

“Whatever It Takes...to Follow Jesus” // Luke 18:18–30 // *Whatever It Takes* 1x

(pic) Do you know what this is? The infamous flux capacitor that allowed Michael J Fox in 1985 to travel backwards and forward in time. If you stumbled onto an actual one of these and could travel back to any one point in your life, what year would you choose? I think I might choose **1997**. July, 1997. I'd just met Veronica and she was hopelessly in love with me and had commenced her desperate quest of locking me down. I'd love to relive some of those incredible moments.

1997 was also the year I left for SE Asia to serve as a missionary, and there's so many things I'd love to tell young, 24-year old J.D. One small piece of advice I'd give him is to make a small investment in a new start-up company. In 1997 I was desperately trying to scrounge up enough money to buy a DVD player. BTW, do you know what the 2 hottest-selling items were in 1997? The DVD player and the Nintendo 64. If you had an extra \$1000 in your bank account, and you were a guy, that's what you were trying to buy. But 1997 was also the year that a little company called *Amazon* went public. You could buy one share for \$18. Today each of those shares would be worth roughly \$2000. \$If I'd have spent my 1000 there, I'd be a fairly wealthy man right now-- If. Only. I. Could. Have. Known. The. Future. Had I known the future, do you think it would have bothered me that I didn't have a DVD player or N64 like my friends? Probably not. Sure, there would be some nights I'd miss out on the joy of playing the Legend of Zelda until 3 a.m. But I'd console myself with the knowledge that one day I'd have enough money to buy Zelda.

If only I could have seen the future. Today in Luke 18 you're going to see a guy walk away from an even greater opportunity than I had in 1997--and one where the stakes are even higher. You're going to find yourself screaming at him--don't you realize what you're walking away from?

Luke 18 if you have your Bibles... (BTW, some of you are like, “LUKE??? I finally had my place marked out in 1 Samuel. It's taken me 6 weeks to figure out where 1 Samuel is, and now you're taking us to Luke?”) Yes.

We're taking a **temporary break from our study of the life of David** to do a 3-week series from the Gospel of Luke called “Whatever it Takes.” The focus is on being willing to do whatever it takes to follow Jesus, and asking him to do whatever it takes to get you to that place. What Luke is going to show us is that following Jesus is not just adding a little religion to your life or making a few moral tweaks. It means turning your back on all that makes you feel secure to put your lot in entirely with him. He offers you a future inheritance 10 billion-trillion times more valuable than Amazon stock. The question is: *Do you believe him?* If so, you'll say, “Whatever it takes.”

Here we go: **Luke 18:18 And a ruler** (the Greek word here implies ‘religious ruler’) **asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Now, we all know the answer here, right? Jesus should say, “Trust in me as your Savior. Put faith in me as your sin-bearer. Whoever believes in me will have everlasting life.” But Jesus doesn't say that--because he can see into this guy's heart and he wants to help him learn some things about himself. So he goes a different direction.

19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. (Let me just pause and say that Jesus’ statement here has troubled some people because it sounds like Jesus is saying he’s not really God, as if he’s saying, “Why are you calling me ‘good’? There’s only one who is good, God, and that’s not me, so you shouldn’t call me that.” But that’s not what Jesus is saying. I mean, first, if there’s one verdict the New Testament consistently gives about Jesus, it’s that he’s good. If it’s true that there’s only one who is truly good, God, then Jesus has to be him.

But more importantly--Jesus is challenging this guy’s superficial view of goodness. This guy thinks *he’s* a good guy; Jesus is good; we’re all good!” Jesus says, “Do you really think you’re good enough for God? Do you really think YOU’RE good enough to *inherit eternal life*?”

But this guy doesn’t pick up what Jesus is putting down, so Jesus presses the point a bit further. He says, 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.’”

The universal standard for goodness, in the Bible, is conformity to the 10 Commandments. So, Jesus says, “How you doin’ keeping those?” That should have been enough to give this guy serious pause. Just consider the ones he named!

- **Do not commit adultery.** You say, “Well, maybe he’d never done that. I mean, lots of men are faithful to their wives.” Yeah, but not so fast. Jesus taught in Matthew 5 that fantasizing about sex with someone you are not married to is like breaking this commandment, because it’s the desire of your heart that counts with God. If outwardly I conform my behavior while inwardly I yearn to break the commandment, God sees the heart. It would kind of be like if my wife knew that outwardly I was a dutiful husband while inwardly I was in love with another woman, that would not be pleasing to her. It’s the same with the commandments. Jesus says, “Just because you’ve never had the courage or opportunity to act on your sexual desires doesn’t mean those desires don’t surge in you.” It’s the same with the next one:
- **Do not murder:** Same deal. You think, “Lots of people never murder anyone. But Jesus, in the Gospel of Matthew, taught that in God’s eyes hating someone and wishing their harm was the spirit of murder. A truly *GOOD* person would never desire the harm of someone else. If you’ve ever been so angry at someone that you wanted to harm them in some way, you possess the spirit of murder.
- **Do not bear false witness:** Who can say, “All my life, in every situation, I’ve always told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I’ve never bent the truth to get out of a bad situation; never stretched the truth to make myself look better; never slightly distorted the truth to slander someone I didn’t like.” Anybody in here brave enough to say they’ve fully kept that one? Don’t raise your hand...
- **Honor your father and mother:** This command is really about submission to authorities God has placed in our lives—that occurs first with our parents, but later on includes anyone God puts in authority over us: teachers, the police, our coaches, our bosses, the IRS, our government. Can you say, “I have always had a humble and submissive posture toward whatever rightful authorities were in my life. I always obey joyfully and I never complain about them behind their backs.”

At this point, any honest person would realize they’re in trouble. But this guy said: 21 And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” (Now, you gotta admit: That takes some real chutzpah, to say to Jesus, “I’m as clean as a whistle.” Are you starting to see his problem? He has no concept of how “not good” he is; he has no idea how *insufficient* his goodness is for earning God’s favor.

So, **having now tried twice** to help this guy see the depravity of his heart, to no avail, Jesus makes one more attempt: 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.” (Some of you hear that and think, “Woah... is that actually a requirement to be a disciple? Do we have to sell everything and give it away? I don’t know many people who have done that but it sounds like that’s what Jesus is saying.” No. Jesus is trying to make a point to this guy--a point I’ll draw out for you in a moment.)

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 (Jesus) 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.”

Here’s our outline for today. From this passage we learn:

1. The way of salvation
2. The particular challenge presented by money
3. The essential question: Lordship
4. The value of Jesus

1. The Way of Salvation

Jesus’ main goal in this conversation is to drive this guy to the point of despair so he’d quit looking to his own goodness for salvation and start looking to God.

Which is why Jesus makes that very confusing statement in vs. 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.” This is the kind of statement that Bible scholars love to obsess over. Some have really ingenious interpretations: they say that “the eye of the needle” was the nickname of a small, after hours gate in the wall of Jerusalem, and the only way a camel could go through it was by getting down on his knees--a picture of what Jesus is telling this guy he must do here. That’s an ingenious explanation, but I think the explanation is likely much simpler: Jesus is just hyperbole, which he often did when he taught. A camel was the largest animal they were familiar with; the eye of a needle was about the tiniest space they were familiar with. Jesus was using hyperbole to drive home a point. It would be like us saying something has “a snowball’s chance in hell.”

Does he mean, then, that rich people have only a snowball’s chance in hell of going to heaven and none of them are going to make it? Well, he couldn’t have meant that. I mean, LOTS of rich people in the Bible went to heaven. Some of the most godly people in the Bible were the richest. Abraham was rich, King David was rich, Joseph was rich, Job was rich. In the NT Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both rich; several of the leading Christians referred to in Acts were rich--and some astoundingly so. So clearly, a lot of rich people go to heaven. So why then did Jesus say this?

Well, to really get at the meaning here, you have to understand how that original audience viewed rich people. It's the opposite of how many of us see rich people today. Today, we're conditioned to see rich people as inherently immoral. If someone is rich, we tend to assume it is probably because they or someone in their family exploited the system; at the least they were part of an oppressive capitalistic system and they leaned into their privilege, and now that they have money they're spoiled and they can't help but be proud, greedy, and oppressive.

Jesus' original audience thought differently--they thought of riches as a sign of God's blessing. You see, they were steeped in the book of Proverbs, which says that the wise man is usually a wealthy man; that wealth is often a sign of God's favor (Proverbs 10:14–15). The wealthy get wealthy, Proverbs 23 says, in part because they control their appetites¹; work hard, invest and save (Prov 30); don't give themselves to alcohol (Proverbs 20:1); don't throw away money foolishly (Proverbs 21:5)²; don't lay in bed all day (Proverbs 12:24), and choose wise friends (Proverbs 12:11).³ In Proverbs, wealth wasn't so much a sign of inherent immorality; it was a sign of blessing.

And to be frank, their worldview is more biblical than ours: Proverbs does indeed teach that wise living often leads to wealth. **Or course, there are exceptions**--Ecclesiastes talks about the hardworking man who is poor and the lazy immoral man who gets wealthy. And, of course, there are systemic dynamics at play in our society that lead to generational disparities in wealth that we cannot ignore--that's a different sermon for a different time--but **Generally speaking--proverbially speaking--wisdom, blessing, and wealth go together.**

Which is why, when Jesus says, "it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven" they respond by saying, **26, Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"** They don't say, "Of course the greedy capitalists are going *down, stick it to the man!*" Instead, they say with genuine bewilderment, "if the *righteous* people--the ones blessed by God with wealth--if they can't be saved, who can be?"

Jesus' answer? **V 27, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."** Salvation, he says, comes differently. It's not a reward for righteousness. You can never be wise enough, good enough, righteous enough or blessed enough, to earn eternal life. With God, salvation is a gift he gives to those humble enough to admit they are hopeless without it; a gift to those who recognize that before God they are as poor as the most destitute beggar ever to walk the face of the earth. To them, and them only, God gives the righteousness of Christ.

God only saves bad people, because that's the only kind of people there truly are. Measure yourself against the 10 Commandments and you'll see: there is none righteous; no, not one.

Salvation is a gift for those who recognize that; to those who attempt no claim on eternal life. Or, the way SLJ says it, **To get Jesus, all you need is need, and need is the one thing this guy didn't have. Sally Lloyd-Jones**

I loved Joby's story last week of the thief on the cross, recorded just a couple of pages later here in the Gospel of Luke. Here you have a man who has thrown away his life; he's lived a life of crime; alienated his family; outcast from society, dying alone as a condemned, despised man. And there, at the end of his life, hanging on that cross, he recognizes who Jesus is and asks for mercy. All he says is, **"Remember me, Lord, when you**

¹ 23:20–21

² 30:24–25

³ 13:4, 20, 22; 14:23

come into your Kingdom.” He knows hardly no theology; he has no time to make up for all his bad deeds, and Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” That very night he sat in the presence of God with Abraham and Moses and Ruth and Samuel and David and Esther and all the other great saints of the Bible. This man had no good works he could bring--no Goliath’s he’d defeated, no bold sermons he’d preached, no generous sacrifices he’d made. His whole life was nothing but bad works; he was as spiritually poor as they came but that night he entered heaven with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. **People sometimes ask me, “Does that mean you can live a life of sin and pray some little prayer right at the end and go to heaven?”** And I always say it depends on what you mean. If you mean can you just throw up a Hail Mary like a cover-all sacrament or utter some words you think qualify as a get out of hell free card, NO. But, at any point, if you truly repent, truly turn from your sin, and cast yourself on his mercy, he can and will save you. (That thief, had he somehow lived through that crucifixion, would have been a different man the next day. It wasn’t a cheap little prayer; it was true repentance.) But the point is eternal life is something he couldn’t earn; something he didn’t need to earn; it was something he could only receive. There is a fountain... The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day...

To come to Jesus, all you need is need; and need is the one thing this guy did not have. Which leads me to the second thing Jesus showed them:

2. The particular problem of money

Not only did Jesus overturn the idea that someone can be good enough to be accepted by God; he challenged their worldview even further--he said that riches actually hinder our ability to enter the Kingdom of God. Why?

Now, real quick--before I go on any further, I know many of you are sitting here saying, “Well, this doesn’t apply to me. I’m not rich.” In America, no one thinks they’re rich. Wherever you sit on the socioeconomic scale, rich people are always the ones in the class just above you. Newsflash: If you know where your next meal is coming from, historically and globally, you are in the category of “the rich.” If you have a savings account, by the standards of these people, you’re rich. We have more conveniences, more disposable income and more flexibility than 99% of the people Jesus talked to ever dreamed of having. They had no AC; no running water; no electricity; most had never traveled more than 60 miles away from their homes.

Second, money is not the only thing you can be rich in. You might be rich in looks, rich in talent, potential, or reputation; rich on your resume, in your family identity--**anything that makes you feel secure and competent as you look toward the future is what you are rich in.**

OK, here’s why Jesus says that money is a spiritual liability: Money is a form of power that quickly replaces our sense of need for God. Money offers you control: When you have money, you can do things; you can get done what you want done in the world even when others don’t want it to happen. You can avoid things you want to avoid. It’s like that great philosopher **Chris Rock** says, “Wealth is not about having a lot of money; it’s about having a lot of options.”

Money promises you security. It tells you that there’s no tragedy tomorrow can’t bring that you can’t handle. The proof is right there on your balance sheet.

Because money offers you those kinds of power, people start to love it. And when they do, they lose their love for God. Jesus said: **"You cannot serve God and money... you will love the one and hate the other."** (Luke 16:13).

- Did you know--**money is the only thing Jesus ever said that about.** He didn't say that about sexual desire. He didn't say, "You can't love God and sex." He didn't say that about **Caesar**. He didn't say, "You cannot serve God and Caesar." In fact, he said the opposite: *"Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's,"* which means, serve Caesar *appropriately*. And think about it: **Caesar was a BAD DUDE**. He was immoral, violent, *anti-God*! And yet, Jesus never said, "You can't love God and Caesar."⁴ Why did he say that about money and money alone?
- Because money offers you a form of power that is so seductive that the moment you start loving and delighting in it you stop loving and delighting in God.

Tim Keller says that after pastoring in one of the richest parts of the United States for 30 years, NYC, he's seen money become a spiritual liability **in at least 4 ways**:⁵

1. **The more money you have, the greater the temptation to cheat.** If cheating makes you just a few more dollars, you probably won't do it. It's not worth the guilt or danger. But if you have thousands, and cheating can make you thousands, that's a bigger temptation. And if you make millions and cheating can make you millions, that's a huge temptation.
2. **Money can turn you into an addict.** The more money you have, the less you feel like you have. That's a proven fact. This is how it works: your income goes up, and then your lifestyle goes up along with it--so your expenses go up. You get a bigger house. And then a nicer car. And you pay for more services. Eventually, you're making 500k a year, which is more than you ever dreamed, but you don't feel wealthy because... in a way... you're still just paying the bills. Not to mention your tastes have elevated. And you look around in this nice neighborhood, and, well, everybody there has a pool, so it seems ridiculous for you not to have a pool. And everybody has a boat. Or a golf membership. Or a vacation house. So, of course, you need one of those--and you feel like you are being deprived until you get those. The more money you have, the more money you need to feel content. Folks, that's called an addiction. Money works like a drug. The more of it you get, the more of it you crave. And that starts to control your behavior. You have to do what it takes to get more of it, and you can't do something that would put you in a place where you wouldn't have much of it, and you certainly can't give it away. It is a statistical fact that the more money you make, the less percentage you give away. That is a statistical fact.
3. **Money can lull you into false security.** When the balance sheet says you have enough to face the future, you worry less about what tomorrow holds. You'll have enough to cover it. And maybe you are one of those rare people who can say, "I could even go without a job for a year, or maybe 5, or maybe for the rest of my life." If so, that's great, but it's also, according to Jesus, very dangerous. Because you start to believe Satan's lie that you're like God, even if you don't know you're believing it--you think you're untouchable. Of course, at some point you learn that's not true--I mean, when she leaves, the money doesn't matter. Or when your son gets the diagnosis, the money doesn't matter. And when death comes for you, money doesn't matter. But money keeps you from thinking about that.
4. **Money can make you proud.** Rich people usually assume that getting rich proves they were more capable than others. After all, people pay money for something valuable and if people pay you lots of money that means you must be really valuable. "I've got more money, which means my skills are better; my work ethic is better. Therefore... I'M better." And when you view yourself as "better," that makes it really hard to

⁴ Andy Crouch, "God and Mammon," Faith Driven Entrepreneurship

⁵ Keller

admit you are wrong. To repent you have to say, “I was wrong; I deserve to be condemned,” but those words taste awful in your mouth if you’ve spent your whole life quietly telling yourself that you’re better.

G.K. Chesterton said that one of the clearest themes in the teaching of Jesus is that rich people are in big trouble.

Which brings us to...

3. The essential question: Lordship

Like I said when we read the text, we see that statement in vs. 22, “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,” and we wonder, “Is this some kind of extra salvation requirement? It sure sounds like Jesus is saying that. Do we have to do that to go to heaven?”

No. The key to interpreting what Jesus said is to notice what he said first: “One thing you lack,” but then he actually lists 3 things: (1) Sell your possessions; (2) Give to the poor; and (3) Follow me.⁶ So is it 1 thing or 3 things? It’s really just 1 thing. The one thing he lacks is JESUS. But to get him you have to open your hands on anything else that controls you. For this man it was his money--he couldn’t reach out and take the hand of Jesus because his hands were full of money, and to reach out to take Jesus’ hands he’d have to let the money slip through his fingers, which he didn’t want to do.⁷

Money may or may not be that thing for YOU. “The ‘one thing’ is whatever we’re afraid to turn over control of; whatever keeps us from taking his hand in surrender. Imagine that you and I were on a sinking ship and we needed to evacuate; the next closest ship was hours away and we were going to have to float on life-preservers for several hours before being rescued. The captain starts passing out the life preservers. But one of you is standing there with bags of gold that you don’t want to leave behind. Somebody else is standing there with a bunch of schoolwork--they’ve been working on their master’s thesis and they don’t want to lose their progress. Somebody else has a big box of Nicolas Cage memorabilia they’ve collected over the years that they don’t want to lose--clearly it’s worth billions of dollars. The captain might say to each of the 3: “One thing each of you lack: a flotation device. If you want to survive, you’ve got to put out of your hands anything that keeps you from hanging onto this.” The point is not what you have to let go of. The point is what keeps you from clinging to the life preserver.

What keeps you from clinging in surrender to Jesus?

Maybe it’s a habit you don’t want to quit. Or a relationship you don’t want to give up. Maybe it’s **Jesus’ demand** to turn over control of your future, your future marriage options; your career. Honestly, that’s what it was for me when I was a teenager--I wanted Jesus in my life but didn’t want to give up control of those things--because I didn’t trust him and I was afraid he’d lead me somewhere I didn’t want to go and turn me into somebody I didn’t want to be and make me do what I didn’t want to do. I thought he would ruin my reputation and take away my fun. My future felt so “rich” that I was scared to turn it over to him.

⁶ John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 154.

⁷ “The ‘one thing’ you lack is less about what falls out of your hands and more about the one thing you take into them. Ibid., 154.

So, again, I ask: What is the one thing that keeps you from fully surrendering yourself to Jesus? Maybe it's your sexual freedom. I know a lot of college students who would say that. They sometimes ask me, "If I follow Jesus, would I have to give up sex before marriage? I want Jesus in my life but I want to sleep with my girlfriend."

I recently read a book by a **guy named Becket Cook**--he's a friend of a friend of mine--called *A Change of Affection*. It's his personal story of his struggle, as a gay man, with Jesus' claims to Lordship over his life. He says, "I wanted Jesus, but I didn't want to give him control over this part of my life--my gay lifestyle was a core part of my identity that I just didn't want to let go. He said, "I wanted to have him AND this part of my life. I tried for a while to reinterpret the Bible to make it ok with my sexual choices, but it was clear to any honest reader that Jesus did not approve of this part of my life. And I didn't want to let that go. My sexual freedom was my obstacle, my hindrance, the deal-breaker that kept me from following Jesus."⁸ Eventually he came to a point where he did--he still struggles with those desires but he is trying to live under the Lordship of Christ. But this was the thing that, for a while, kept him from opening his hands to Jesus.

What is it for you? For many of us, it's the same as this guy here: Money. **Church, here's the facts: When it comes to giving, many church-going people aren't even at a tithe.** Now, I want to be clear: a tithe is not some kind of iron-clad rule in the New Testament--and there can be hardship exceptions where you shouldn't feel obligated to give it. **But throughout the Bible** the tithe is consistently presented as a kind of "minimum requirement" for Kingdom stewardship. 10% of your income. **True generosity, Jesus says, usually starts after the tithe**--and particularly, as you get wealthier, and God grows your capacity to give, you start to give way beyond the tithe.

I have to ask--I'm not judging, I'm asking--if you are not even giving a tithe, is Jesus really Lord of your money? Have you really taken your hands off of it and given control to him?

I mentioned earlier that the wealthier you are the less percentage you give. That's a statistical fact. But Scripture says, 2 Corinthians 9, that as God grows your income, your percentage of giving should be going UP, not DOWN. The reason the opposite happens with most wealthy people is, as they get wealthier, money starts to displace God as the thing you trust in and delight in. They get addicted to it. I've talked to a lot of rich, religious people over the years who have the most ingenious explanations for why they don't even tithe. They say things like, "Well, instead of tithing I'm investing the money so I can give it later." And yes, of course, you should invest money to give more later. That's biblical. I'm definitely doing that. But AT LEAST that first 10%--the first and the best--and likely more, should go to him now. The Kingdom of God has opportunities in front of it *now*, and God has called us to bring our first and best *now* to take advantage of those opportunities.

Or, they buy some asset that they tell themselves they are partially going to share with the ministry. "Pastor, we used our tithe money to help buy this really big house but we're going to host 'small group' there once a month here." **Or, my favorite,** "Hey, pastor, here's our vacation home. We used our tithe money to buy it and we want to let you use it once a year." Listen, I'm grateful for the offer, I really am. And I'm not some kind of generosity detective or judge. **But that's not really giving to God.** The point of giving something to God is you RELEASE it to him. When you turn your tithe into an investment or an asset, you retain control of it. Even if you intend to use it partially for ministry or to give it away later, it stays on your asset sheet. You still control it. **It's there for you** if things go financially south and you need it to fall back on. The whole point is to RELEASE it to God: you lose control of it and allow God's Spirit, through his church, to direct it where it needs

⁸ Becket Cook, p. 133--36. (My paraphrase of 3 pages of his writing).

to go. **Listen, God made his church a body**, and he gives different ones of us different roles in that body. **Some people** in the body he gives lots of resources to. **Others of us** he calls to leadership in the wise allocation of those resources. The gifts don't come to me, they go through me and your church leaders to God's mission. We both bring our gifts to the church and lay them on the altar. That's how it works.

So, I ask again: Is Jesus Lord of your money? If you are wealthy and don't at least tithe, are you sure? I know some of you are sitting there saying to me, "How dare you? And you're already composing the email to me right now in your head--I'm prepared to get all kinds of emails this week." I'm not trying to give you a rule or stand in judgment over you. *I'm just asking, like Jesus did the guy in this story.*

(BTW, on your way out today, you're going to get a little Devotional that will walk you through these questions. We want to give it to you and have you spend time in it the next few weeks, to really give God a chance to speak to you in this area. If you are really serious about being a disciple, I think this will be a helpful tool for you.)

To this guy, Jesus said: "One thing you lack if you want to inherit eternal life: open up your hands." And that leads me to...

4. The Value of Jesus

I think the **hardest part of this story for me** is seeing this man **walk away** from Jesus! The Gospel of Mark's account makes clear that Jesus loved this rich, young ruler, and was broken-hearted when he walked away. **When I read this story I want to look at him** and shout, "What are you doing???? There you have the Son of God--who created the Universe, the King, the one who will judge the living and the dead, the one who loves you so much he'll die for you in just a few day--there you have him, standing in front of you, arms outstretched to you as you WALK. AWAY!

Think about what he walked away from! You see, here's the tragic thing: one day, the RYR became the ROR. He watched in the mirror as his beauty faded. At some point, his mental strength slipped. His influence waned. His command of the room he was in diminished. People no longer cared that much about his opinion. And then one day he died. And the rich young ruler was neither rich, young, nor in charge of anything. And what did he have then? I remember **as a kid playing my favorite board game** with my mom. **Monopoly**. The two of us would play together--she'd always take out several hours to play with me, and I loved getting Boardwalk and Park Place and Pacific and Pennsylvania Avenue, that whole side of the board, and watching her wince as she rounded the corner after Water Works and Marvin Garden to pass through my little gauntlet where I had a MONOPOLY--with an unbroken string of green and blue squares dotted up with houses and hotels. And inevitably she'd land on one and what joy I'd have taking all her money! "Hand it over, mom." And I remember my mom smiling with approval, telling me I was getting the point of the game. But then, when she was bankrupt, she taught me the greatest Monopoly lesson of all--she scooped it all back into the box and said, "Son, you won, but it all goes back in the box. Now, go clean your room."

Friend, it's all going back in the box, and what are you going to do when that happens? At the beginning I asked you what you would do if you could go back in time to 1997 with \$1000. Almost all of us would say "invest in Amazon," even though it meant doing without some of the toys your friends had. And you would do that happily because you know what is coming!

(VAMP)

Friend (BIBLE), you know what is coming! If Jesus rose from the dead, you know what's coming. You know the only life to live 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last!" Why would you hold onto anything that keeps you from Jesus! That DVD player and N64 you bought in 1997 are basically worthless now. At some point you took it down to Goodwill and gave them away. Why hold onto something that you know soon will have no value if it means giving up the one thing in the future that you know will have infinite value?

Jim Elliott, the missionary martyr who died, as a young man, on the beaches of Ecuador, famously said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Riches you can never keep. Jesus and an eternal inheritance you can never lose. What are you holding onto that keeps you from Jesus?

"If you give your soul up to anything earthly, whether it be the wealth, or the honors, or the pleasures of this world, you might as well hunt after the mirage of the desert or try to collect the mists of the morning, or to store up for yourself the clouds of the sky, for all these things are passing away." —C.H. Spurgeon

Jesus stands here, to you, saying, "Let go of all you're clinging to and follow me. Don't cling to things you can never hold onto anyway. Release it all to me." Is Jesus worthy of that trust?

You know, when you think about it, there are actually 2 RYR's in this story. There is this guy, and there's Jesus. Jesus also was young--33 years old at this point. And he was rich beyond anyone's imagination: he was the Son of Heaven. And he was a Ruler--the King of the Universe. Yet Jesus turned his back on all of that for us. If he did that for us, why wouldn't we trust him enough to release ourselves to him?

Almost every November we enter a time where we focus on surrender and sacrificial living. We don't do this primarily as a way of raising money, but because this is at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus. Yes, I try to take time to tell you about some of the specific opportunities God has in front of us as The Summit Church and I'll do that over the next few weeks. But this is first and foremost not a fund-raising thing, it's a discipleship thing. To the point that I always say, and some of you have heard this a dozen times, if you have a problem with me talking about this, because you think it is some manipulative way of getting your money, I plead with you: give it somewhere else. If you think this is all a way of getting money out of your pockets into mine, turn over this part of your life to Jesus, and at least start to tithe, but give it somewhere else. It's more important to me that you learn to actually follow Jesus and I see you in eternity than it is you giving money to our church. So, I plead with you, for the sake of your soul, obey Jesus' commands to honor him first with your money. We'll be fine as a church w/o your money, I promise. But give it somewhere. (Now, I will say, if God has led you to this church, I pray that at some point you will trust us enough that you do invest here, because your local church, in Scripture, is supposed to be your hub of ministry and if you are part of one it's where the bulk of your investing should go. But if you're not there yet, that's ok--for now, give it somewhere else.)

Let me close with this: Summit Worship just released a song called, "Whatever It Takes." And the song is a prayer, saying, "Do whatever it takes to make me fully devoted to you."

*So do whatever it takes
Whatever You wanna do
I'm letting go of my idols
And I'm holding tight to You*

Jesus, You must increase

I must decrease

Fire of God come and consume

Do whatever it takes

We'll sing it sometime over the next few weeks, I'm sure. **And I want you to ask: what is God calling you to let slip through your hands? Are you willing for him to do whatever it takes?**

BOW HEADS: *What's your one thing? Open your hands!*

I wanna just leave you in the posture of surrender and openness and, in a moment, someone from your campus team will come lead you.