in His hands. And He will never let you go. There's security. It's not in your level of generosity.

There's significance. There's joy and rest. Traveling light is worth it because you're actually traveling with Jesus who loves you like that.

Having Him, what else could the riches of the world offer to compete with Him? What else besides that kind of love could make you willing to lay aside the things of this world?

What else could motivate you to hold your wealth in an open hand? What else could compel you to cling to Jesus desperately? Thou who wast rich beyond all splendor, all for love's sake becamest poor.

[31 : 19] You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.

For your sakes He gave up everything. And that's what this table reminds us of. This table offers us a chance to find our treasure again in the One who gave Himself up for us.

Remember what He said when He told His followers to do this. He said, This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. He sat with His disciples and He took the bread. And He broke it. And He gave it to them and said, This is not normal.

This is not the bread I usually give you. This bread is going to represent to you my body. Which is broken for you. And you're to do this in remembrance of me.

[32 : 25] And He took the cup after supper. And He said, This cup is not a normal cup. This cup is the new covenant in my blood. My blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

So you drink from that cup. This week we had a chance as we were out in Colorado to see the majestic grandeur and beauty of the Rocky Mountains.

Snow capped in God's kindness. And one of my kids said, You know, I don't think this will ever get old. And sure enough, we confirmed that suspicion with some of the locals.

That this time every year in the first snow, waking up and seeing the mountains around you is overwhelming. And it never gets old no matter how many times you look at it. And I thought about this table we were going to be at together.

And I thought it can never get old. I've come hundreds of times in my life to the Lord's table.

[33 : 31] I don't know how many times you have come. But may it never get old. May you get a fresh glimpse of it even this morning. That the Savior whose body and blood is pictured here comes to remind you of His unstoppable love.

His costly sacrifice. Do you know what we just read in Luke? Jesus said, here's what's going to happen. We're going to go up to Jerusalem. And here's all the terrible things that are going to happen to me.

Beaten. Flogged. Treated shamefully. Killed. Buried for three days. And what does Jesus say? Let's go. I'm going there.

Knowing. Jesus, knowing what He was walking into, went to the cross for you. Because He loved you.

He would do it again. He loves you like that. Do you see that in this table? Do you taste the love of a Savior who gives up everything in order to have a relationship with you?

[34 : 39] Let's pray and we'll come to this table together. Amen. Jesus, thank You for what You've done. Thank You for giving us a picture of it. And the bread and wine.

We might never forget Your body and blood. That it might be fresh and taste sweet to us again. So would You do that as we celebrate. And we ask it in Your name.

Amen. Amen. If you don't know Jesus this morning, our desire is not to give you bread and juice. Don't come to this table for that.

We actually want to introduce you to Jesus. We'd love to talk with you about Him. So don't come to the table. Come and talk with us and let's talk about Jesus together.

But if you know your Savior, if you see in this bread and juice the body and blood of the One who treasures you, who will never let you go no matter how much you struggle to treasure Him, then come to this table.

[35 : 44] Come repenting. Come rejoicing in His forgiveness again. Our host team members will usher you to tables forward and back. And we'll celebrate His love together.

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