

Jesus is Passing By

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter, Luke chapter 18, and as we're working through Luke, I want us just to look at this section that we've read tonight, from Luke chapter 18, verse 18 to the end.

The ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Now, one of the things that has been striking us as we go through the gospel of Luke and Jesus' teaching is we are meeting constantly contrasts.

Life, of course, is full of contrasts. Day, night, summer, winter, rich, poor, death, life, black, white, just the list is endless. But we find in Luke's gospel, it seems to be one of the things that is being highlighted so often, the great contrasts in life and contrasts in people.

And certainly here tonight, we find two men and the contrast in these men couldn't really be greater. One of the men seemed to have everything.

We're told in one of the other gospels that he was young. This young man, this ruler, he seemed to be somebody who had, as far as the world was concerned, he had the world at his feet.

[1 : 26] He had wealth. He had prestige. He had privilege. He was the kind of person that many would have looked up to. And he was very obviously an upstanding young man.

He was the kind of person that people would have looked at in the community and would have said, wow, that's a fine young man. Look at where he is. Look at what he's achieved. Look at what he's done.

Look at the kind of person he is. Look at his character. The kind of person, I suppose, you would say was almost beyond reproach. And I'm sure there were many people who would love to have swapped places and say, traded places and said, I wish I was that rich ruler.

I would love to be him. Then the other person that we're meeting here is at the very opposite end of the scale. He's got nothing. Doesn't own anything.

He's a beggar. Doesn't have any possessions. No state benefits. He lives absolutely and entirely upon what anybody will in any form of generosity or kindness give him.

[2 : 32] He has nothing. But more than that, he doesn't just have nothing. He is void of sight. One of the most devastating blows, surely, that anybody can experience to lose their sight.

So this man really is in a poor, in a bad way. And again, nobody would have traded places with him. Just as people would have wanted to trade places with a rich man, nobody would have wanted to trade places with this beggar.

And yet, both of them met with Jesus. Both of them had a, it was quite remarkable. Because one man left Jesus almost in a worse condition than when he met him.

He went away sad. But the beggar, on the other hand, his life was changed. He was healed. He was helped. And all of a sudden, his life took on a whole new meaning.

It was a life full of potential. The man who had everything ended up with nothing. And the man who had nothing ended up with everything. As we said, a life-changing experience.

[3 : 48] And as we see here, the contrast. We've been seeing this last week. When we were looking at the earlier part of the chapter, we were seeing one of the things. The contrast with the two men who went to pray.

The Pharisee and the publican. Went back in chapter 16 again. We met a rich man and a beggar. The contrast in life was extraordinary. The contrast in death was even greater.

Well, here we have this rich man, this ruler. And though his eyes is perfect, he's got 20-20 vision, it's a distorted vision.

Because he is looking at life through his wealth. And you know, wealth has an ability to distort. It has an ability to distort for the one who has wealth.

Because it's so easy to put our trust and security in these things. It even has the ability to distort in our eyes when we look at those who have wealth.

[4 : 47] Because somehow there is something about looking at people with wealth where we think that they, in some way, are different. We have this, there's a, the day we're living in, there is this whole celebrity culture.

And in some way, here we are and there's them. And we look at them with a kind of a distorted vision. The Lord looks at everybody exactly the same.

And so should we. There's that great poem, A Man's A Man for All That. And you know, there's a lot of gospel truth in that very statement.

Because we are all the same. The bottom line is that we are all in God's sight. In this, as far as we are naturally, just the same.

So here we see these two different, different people, different characters. And they both come to meet Jesus. Now, this ruler, he asks Jesus probably the most important question that any person can ask.

[5 : 58] And he says, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Eternal issues. An eternal state was playing on his mind.

Now, that was good. There were, he had a distorted view of things. But he was wrestling with this all-important question.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? I would love to think, if you're here tonight, and you have never met with Jesus, personally, savingly, that that kind of question is working away in your mind. I would love to think that you are thinking about your eternal destiny. Because it's not far away. Be persuaded of that. Our journey in this world is so brief.

I suppose it's a sign of me getting older. But I just cannot believe where the years have gone. It's just a blink.

[7 : 01] The Bible talks like a tale at a stone. It talks like it's just the morning mist that's there for a moment and it's gone. And that's what it's like. It's just, it's rushing.

And when we place it against eternity, our time here is just like a blink. I really hope that like this young ruler, the question of eternal life is playing in your mind.

I really hope so. And if it isn't, then ask the Lord that it will become an issue with you. That you will really begin to think about it. That it's something that you want to dwell upon.

However, this young man had made the mistake that so many people make. It's very obvious from his discussion with Jesus that he thought his own efforts, he thought that who he was in himself was somehow sufficient to make himself right with God.

That God was going to accept him. At one level, you kind of wonder why did he ask Jesus. In the first place, this question about eternal life.

[8 : 14] Because it would appear that this person had an incredible estimate of his own goodness. And while he was a fine young man in many ways, and as we said, the kind of person that people would have looked up to as being a successful religious man, his arrogance in a sense is breathtaking.

Because his own belief in his goodness is really, it's mind-blowing to a certain extent. Because when Jesus, he says to Jesus, What good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus says, You know the commandments. And Jesus runs through the commandments. And see what the young man says. This young man believes that he has kept all the commandments. That's really what he's saying here. This person thinks he has an advanced hire in commandment keeping. That he is there, that he has, that's what he says.

He says, all these I have kept from my youth. That's what I mean by saying his arrogance is breathtaking. I don't believe there's any person in here tonight who would make that kind of claim.

[9 : 26] When the commandments are rolled out in front of you. And you say, you know, since my youth kept them all. You would sort of say, that's a mind-blowing.

You don't say, that's mind-blowing arrogance. And yet that's what this young man actually thought that he was doing. Because, and don't get me wrong, he obviously was a fine, upstanding, he was a morally upstanding person.

He would probably have put many of us into the shade by his outward life. And you would say to yourself, as you looked upon his life, obviously, if he lived in this way, you would say to yourself, that man's life is beyond reproach.

He was obviously very careful, very diligent. He was the kind of person you would say to yourself, really, I can't, I cannot really point to anything about him. And say, well, you know, he's, he's this or this or that.

He was just, he was upstanding. But this young man obviously thought that his own works were going to get him to heaven. What must I do? What must I do to inherit eternal life?

[10:37] What must I do? In fact, in one of the other gospel accounts, it's called, what good deed must I do? My friend, there's no good deed we must do.

The good deed has already been done. That's what we were remembering this morning. Jesus. What he did. And what is required of us is to accept Jesus in his entirety.

To accept him, his passion, and his work. The good deed that he is and did. It's to accept. This is what we're to accept. Him. His passion.

Jesus. To rest our life. To believe in him. To accept him. Have you done that? Jesus. The living. Savior. Tonight. Exalted. And yet. Who is there. With open stretched arms. Saying, look. Come unto me. Cast yourself. Your burdens. Your sin. Your guilt.

[11:40] We heard about that this morning. How Jesus took our guilt. It's extraordinary. And this is what we are to do. Now, Jesus challenged.

Jesus had a wonderful way of dealing with people. And he always got right straight to the heart of the matter. And he deals with this man. And Jesus always picked on the right thing.

And so, how does Jesus deal with this man? Well, this man had come to Jesus. And he said, good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

So, you see. Jesus knew this man had a problem. And part of his problem. Was that he had never really come to see himself. Because he was trusting in himself.

And as we can see. He had an idol in his heart. And that was wealth. So, Jesus wants this man to have a wee look at himself. This man, remember, who thinks he is really, really good.

[12:41] So, Jesus picks on the word good. That's what he does. Jesus says straight away, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Now, there's a conversation stopper. That man thought he was good. Jesus straight away takes the word good. Brings it back to him. And he says, there is nobody good but God.

Now, straight away, that would have to make that man think and say to himself, All right, hold on. I must review the situation a little. That's what Jesus is doing here.

Despite what he thinks, he's not as good as he is. And Jesus wants us all to take a deep look inside. Do you do that?

Now, if we look at ourselves against the light of God's word, with the aid of God's spirit, it can be a very disturbing discovery.

[13:43] Where we see what we really are. But, you know, it's important. The worst thing that we can do spiritually is to adopt the ostrich position of burying our head in the sand and kind of hoping everything's all right.

People do that. They don't want to face up. You know, that's one of the great things about the Bible and about Jesus' teaching. It makes us face up to things right as they are.

No escape. No beating about the bush. No. Jesus got right to the heart of the matter. And that's what he wants us to do. Look at yourself against the word. Look at yourself in the light of truth.

Where do you stand? Are you standing on your own works, on your own efforts, on your own goodness? Well, it's not good enough because there's nobody good but God alone.

That's what Jesus is saying to us. Just as he said to this young man. And then Jesus says to this man, you have a problem. That's really what he's saying.

[14:47] When Jesus heard all this of this young man, and Jesus saw that he was a good man because Jesus is sad. It tells us that Jesus looked at him with sadness in verse 24.

Because Jesus is seeing the kind of passion he is. But on this young man's heart there was an idol. And that idol was wealth. And that's why Jesus said to him, you know, you've got to go and you've got to sell all that you have.

And you've got to give to the poor. Now, for that man, that was an incredible thing to say. Because his life was his money.

Now, Jesus, when he says that, and he goes on to talk about wealth, Jesus is not for one moment meaning that an empty bank account saves a person. But he is showing us that our love of money.

And it's not, let's be quite clear on this as well. It's not wealth that is the problem. It's the love of wealth. It's the love of money, we're told in scripture.

[16:00] That is the root of all evil. It's not money itself. People can have an obsession with money who are really poor. People can have an obsession with money who have a bit of money.

People who are very rich, it might mean nothing to them. There are many people who have a huge amount of wealth. And they're distributing their wealth.

Tonight they are bringing so much good through their wealth into the lives of others. And that's a wonderful thing. Jesus never preached against wealth in itself being wrong.

There are loads of things that you can put in the place of wealth. It could be our home. It could be our work. It could be our attainments. It could be our achievements.

It could be our relationships. It could be, there's 101 things where the idol is sitting upon our heart. Anything that comes between our shelf and God.

[17:01] God will not tolerate any other upon the throne of our heart. Nobody else. And that's one of the things that we have to learn.

And so Jesus is saying to this man, until you deal with this issue, go and sell what you have.

Because Jesus, as we said, that is not the way to salvation, is getting rid of what we have.

But for this man, his wealth was his idol. There might, tonight, you might be here and there might be something that's keeping you from the Lord.

And you know what it is. And you're not prepared to push it aside. It is a grip of your life. It's powerful. And you are not prepared to face up to the challenge and to say to yourself, I know that this is an obstacle between me and God.

I know it. But I'm not prepared to deal with it. And my friend, you, however much you say to yourself, I want to be a Christian, you will go away like this man, sad.

[18:14] Because until you deal with this, until you ask the Lord to help you to deal with it, you're going to be stuck and ensnared and trapped by it.

And so when Jesus talks to those who are round about, they're absolutely, they cannot understand what Jesus is saying.

And there's a sense of bewilderment and amazement. And then, I'm just rushing through this, Peter says to Jesus, well, look, he said to Jesus, we've left all. Remember, these men, they were fishermen.

They've left the fishing behind. They've left their homes behind. They've gone. They've followed Jesus. And Peter is saying this, Lord, he said, look, we have left our homes and we have followed you. And if we can sum up what Jesus says, it is this.

The Christian's reward will always exceed the sacrifice they make. That's it. If you're to put it in a nutshell.

[19:13] The Christian's reward will always exceed the sacrifice that's made. At the end of the day, you will never, you will never sacrifice anything but that the Lord will make it up to you tenfold.

We will find that running, that truth running through the Bible. We are never the losers when we give, when we do for the Lord.

Never. Never. And that's really what Jesus is saying. And we've got to take hold in these things.

And then from verses 1, 31 to 34, and indeed, there's a sermon and it's on its own there.

Here, Jesus, as the prophet, highlights some of what is ahead of him. And he's telling them of how they're going up to Jerusalem. And he's there.

It's quite, it's really a profound prophecy here. Because he's telling how he's going to be handed over to the Romans. Very interesting. Because that's what he says. He's going to be handed over to the Gentiles. And see what he says there in verse 32.

[20:22] For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles, that's to the Romans. And it's there the ones who are going to mock and shamefully treat, spit. And after flogging him, they will kill him.

And on the third day, he will rise. It's really an incredibly graphic prophecy that is given there. And all the prophecies in the Bible are being fulfilled.

And, you know, it's one of the things that not only strengthens our faith, but it gives an increased, as it were, you could say, authority and accuracy to the Bible when we see the word of God being fulfilled.

And it must have been extraordinary in the experience of the disciples. They weren't getting it. They were going with Jesus. And time and again, he would tell them what was in front. They just didn't

get it.

But afterwards, they did. And they would look back and they would say, I'm sure there were days they would discuss and say, Hey, remember when we were going up to Jerusalem, after we met that rich man? Remember how he told us that he was going to be handed over to the Gentiles?

[21 : 25] He told us about the flogging. And what a flogging Jesus got. And he was going to be spat upon and mocked and put to death.

And they would remember all these things. And you know, it's a wonderful thing. That's what God continues to do with his word. And you will find that as you go along.

The word continues to open up for you. You look back over your Christian life. And that's one of the things you will discover that God's word continues to open up.

And it's one of the thrilling things. It makes God's word so real. Just in a word, the times racing by, we meet the other character.

And just, we're going to race through this. And this man couldn't be more different to the rich ruler. This poor beggar. As we said, he had nothing. It's amazing. He's sitting there at the roadside, void of light.

[22 : 22] And he's just about to meet the light of the world. Jesus is on his way to Jericho. And no doubt, this beggar, this is exactly what happens.

He's sitting there. And he hears the movement, the rustle along on the sand. He's hearing the tramp, tramp, tramp of footsteps. And all of a sudden realizes, hey, there's a big crowd.

And so he asks someone, what's this movement? What's going on? No doubt he was waiting, hoping that somebody would throw him a coin or something. He says, what's going on? What's the deal today?

And he's told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Do you know something? Jesus of Nazareth is passing by tonight.

You may say to yourself, what's so different about tonight as any other night? Well, at one level, nothing. But the other night as well, Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

[23 : 21] If you missed that opportunity, thank the Lord in his providence that he's given you another opportunity to be where Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

Because we're told that we gather together in the name of Jesus, that he is here in the midst.

Tonight, Jesus is here. And tonight we have to grasp this opportunity because Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

He never passed through Jericho again. This was his final journey. We meet about, see him again in chapter 19, part of this journey. But he was passing by.

If this blind beggar hadn't grasped the opportunity, then he would never have got it again. Are you grasping this opportunity?

Don't let the familiarity of the gospel, of your seat, of the people around you, of what you're doing here, put you off and say, Oh, I'm going to leave this for next year, for some other time.

[24 : 25] Not just now. My friend, Jesus is passing by. You and I don't know when we'll have another opportunity. We're not trying to be dramatic, but we might not.

We always think it's going to be the same. One day it won't be the same. Jesus is passing by tonight. Don't let this opportunity pass you by.

And Jesus responds to the cry from this blind man. He cries for mercy. And Jesus always responds to a cry for mercy.

If you tonight call out to the Lord, Lord, have mercy upon me. Do you know something? He will. The Lord never closes his ear to anybody who cries to him for mercy.

And tonight, Jesus is offering you a life of potential, a life of hope, a life with a glorious future.

[25 : 33] Do you know what in the Psalms it talks about? The person who trusts the Lord has the Lord as a help and our hope is in the Lord.

He's both a help and a hope. And I think these are two of the most glorious words in our everyday language. Because always in life we need help.

And it's wonderful. That's one of the great things, I suppose, in a small community. We know so many people. And there's always somebody who can do something. And it's a good thing when we can ask somebody to help us.

And it's a good thing when we're able to help. Imagine having the greatest, most powerful passion in the whole world. Indeed, the person who made this world, who is there to help you.

Well, that's who Jesus is. He's our help. And he's also our hope. He is our hope. You see, the world's hope is always uncertain.

[26 : 40] I hope to go tomorrow. But I'm not sure. That's what I hope to do. It might not happen. I might go down with the flu.

Can't go. I might, circumstances may change. Might not be able. That's the way the world operates. The hope in Jesus is different. The hope is centered in who he is.

So you see, to be a Christian takes on a whole new, life takes on a whole new meaning. And that's what Jesus offers tonight. And when this man began to shout, we're told that he was told to be quiet.

And we find that those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more. And may I say to you tonight just one word here.

If you are serious about your soul. And you're beginning to seek the Lord. Just like this man was told to be quiet.

[27 : 43] There will be voices telling you to be quiet as well. Voices that will be saying, ah, not just now. Satan will do anything to stop you seeking.

The moment he sees that you're beginning to get serious about your soul. He will come and he will try to derail that. He will bring something before your mind.

Where all of a sudden you say, oh, I can't become a Christian just now. Oh, man, I've got things coming up just now at Christmas. There's no way I can become a Christian.

I'll leave it to laughter. I'll leave it to New Year. Then I'll begin to seek the Lord. Satan's got you. He's won. Don't listen to him. If you find that, first of all, there's a desire in your heart to have Christ.

And then you find objections coming up as to why you should leave it. That is from Satan, not from the Lord. Tonight you must seek the Lord.

[28 : 49] So Jesus stops and Jesus asks this man to come over to him. He brings the man over. He commanded him to be brought to him. And Jesus asks him, what do you want me to do for you?

Of course Jesus knew. But he wanted to hear it from himself. And he wants to hear from you. Spell it out. And here's one of the most wonderful prayers.

Lord, let me recover my sight. One, two, three, four, five, six. Six words. You know, people say, I don't know how to pray. Well, you know how to pray like that. There weren't many words, but there was great heart.

That's what the Lord is looking for. Heart. It doesn't matter the length of the words. That doesn't matter. We tend to judge the length of words.

The Lord doesn't. What's important to the Lord is the heart. And for this man, he was genuine. He was sincere. Lord, I want my sight. Please. Will you restore my sight?

[29 : 51] And here, Jesus acknowledges this man. His cry for mercy acknowledges his faith in believing that Jesus could heal him.

And so, Jesus said to him, recover your sight. Your faith has made you well. And you see what happened?

And immediately, he recovered his sight, and he followed him. How different to the other man. The other man went away sad. I find that one of the saddest episodes in Scripture.

A person who had a meeting with Jesus, and he went away sad. I cannot think of a sadder episode than that. Can you? And yet, here's this man who was blind.

His eyes are opened. And he's away following Jesus. And if Jesus opens your eyes, that's what you'll do as well. Today, we're celebrating and remembering the death of Jesus.

[30 : 54] And round his table were all the people whose eyes have been opened by Jesus. And they've begun to follow him. They followed him to the table.

It was his table. And they will follow him everywhere in life. And eventually, he will take them home to be with himself. Because if we're following him here, he will say, right, you followed me.

Now it's time to take you home. Are you going to go home with Jesus? Or are you still on the outside, in the cold, in the dark?

Jesus is passing by just now. Let us pray. Lord, we pray that we may hear and heed what the word is saying.

We pray that we will get rid of all the excuses. And all the things that hinder us and keep us back. And that we will put our trust entirely and completely in the Lord.

[31 : 55] Have mercy upon us, we pray. Guide us and keep us. And take us all to our home safely.
And may the power of God be in us and on us. Forgive us our sin.
In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen.