

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

The Free Gift that Costs
Everything (Pt 6)

October 23, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 18:18-30

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:1-10

1Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

As we continue to look at portions of the Gospel of Luke which speak about the cost of following Christ, we certainly cannot forget to hear Jesus' encounter with the man commonly known as The Rich Young Ruler. It is an account of a man who, unlike Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, refused in the end to give up everything, leave the City of Destruction, and follow Christ.

Of all scriptures in the Bible, I have to say that for myself, my favorite passages to hear are those that set out the words and works of Jesus Himself. The Gospels, in other words.

Follow along then as I read from Luke chapter 18, and let's all receive these words for what they are, the Word of God accompanied by the authority of God.

Luk 18:18-30 And a ruler asked

him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

(19) And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? 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) And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”

(22) When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

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

(24) Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult 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 it said, “Then who can be saved?”

(27) But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

(28) And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.”

(29) And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, (30) who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Rich, Young, and a Ruler

Both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark also record this event and from them we gather a few additional details:

Mat 19:22 When the **young man** heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mar 10:17 And as he was setting out on his journey, **a man ran up and knelt before him** and asked

him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

And Luke has told us that this man was *a ruler*. And so there you have it – Rich, young, ruler.

Apparent Zeal

This scene is remarkable and unusual. Here you have an extremely wealthy man who also enjoys a high position of some sort (a member of the Sanhedrin?), not just casually approaching Jesus, but *running up to Him and kneeling before Him*. If we had been there, surely we would have concluded that here is genuine faith in action – a man who without doubt is about to be saved. But we would have been wrong:

Mat 13:20-22 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (22) As for what

was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

The Question

Our conclusion would have been further strengthened when we heard this man’s question:

“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

What do you suppose his thoughts were about this matter of *inheriting eternal life*? It is a rather odd phrase coming from a Jew of the day, isn’t it? They generally conceived of the Kingdom of God to be a very earthly kingdom. And I am not sure how far their thinking went in respect to the *eternality* of the Kingdom. They should have known from the OT Scriptures –

Dan 2:44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall

break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

Dan 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Perhaps then he really is sincerely asking – *what must I do to be saved?*

At this point, the young man is far ahead of so many people in our day. We are surrounded by people who are not even so concerned as to ask the question at all:

The great thing we are every one of us concerned to enquire after is what we shall do to get to heaven, *what we shall do to inherit eternal life*. This implies such a belief of an eternal life after this as atheists and infidels have not, such a concern to make it sure as a careless unthinking world have not, and such a willingness to comply with any terms that it may be made sure as those have not who are resolvedly devoted to the world and the flesh.

[Matthew Henry]

And this man was a Jew, a member of what he would have thought was the chosen people. Furthermore, as we shall see, he thought he had done quite a good job obeying the Law. Still, he asks the question. “*Is there anything else I need to do to inherit eternal life?*”

And so we say again, even though he will ultimately walk away from Jesus, unwilling to comply with Jesus’ command, still – he was far ahead of so many people we see today. *He went to JESUS. He went humbly. He went urgently. He, we might say, has come right up to the Wicket Gate.*

The Real Issue

Have you ever noticed how often Jesus answered people with statements that don’t seem at all connected with the question they asked? Nicodemus – “we know you are from God.” Answer: “You must be born again.” We have this kind of thing here:

(19) And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

We need to spend time here to carefully think about what Jesus is saying – to us as well as to that young man.

The Rich Young Ruler’s real problem was that he had a deficient notion of goodness. Namely, he thought that HE was good AND he that because he had a sadly flawed concept of God’s goodness.

It is quite probable that to greater or lesser degree every single one of us is infected with the same ideas. *The thing is deadly. It is a soul-killer.*

No one is good except God alone.

We need to hover over this statement and let it really sink in.

Rom 3:12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

Ecc 7:20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Jas 1:16-18 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. (17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (18) Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Psa 107:8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

Listen to the definition of God given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

The *goodness of God* is eternal and

unchangeable.

“God has always been and always will be infinitely good...dealing bountifully and kindly with all His creatures. His attribute of goodness subsumes [includes] His love, grace, mercy, pity, compassion, long-suffering, kindness, and other such expressions of His tender and fatherly character.” [Robert Reymond, Systematic Theology]

Psa 103:1-22 A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. (2) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: (3) Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; (4) Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; (5) Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

(6) The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. (7) He made known his ways unto Moses, his

acts unto the children of Israel.

(8) The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (9) He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. (10) He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (11) For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. (12) As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

(13) Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (14) For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

(15) As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (17) But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; (18) To such as keep his covenant, and to those

that remember his commandments to do them. (19) The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

(20) Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. (21) Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. (22) Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

Such are the depths of the *goodness* of God and therefore we see in this young man a very loose tossing around of this word “good.” He believed HE was good, and he addresses Jesus as *a good man, a good teacher*, but not as the perfect, good, God.

Now, compare this divine, perfect goodness of God with the so-called “goodness” of man. Put the question to yourself – *do you think that you are good? In and of yourself, do you believe that you are good?*” But there is NO

goodness in us natively. The only goodness we exercise *comes from God*. This is true even for the Christian. Any goodness in us is a fruit of HIS Spirit in us:

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

He has Kept the Law?

(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) And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”

Really? This reply shows us further that all was not well with this man. He fancied himself quite good. And yet he shows himself to be quite ignorant of God’s Law.

Luke quotes Jesus presenting the man with 5 commandments, but Matthew adds a sixth (which is a summation of the Second Table of the Law): *you shall love your*

neighbor as yourself.

No adultery
No murder
No stealing
No lying
Honor father and mother

Jesus does not cite the commandments in their original order. Also, it is interesting that Jesus did not include the 10th commandment:

You shall not covet

We do not know with certainty Jesus' reasons for all of this, but we can see that when the young man foolishly claims he has kept the Law, he seems to be skirting around *you shall not covet*. "I have kept all of these, and the 10th as well" – he did not say.

Let me close for this morning by reading J.C. Ryle's comments, and we will plan to resume here next Lord's Day-

At once the spiritual blindness of the inquirer was detected. "All these," said the man, "I have kept from my youth up." An answer more full of darkness and self-ignorance — it is impossible to conceive! He who made it could have known nothing rightly — either about himself, or God, or God's law.

Does the case of this rich ruler stand alone? Do we suppose there are none like him at the present day? If we do — then we are greatly deceived.

There are thousands, it may be feared, in all our congregations, who have not the least idea of the spiritual nature of God's law, and consequently know nothing of their own sinfulness. They do not see that God requires "truth in the inward parts," and that we may break commandments in our heart and thoughts — even when we do not break them in outward actions. (Psalm 51:6, Matthew 5:21-28.)

To be delivered from such blindness, is one of the first things needful to our salvation. The eyes

of our understandings must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:18.) We must learn to know what God's opinion of us is. No man really taught of the Spirit will ever talk of having "kept all God's commandments from his youth." He will rather cry with Paul, "The law is spiritual — but I am carnal." "I know that in me dwells no good thing." (Romans 7:14-18.)

End Supplement on God's Goodness Surrounding Us (KJV)

Psa 104:10-35 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. (11) They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. (12) By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

(13) He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. (14) He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food

out of the earth; (15) And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

(16) The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; (17) Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. (18) The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

(19) He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. (20) Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. (21) The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. (22) The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

(23) Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. (24) O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

(25) So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. (26) There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

(27) These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. (28) That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. (29) Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. (30) Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

(31) The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. (32) He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

(33) I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. (34) My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. (35) Let the sinners be consumed

out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.