Hope and Healing
Week 11: Living Honestly
Luke 18:18-23

I read a story last week about a little boy who tied his shoes by himself for the first time ever. It was a huge moment, but instead of being happy about it, the little guy started to cry. His mom asked him why he was crying. She told him he should be proud of himself because tying his own shoes means he's growing up. The little boy said, "Yeah, but now I have to do it every day for the rest of my life!"

Our text today starts in Luke 18:18, but I wanted Jim to read the verses leading up to it because I think it gives some important context for where we're going today, and even ties into what we talked about last week.

Jesus elevates the importance of having a childlike faith. Kids just have this incredible sense of wonder about the world around them. Everything is exciting and new and fascinating. Kids are curious. They're dependent and know they need help. They trust that someone else is going to provide for them and protect them.

Jesus says that's the kind of faith that receives the Kingdom of God. It's a faith in our Heavenly Father that is humble and authentic and trusting. And I think most of us start out with a faith like that. We have a sense of childlike wonder about God's grace and love for us. But, over time, for many of us, things start to get complicated.

Life happens. Questions come up that you can't answer. Someone at church hurts you with something they said or the way they treated you. Maybe you have some ongoing struggles in your life that you just can't get over. Hurts, hang-ups, and habits you can't break. And slowly, the simple, childlike faith in our Heavenly Father, and the wonder of trusting Jesus, is replaced with something else.

Grace gives way to performance because we feel like we have to earn God's love. Fear grows stronger in our life and makes walking by faith feel foolish. Doubts creep in and rob us of the assurance of salvation, leaving us trying to hold everything together on our own.

And by putting these two accounts back to back in his Gospel, I think the point Luke wants us to know is that the Kingdom of God is not earned by impressive spiritual performance, it's received with humble dependence.

In our passage today, a man comes to Jesus who looks like he has everything together. He's moral. He's well respected, successful, and wealthy. And he seems to take his faith seriously. It's the kind of man those of us with daughters pray they'll meet and fall in love with! On paper, he looks perfect. But Jesus sees something in him that no one else can, and he lovingly challenges this young man to lay it down so he can truly follow Him...(READ Luke 18:18-22)

Now, don't miss the point of what's going on here. Jesus isn't give a universal command about money and following him. What he's doing is exposing this man's functional savior. Functional saviors are the things in our life that promise to rescue us from whatever hell feels like to us.

And so, if hell feels like loneliness, then we might run to the functional savior of relationships, even if they're unhealthy, because we think if we can just have someone, then we'll be okay.

If hell feels like insignificance, then we might run to the functional savior of achievement, trying to prove our worth through success and recognition. There's nothing wrong with those things, until we start looking to them to provide what only Jesus can in our lives.

If hell feels like rejection, then we might run to the functional savior of people-pleasing, constantly trying to manage how others see us so we'll be accepted.

If hell feels like boredom or emptiness, then we might run to the functional savior of entertainment, endlessly scrolling, streaming, or distracting ourselves to avoid the pain of reality.

If hell feels like insecurity, then we might run to the functional savior of money, believing that financial stability will protect us from everything we fear.

Jesus knows that's what this young man is trusting in, and he loves him enough to expose it and then he challenge him to stop looking to it and start following Him. But, the allure of his functional savior was too strong...(vs. 23)

Mark's Gospel says his face fell and he turned and walked away. One commentary I read called this the saddest verse in the Bible. This young man seems to have a sincere faith and desire to do what is right. The way he addresses Jesus indicates he knows he's more than just your run-of-the-mill Rabbi. But, the cost of following him was more than he wanted to endure, so he walked away. He was unwilling to exchange what was temporary for what is eternal.

Remember what Jesus said just a few verses earlier about receiving the Kingdom of God like a child. Childlike faith trusts in the Father. Is dependent on Him alone. But this Rich Young Ruler had a divided heart. He wanted to trust God, but when Jesus told him his next step of faith was to let go of what he *actually* trusted, it was too much and he walked away.

Compare that to the text we looked at last week. The account of Zacchaeus is in the next chapter. You have two wealthy men. Both of them had an encounter with Jesus, but only one of them demonstrated the childlike faith Jesus talked about.

When Zacchaeus receives the grace of Jesus, he tears down his functional savior and puts his trust in him. He commits to giving half of what he had to the poor and paying back 4x the amount he'd taken from people. When Jesus exposes the rich young ruler's idol, he walks away sad.

The difference between them isn't wealth...money is amoral. It's not good or bad. The difference is one shows a childlike faith of trust and dependence, the other turns away sad. Zacchaeus ran towards surrender, the rich young ruler walked away from it.

Here's the point I want to make for us this morning. Most people think that the hardest part of following Jesus is figuring out what He wants us to do. But, if we're honest, that's usually not the problem. Most of the time, when it comes to taking our next step of childlike faith and trust and dependence upon Jesus...we already know what he wants us to do, we just don't want to do it.

Both the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus knew what their next step was, but only one was willing to take it. And as we follow Jesus in our day to day lives, the Holy Spirit is constantly pointing out opportunities for us surrender more of ourselves to Christ. To live with a childlike faith and admit that we need Him. To lay down our functional saviors and trust Jesus.

The Holy Spirit lovingly convicts us to expose our sin to the light of God's grace. To take responsibility for our actions instead of blaming others. To quickly confess when we fall short. To make things right when we've hurt others. And as we do these things...or, work these steps, we become less defensive and more humble. We're quicker to repent and more willing to change.

We start to live with a childlike faith of complete and continual surrender as we allow God's grace to reshape who we are and how we live. And that's the heart of Step 10 in recovery programs. Re:Generation puts it like this...Step 10: We continue to examine our lives and when we sin, promptly confess and turn to walk with Christ.

Step 10 is just making steps 1-9 a regular practice in our lives. Some people call it the "One Day at a Time" step. It's about learning to do the next right thing, and when we fall back into old habits or behaviors, to quickly turn back to Christ. This is how we develop a life of childlike faith and continue to follow Jesus. This is sanctification; the process of living a holy life. Following Jesus is more than just a one-time moment of surrender, it's a lifestyle of confession and repentance.

It's getting into the habit of saying, "Jesus, if you point something out, I'm going to surrender it to you." I think, sometimes, we make following Jesus more complicated than it really is. We get caught up in the things that we don't know about it and ignore the things we do.

Following Jesus with a childlike faith might mean that you're in the middle of an argument with someone and the Holy Spirit nudges you that you're tone maybe isn't the best…so you stop and say, "Hey, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said it like that."

Or you catch yourself gossiping about someone in a conversation, feel that nudge, and say, "I shouldn't be talking about them like that." Or you're in bed, scrolling on your phone instead of going to sleep. You know it's feeding your anxiety and eating away at your soul, so you put the phone down. Maybe even commit to keeping it in a different room at night.

Following Jesus often looks less like big, dramatic spiritual moments and more like small, daily acts of surrender. And when the Holy Spirit brings those things to light, will we be like Zacchaeus and run towards surrender, or like the Rich Young Ruler and walk away? Will we keep going our own way and doing our own thing, ***or will we stop and follow Him?***

Several years ago, like…back at the turn of the century…Bob Newhart was in a skit on MadTV. He played a discount therapist who promised to cure people in 5 minutes or less. He was so confident in his counseling that he only charged $1 per minute up to 5 minutes, and then everything after that was free.

And, in the skit, a lady comes to him with a fear of being buried alive in a box. Bob asks her if anyone has ever tried to bury her alive in a box, and she looked at him confused and said, "no…" and then he offers her this advice…(Play clip)

Now, obviously some things in life are more complicated and some struggles require deep, meaningful work in counseling. I've benefited from that myself. But I think sometimes, we know what we're supposed to do, we just don't want to do it. There are times in my own life when I wonder if Jesus looks at me and is just like, "Stop it!" And I want to negotiate with him, make it more complicated than it is. Maybe you've felt that way, too.

Doom scrolling a news app every night, or having a news channel on all day, every day…maybe Jesus is saying to you, "Stop it!"

Mindlessly scrolling through social media, "Stop it!"

Numbing yourself with alcohol every evening before bed, "Stop it!"

Constantly comparing your life to the online lives of others, "Stop it!"

Replaying that conversation in your head and thinking about all the things you want to say to that person to show them you're right and they're wrong, "Stop it!"

Working yourself into the ground trying to prove your worth, "Stop it!"

Living with a constant stream of negativity and complaining that poisons your relationships and outlook on life, “Stop it!”

Avoiding prayer, or time with God, because you feel ashamed or like you’ve messed up too much, “Stop it!”

Sometimes we treat following Jesus like it’s this impossibly complicated puzzle we need to solve, but so often, the next step of faith is clear. Not easy, but clear, and we already know what it is. But, when it comes to surrender, the problem isn’t that it’s not clear. It’s that it’s costly. But, the cost of surrender is worth the life we receive in Jesus.

Jesus asks, “What good is it for a person to gain the whole world, and yet forfeit their soul?” What good is it to hold onto something temporary and give up what is eternal. A life of following Jesus means we continue to examine our lives and when we sin, promptly confess and turn to walk with Christ. It’s a lifestyle of confession and repentance so that our hurts, hang-ups, and habits don’t have a chance to take root in our life.

And so, our question for this morning is, “What is Jesus asking me to surrender today?”

For some, it might be the trust you’ve put in money, status, control. For others, Jesus might be asking you to surrender Instagram to Him. Comparison. Bitterness. We all have places in our life where we trust something else to give us life instead of trusting Jesus. Step 10 is about staying honest enough with Jesus to let Him point those things out so that we can walk in a childlike faith with Him.

And it can be scary to let go. Too often, I’ve been like the Rich Young Ruler and walked away instead. ***But Jesus isn’t trying to take life from us. He’s trying to free us from the things that are slowly taking life from us.*** And in exchange, he gives us the abundant life we truly desire.

Maybe today, you’ve been chasing that life and it’s led you to some dark and painful places. Jesus is offering you new life and inviting you to follow Him…(invitation).

Communion – What is Jesus asking me to surrender today? He gave himself so we might have abundant life. Thank Him for that as you take the elements and remember.