

Jesus's Gift of Salvation Demands Humility and Surrender

FIRST THOUGHTS

When people brought some children to Jesus for a blessing, His disciples tried to stop them. But Jesus rebuked His followers, telling them to let the children come to Him because they represented what kingdom life should look like (Matt. 19:14). Right after that, a young and wealthy Jewish leader gave Jesus the perfect object lesson. He came seeking eternal life (v. 16), but he walked away grieving once Jesus exposed his true self-centered values. Jesus told His disciples that entering the kingdom requires humble, childlike faith (vv. 23-24), not wealth or influence. He added that all those who surrender the things they hold dear to follow Him would be rewarded in eternity (vv. 27-29). We as true believers must exam our own hearts. What is it that I hold close to my heart and why? What are the motives for what I do? Is it for the glory of God? What am I putting my trust in? Is it the material things of this world or perhaps my own intelligence and human power? As true believers we are given salvation and eternal life as gifts and really, miracles from God in Christ. We have no goodness or righteousness of our own: it all comes from Jesus: His life, His work, His death and His resurrection. Hallelujah 🙌.

As you dig into this session's verses, think about what "eternal life" means to you. How does the life Jesus has granted you affect the way you live each day. Let God remind you that salvation is impossible to obtain by human merit and comes totally by God's grace. Use the truths of this lesson to remind you of the biblical perspective on wealth and possessions, including how materialistic values can stand in the way of people becoming followers of Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT (companion verses are Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18: 18-30)

Jesus and His disciples are in the region of Judea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River or "Perea". This is area has spiritual significance because this is where John the Baptist had ministered to the people about repentance and the coming Messiah. Jesus continues to teach and preach about the kingdom and relationships with one another on His final journey toward Judea, Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross. All three Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 19:13; Mark 10:13; Luke 18:15) begin to match toward the end of Jesus's Perea ministry. After another heated confrontation with religious leaders, Jesus took time to bless a group of children. Jesus allowed the children to come to Him and spoke of the dependence of children as an example of the childlike humility needed by all to be a part of the kingdom of God. This thought links this humility with the proper way to enter eternal life. As we study this lesson, consider what eternal life means to you and how you can demonstrate your relationship with God in practical ways each day.

Unwilling (Matt. 19:16–22) • We can affirm that eternal life cannot be achieved by human achievement.

From every indication this inquiry was sincere. What is surprising is the fact that this wealthy young man would admit he lacked eternal life. He knew something was missing from his life. He was eager to fix his emptiness. Here was a young man seeking hope for this life and for life after death. This man thought he had it all together. He claimed to keep all the commands, including those focused on our "horizontal" relationships with others. But Jesus cut through the man's delusions. He revealed some gaps in the man's understanding of what it means to keep the law. More important, He pinpointed the man's biggest failure: allowing his stuff to become his god. None of us can fill God's spot in our lives with material possessions. We can't earn or purchase salvation, and we can't earn or purchase a meaningful relationship with Him.

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 19:26

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Jesus is the only way for salvation, His is the only name under heaven given to men for salvation. See John 14:6; Acts 4:12)

POSSIBLE (Matt. 19:23–26) We can be encouraged knowing salvation is received as a gift from God.

Jesus reinforced His statement with the extreme example of a camel passing through the eye of a needle. Point out that the picture of a large camel trying to fit through such a tiny opening would have seemed impossible. In essence, Jesus was saying squeezing a camel through a needle and a rich man getting into the kingdom both required acts of God. Why were the disciples shocked by

Jesus's words: Jesus's statement here was in direct contradiction to the traditions of Judaism that believed a person's wealth gave evidence of God's favor. Wealthy Jews often thought they could purchase a more favored position with God through their gifts to the temple or through the giving of alms to the poor. Jesus, however, taught something very different. Wealth or poverty didn't matter. Only God can bring salvation to a person, for with Him all things are possible. Salvation and entrance into the kingdom of God is dependent on God and God alone.

REWARD Matt. 19:27-30 We can know that following Jesus is worth it, no matter what it costs—the greatest reward being eternal life.

Did Peter's statement and question sound greedy or self-serving? Peter probably was trying to process what Jesus was saying. He may have been confused and wondered how the sacrifices he and the other disciples had made fit into Jesus's bigger plan. Jesus did not chastise Peter. He just made Peter and the disciples a promise. What did Jesus promise? "To the disciples, Jesus gave the promise that they would also sit on twelve thrones and judge over the twelve tribes of Israel. The reference to the twelve tribes of Israel might refer to the actual tribes of Israel or could be a reference to all of God's redeemed people. Jesus next included all those who make Him their priority. They, too, will be rewarded. Everyone who forsakes everything and everyone because of my name will be rewarded a hundred times more. The reward of a hundred times more speaks of a reward that is out of proportion to what is sacrificed. It will be much more than is expected. On the other hand, people like the rich young ruler may be regarded as first in this life, but in the judgment and the world to come, we will find they are last and left out of God's heavenly reward."

APPLICATION

The young man walked away from Jesus because he wasn't willing to accept Him as Lord and Savior. His wealth was more important than Jesus. Is there anything you won't give up for Christ. Idolatry is when you place anything or anybody above or before the Lord. In our lesson today Jesus showed us that: 1. He always exposes the heart's true loyalty, 2. Salvation and eternal life are divine gifts and miracles, not human accomplishments, 3. Discipleship involves real sacrifices and total surrender, and 4. in the kingdom, human norms are reversed. Let us exam our hearts and ask the hard questions. Why do I do the things I do for Christ? What are the real motives in my heart? Is it fame and attention? Is it just to get a reward in heaven? Are we trying to impress others or the Pastor? Are we simply checking boxes? Heaven forbids! We serve Christ because He died to free us, He has saved us and given us the victory. We serve Him because we love Him and the people He created. Salvation and eternal life are given only by God in Christ. **Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"**

Next week's Lesson: Matthew 20 "Grace"