

The Cost of Discipleship: Getting Free

Luke 18:18-27(NKJV) ¹⁸Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ²⁰You know the commandments: '*Do not commit adultery,*' '*Do not murder,*' '*Do not steal,*' '*Do not bear false witness,*' '*Honor your father and your mother.*'" ²¹And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." ²²So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²³But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. ²⁴And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Series Introduction

Jesus was sent to save mankind from the penalty of sin. He came to seek and save that which was lost. God was in Jesus reconciling the world back to himself. His single greatest task was completed with his death on the cross. For three years leading up to his work at Calvary, Jesus chose disciples and taught them the ways of God. When his work of redeeming the world was completed, he met with his disciples and commissioned them to go and make disciples just as Jesus did with them.

That Great Commission still stands for disciples today. We are to go into the world, and make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We often get the baptizing part right. It doesn't require a lot of commitment to fill the pool, immerse people in water, and sing a few songs. It's the other part that we often struggle with. The other part of the commission is making disciples.

Making disciples requires certain sacrifices and efforts. Last week we shared with you a message entitled Getting Buy-in. Today we will continue with Getting Free. It is my prayer that each of us will learn the true cost of discipleship and then choose to follow Christ.

Introduction:

In our passage today, a ruler approaches Jesus to ask a question about eternal life. This is significant because it was the chief priests and rulers who eventually crucified Jesus.

John 12:42-43(NKJV) ⁴²Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus knew what he was working with. He knew that he was dealing with a person who flattered with words and would have trouble following him openly. He also knew he was dealing with a person who was educated and knew the law. So when the man called Jesus "Good Teacher" he deflected his comments and asked "why do you call me good? There is only one that is good and that's the Father." Let's not play any games.

After this exchange between them, Jesus begins with one of the most basic principles of discipleship which is obedience to the scriptures.

The Freedom to Do Right

²⁰You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" ²¹And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

One of the things we need to emphasize more in the church is the freedom to do right. Being saved gives us the freedom to walk away from the bondage of sin.

Romans 6:5-7(NKJV) ⁵For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷For he who has died has been freed from sin.

When we are saved and brought into the image of the Son of God we are set free from sin and death. We are crucified with Christ and his Holy Spirit empowers us to overcome sin. Let's be honest about it. There are a lot of things you don't do. There are sins of your past that you have overcome. There are habits that you have put down and attitudes that have changed. If you are a born again believer, God is making you better day by day.

"You do a lot of good things."

As individuals we are not totally evil. We are not all bad. We do some random acts of kindness. We give to various causes. We treat people with respect. As we were growing up there were certain principles we were all taught that we subscribed to without hesitation. For some of us it was honesty. We just tell the truth and keep things out in the open with nothing to hide.

We may have been the ones who didn't cheat or the ones that didn't steal. Some of us have resolved to never run with the wrong crowd. We have some people here who have never played the harlot and some who have never gone down to the harlot's house. We have some who have never gambled or maybe never been drunk. Some of us have never been in trouble with the law.

You come to church. You attend Sunday School and Bible Study. You read your Bible. You pray. You give. You worship.

There are just some commandments we have kept since our youth. We are like this ruler who has come to Jesus. We can say that we are good people. We can testify that we haven't broken most of God's law.

*Every one of us should be commended for our resolve to be a good citizen and a productive member of society. But the issue here is not goodness. **The issue is "what must I do to inherit eternal life".***

So Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes deeper by addressing the freedom to follow him.

The Freedom to Follow Christ

²²So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²³But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Jesus said, "You still lack one thing." The word lack in this sentence means to leave, to fail, or to be absent. Jesus is telling the ruler he is missing something. He is lacking something important. There is something missing in his life that will cause him to fail to reach his goal.

He is lacking the freedom to follow Christ.

Well, it would seem that he was already doing a good job following Christ. He was keeping the commandments. He was going to church. He grew up in the church. He came from a good home. He was doing well financially. He was a leader of the people.

Surely, this ruler was a good candidate for following Jesus. Not necessarily. You see none of those things automatically equate to following Christ. Coming to church doesn't mean we are following Christ. Watching Christian television doesn't either. Putting an "I love Jesus" bumper sticker on your car doesn't equate to following Jesus.

Even keeping the commandments doesn't automatically equal following Christ. There are Muslims who don't steal. There are Buddhists who don't lie. There are Mormons who don't get drunk but they don't follow Christ.

Following Jesus means we have a relationship with him where he speaks to us and we follow his commands moment by moment.

Following Jesus means we have the freedom to follow him at any time he calls on us. The issue here with the ruler is he lacked the opportunity to follow Christ. There was something in his life that had a hold on him. At any given moment the Lord would call on him to follow but at any given moment his stronghold would cause him to fail.

What is it that has such a strong hold on you that you would fail to follow Jesus?

What is it in your life that would cause you to leave the Lord's side?

What is the one thing that would cause you to fail to follow Jesus?

What is the one thing in your life that would cause you to be absent when the Lord is looking for someone to do his will?

What is it in our lives that we are so committed to, we will leave Jesus?

What is it that has such a stronghold on our lives that we will automatically choose it over doing the will of God?

Some of us are like this rich young ruler. We can't truly follow Jesus because of our material things.

Jesus gives us an analogy.

The Eye of the Needle Example:

Imagine a camel standing 7 feet tall and weighing 900 pounds. This animal is huge with long legs. Now imagine the wall at Jerusalem. It wasn't just a door way. It was a wall that was wide enough for men to stand on it and walk around. So this is a thick wall with a large gate. But the

gate is closed and the only way to get in at night is to go through a small, man sized door called the "Eye of the Needle".

Now take your 7 foot tall, 900 pound camel and get him to lay down on his belly and shimmy through the eye of the needle. You may have to push and pull for quite some time to get it done.

Now imagine that you are a rich traveler. You are traveling from city to city and you have all of your things with you. You have gold and silver. You have tents and roll out beds. You have cooking supplies with you and weapons for protection. You may be accompanied by servants and family members who are also on camels. Each camel may be carrying a few hundred pounds of gear. You get to town at night and the gate is closed. What are you going to do?

You have to take all of the gear off of the camels. You have to carry your things through the eye of the needle and then also get each camel through the eye of the needle.

Jesus said it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven. But this isn't just about money. Some of us are rich in other ways that we won't give up for God.

"What's on your camel?"

What are you carrying around that will make it difficult for you to follow Jesus?

Is it your social life?

Is it that man or woman in your life that you allow to keep you from following Jesus?

Is it your group of friends?

Is it your lodge meetings?

Is it your fraternity or sorority?

Is it your entertainment life?

Is it the Classic.

Is it Homecoming.

Is it Mardi Gras.

Is it your trip to the casinos?

Is it a concert or a movie?

Is it your personal time?

Is it the fact that God wants to do something on a Saturday and we aren't willing?

If it's your day off, Jesus can't get you to do anything.

Are we spiritually deaf and blind. We can't hear the Holy Spirit calling us into service and we can't see what God is doing because we are focused on ourselves.

Is it your success?

Is it your position?

Is it your trophies?

Is it your tenure?

Is it your pride? Are some things just beneath you?

The Holy Spirit can be doing a great work and invite us to follow him but we have already made up our minds. We can't participate because we have already made plans to be absent.

Here is the acid test for following Jesus in this passage: what is it that would make us sorrowful because Jesus told us we had to give it up?

You will say "Rev. Manuel, you are being unreasonable."

Am I? Jesus died for you. He gave up everything for you. Going to the cross to pay the penalty for sins he didn't commit was unreasonable. The word declares that we are to be living sacrifices. That is our reasonable service. When was the last time you made a true sacrifice for God? What did you give up to do the will of God?

Discipleship will cost us something. It will cost us some commitment. It will mean leaving some things behind. It means letting go of whatever it is that has a hold on you.

We have to get free to truly follow Jesus. We have to get free to inherit eternal life. Get free to be available to God.

We have to get free to live for God regardless of the circumstances. We have to get free to be a witness for Christ when others can't be found.

Get free from the chains that bind you.
Get free from the expectations of the world.
Get free from addictions.
Get free from dead living.
Get free so you can hear his voice.
Get free so that wherever he leads we can follow.

Conclusion:

The disciples were astonished. The rich young ruler seemed to have it all together. He was blessed with wealth. He was privileged. He had status. He had been able to keep many points of the law of Moses. Surely, he was worthy to inherit eternal life.

But Jesus showed them that all the young man had and all that he was worth was not enough to purchase his salvation. The obstacles in his life made it impossible for him to follow Jesus.

The disciples wanted to know "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

With God we can do all of the things that are pleasing in his site.
With God we can courageously follow Jesus wherever he leads us.
With God we can be loosed from the chains that bind us in this life.
With God we can get free to live lives that reflect his glory.
With God we can have life and have it more abundantly.