

## Easter

### Luke Slide

**“Hey dad, you know those funny quotes you do at the first of your sermons? Use the one I said earlier in the van tonight.”- Micah Atwood**

**“Jesus says try and try & never give up...unless you have to eat, then you can stop for a minute.”- Isaac Atwood**

**"How about reading something more important?"- Micah as he hands Keva a bible.**

After reading our Bible and then a little bit of Harry Potter, Isaac asked

**"Is God going to change Voldemort's heart?"- Isaac Atwood**

**“I wish there was still magic- you know, like when Jesus was around. Then I could put my socks on quicker. Like POOF!”-Isaac Atwood**

**Title Slide: “Is God Gonna Change Voldemort’s Heart?: How the Radical Generosity of Jesus Makes Anything Possible”- Luke 18:9-30**

Back to that last one... from Isaac... That's what today's passage in Luke 18 is all about.

It's something that all of us at one time have wondered about. Is it possible for the very worst of the bad guys- to change?

I think when we're kids we have hope for even the worst people to change to a greater degree than we grow up and get cynical. That's the thing about kids. They have the kind of imagination that leaves the door open for anything to happen.

...and that's exactly what Jesus is going to show us today about the Kingdom of God.

Yes Isaac- God is going to change Voldemort's heart....or at least he makes it possible.

### Luke 18:9-30

**9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like**

other people — greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’

13 “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

15 People were bringing infants to him so that he might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 Jesus, however, invited them: “Let the little children come to me, and don’t stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

18 A ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not bear false witness; honor your father and mother.”

21 “I have kept all these from my youth,” he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he told him, “You still lack one thing: Sell all you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

23 After he heard this, he became extremely sad, because he was very rich.

24 Seeing that he became sad, Jesus said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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.”

26 Those who heard this asked, “Then who can be saved?”

27 He replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

28 Then Peter said, “Look, we have left what we had and followed you.”

29 So he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left a house, wife or brothers or sisters, parents or children because of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive many times more at this time, and eternal life in the age to come.”

This text today is showing us something about radical generosity. The word 'radical' means 'down to the roots'. That's why I'm using it today.

Jesus is showing us in this text today that he isn't satisfied in a mere external appearance of good...he wants to change you all the way down to the root. Which gives a lot of hope to the worst of us.

### **1) Radical change can't start until self-reliance stops.**

#### **v 10-12**

Pharisees weren't the bad guys. They were the good guys!

Look at his external generosity!

He gives 10%! He's not greedy

Tax Collectors were the bad guys

The tax collector was Voldemort. Sell out countrymen for money.

Same in the story of the ruler that approaches Jesus.

#### **v 18 & 21**

He's the good guy

He's kept the commandments! He's an external success!

But Jesus goes on to call him to something much deeper. Something much more radical...much less manageable.

He's trying to have it all. Can I have eternal life...and hold onto the control of my life too?

That's when Jesus calls this rich ruler to something that could not be faked.

#### **v 22-23**

You lack one thing...give it all away.

In other words...get rid of all of your self-reliance and depend completely on me.

Notice the two identity markers for this man. RULER- authority. and EXTREMELY RICH.

Jesus says- give all your money away- which dispenses with his rich identity...and then he says "Follow Me" which gets rid of the RULER identity.

Jesus is calling him to complete dependence. He's testing his heart...does his generosity go all the way to the roots- is it radical- or are his good deeds just some kind of external project attempting to manage and control God?

For the Rich Ruler- he gets sad

### **1 Timothy 6:9-10**

**But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

You see what Paul writes here to Timothy? There is another love at the root...you aren't radically changed...

The good guys in these stories...that turn out to be the bad guys...are shown as rich...not because being rich makes you bad...but because it so often makes you self-reliant.

See the root doesn't change...there is no heart change. ...and so the rich ruler is extremely sad.

### **Luke 18:9**

...and the Pharisee does not walk away from his prayer time at the temple changed...but with his heels further dug into trusting his own righteousness and looking down on everyone else.

So that's the Pharisee & the Rich Ruler...now...let's look at the other side. A tax collector and some babies.

### **2) You can't receive the Kingdom until you are radically desperate for it.**

Kingdom of God- wherever God is the ruler.

There is a culture to that Kingdom- Radical Generosity. A deep and abiding willingness and eagerness to give.

### **Luke 18:11-13**

The Pharisee comes convinced that he carries in himself all he needs to be approved by God. And notice how he spends his time in the temple. God is a chess piece on his board. His whole prayer exalts himself...and trashes this tax collector.

Now look at the tax collector's prayer. His whole prayer is honoring the holiness and goodness of God (he stands far off)...there is no negative focus on the pharisee or anyone else...and he acknowledges that he is sinner. He brings his sin to God...his guilt...and humbly ask God for mercy. He is broken.

There is a tell-tale sign of someone who knows Jesus. They speak humbly of their own sin more than spend time pointing out the sins of others.

There is a desperation for God to work in their life...more than an assumption that he already is or is just obliged to.

Now take a look at these babies.

### **v 15-17**

Luke in particular uses the word for “infant” or “baby”. In other words- these kids that people are bringing to Jesus are COMPLETELY dependent on someone else for life. Not only that- you know- as cute as babies can be- they don't right off the bat really offer anything to the household.

And certainly in 1st century Israel- they represented a hassle for a Rabbi as important and with as much authority as Jesus.

That's why the disciples try to stop these parents from bringing their babies to him. The disciples reason- this is only going to get in the way.

but Jesus says the Kingdom BELONGS to people who are like babies. they are radically dependent on God for their lives. They need God's mercy and forgiveness. They can't dare come close by their own strength or good deeds...they need to be forgiven and welcomed in by God's mercy.

Then...notice receive like a little child.

Ok- this is where Luke takes this story in a little different direction than Matthew and Mark.

Most of the time, the Scripture talks about ENTERING the KoG. But here- its RECEIVING.

One way to understand this is “Receiving” like the babies “receive”...and there might be something to that.

But I think more likely what Luke is getting at is the character and nature of the Kingdom of God.

For Jesus to RECEIVE these children...is an act of radical generosity. He can't get any immediate payback from these children. If anything- they will take from him. But he gladly receives those that can't pay him back.

He is saying- a sign that you have entered the KoG...is that you don't look down on anyone. That you receive anyone...you are generous all the way to your core. And yes...even willing to love your enemies...like Harry Potter hosting Voldemort for dinner.

Some are generous with money-

**currency of emotional space**

happy to give money- dont want to be personally involved

**currency of physical space-**

happy to give money- don't want you on my rug

**currency of personal relationship economy**

happy to give money- cannot forgive

**currency of time-**

happy to give money- but not my time

Jesus is saying- Until you become radically desperate for me for mercy... forgiveness..life...not relying on yourself for your own justification...you will never become radically generous.

**3) Radical change is possible because Jesus is radically generous.**

Is God going to change Voldemort's heart?

We can argue about the literary significance of Voldemort...what he represents etc...

...but I only ever read Harry Potter as an adult...and never once...not a single time did I think it was possible for Voldemort's heart to change.

Leave it to a child...to even offer the possibility of repentance to one of children's literatures most evil characters.

Look what Jesus promises in this text.

**v 14**

To the tax collector- the embodiment of evil to the jewish people- he meets the desperate cry for mercy with justification.

EXPLAIN JUSTIFICATION- Made right.

**v 26-27**

When people heard that its easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich person to enter the kingdom of God-

they have no capacity to understand. Because of the Pharisees- and the general belief at the time- if you were honestly prospering financially- it was a sign of God's blessing- so they thought- if the Pharisee's are eliminated...then who can get in?

Jesus gives a very childlike- a very Isaac and Voldemort answer- "anything is possible with a God this radically generous...this merciful"

#### **v 28-29**

Look how generous- how patient

Nothing is lost. Everything is transformed. In the Kingdom of God- nothing you seem to lose for the Kingdom will be lost forever. When Jesus returns- you get it all back..and more.

But how?

#### **Luke 18:31-34**

**31 Then he took the Twelve aside and told them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. Everything that is written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked, insulted, spit on; 33 and after they flog him, they will kill him, and he will rise on the third day."**

**34 They understood none of these things. The meaning of the saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.**

In other words, God is very holy, and he hates evil and sin. He came to earth in Jesus Christ, and he lost everything. He lost his glory. He lost his invulnerability. He lost all of his money. He was born poor. In the end of his life, he lost everything. He was even stripped of his clothing, the last thing he owned. He was killed. He was tortured, naked. He died in the dark.

In the resurrection- He got it all back...and it completely changed all his disciples. They became generous with their lives.

Are you desperate for God today? Are you ready to receive the Kingdom of God like a little child?

#### **Baptism Sunday**