

Luke 18:18-30
Evangelism with Jesus
May 14, 2017

Main Point: Evangelism is about giving people hope – the only hope that truly satisfies – the hope of the good news that King Jesus has brought and is bringing His kingdom to heal broken people and a broken world. Here we see Jesus deal with a rich ruler whose hopes are in the fleeting riches of this world. He gives us hope for our evangelism, and hope for our loves to ever be conformed to His kingdom purposes.

SI:

Intro: The loves.

How does Jesus evangelize? How does Jesus share the good news with people? In His personal interactions, He never shares it the same way. He gives each person what that person uniquely needs.

But for all, He gives hope.

Evangelism, sharing the good news of Christ who lived, died, and rose for all those who will trust in Him, sharing this good news is a message of hope.

And that is what this ruler is looking for. How do I inherit eternal life? It is a good, sincere question.

This story has come down to us through the 3 authors Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is known as the account of the rich, young, ruler. He most likely was a ruler, an elder in a synagogue. He knows the Jewish law and traditions very well.

So he questions Jesus: Will Jesus say something different than I already know? Will Jesus validate my own answer to the question? I already know the answer – the way to salvation is to keep the commandments, right? It's all about being good.

Hope for not-yet-Christians: No one is good. (vs. 18-22)

v. 18-19 > Flattery right off the bat... Jesus will not play politics... A ruler, a powerful person toe to toe with another powerful person. The read, the jockeying for position, the mutual benefit to give one another.

He does ask a good question... several other places in the NT where this question is asked... “What must I do?” “What must I do to be saved, to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus' use of the Law... lesson for us in how to use the Law as a tool to drive people to the gospel. All other religions use the law to drive people to themselves. We cover over our lack of being good by some kind of more goodness. And this is the way to salvation!

Jesus calls the ruler to obey the law – singles out 5 of the 10 Commandments, the commands related to people –

Ok, let's see, how focused are you on others? How focused are you on yourself? How do you measure up to the summary of the law—to love God and love your neighbor as yourself?

“All these I have kept since my youth...” I learned the law, I mastered it, I know it, I obey it, I'm good. I'm a good person. He totally missed Jesus' first comment – no one is good but God alone. At this point, he cannot hear the gospel.

The rich ruler thinks he's not bleeding at all, that he is bullet proof, that he's immune to sin, that he has inoculated himself through his own goodness.

How many are like this? How many are locked in, blinded by their religion, their southern-ness, their cultural goodness, their good people-ness.

(Personally boycott Good People Brewing Company for this reason.)

This is hope for non-Christians b/c Jesus breaks open a gaping wound that only the balm of the gospel can heal. If you are hurt by the truth, it is the Truth loving you enough to tell you the truth.

In the OT, there was an indictment upon the false prophets who told people what they wanted to hear....Who told people who were locked in their sinful ways that God wouldn't hurt them, that they were fine.... Beware of that temptation! You're not that bad off, it'll be ok...

Hope for Money Lovers: Jesus Loves Enough to Expose Our Loves (vs. 22-27)

This ruler is like many, many Alabamians, many southerners, many if not most people in Birmingham: Good person. ... But his loves expose his heart allegiance.

Salvation is about loves. Salvation comes down to “what do you love?”

Mark has this account, and Mark includes this: After the ruler says, “all these I have kept from my youth.” Mark writes: Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”

You love what you think will bring you life. You love what you enjoy, what thrills your heart, what you think is worthy. This is worth-ship, worship.

So you say that you are a good person, that you follow the law, that you follow the 10 commandments. Do you really? Do you follow the law from your heart, b/c by the way, that is much more important, absolutely essential than just mere external obedience to the letter of the law.

And so Jesus says, one thing you lack... Go and sell all you have... in order to expose his loves! The law points to caring for others – actively caring for others – do not defraud people, honor people more than yourself –

Jesus loves this man and shocks him with this statement – so to force the ruler to trust God and not himself –

Jesus doesn't ask this of everyone and to be sure, there is no biblical requirement against being materially rich. But for this ruler, Jesus loved him and demonstrated that love by this radical requirement.

And his response, and the response of the crowds! The honesty! The peeling away of inhibition with this shock to the system... He walked away very sad, the crowds notice,

Jesus responds to this one man's response to a universal application: Wealth can be a prison of your own making. You can imprison yourself with possessions that possess you, that control you, that make life all about you and your stuff. They keep you from entering the kingdom b/c you have your own all-consuming kingdom.

Jesus knows, that we are prone to love money. He wants to protect us from this danger. It is impossible to love both God and money.

The creative ways people try to get around the “camel through the eye of a needle” ... It was the name of a gate in the city walls and a camel had to bow down and crawl through... um, no.

It is hyperbole in order to get the reaction Jesus knew it would get from Peter and His listeners. Who is this guy? What is He saying?

What?! How can anyone be saved? This is preposterous what you are saying, Jesus. Jesus is looking for this response: “what you are telling me to do I cannot do! No one can!” Yep, true that.

So that you see what is impossible for you is possible with God, and that is the only way that it is possible.

v. 27 > It is impossible, for you. But not for God. He raises from the dead. He brings life to the dead. You must be converted, you must be born again. Conversion is just that, it is changing, completely, from the inside out, everything about you, everything changes.

Not just a few additions, not just a list that you keep, not a few adaptations, not self help, not life coaching, not mid life crisis, not a tattoo, a job change, a marriage, nothing but Jesus grabbing your heart with His Truth and giving you life.

Hope for Christians: Unimaginable Rewards (vs. 28-30)

Giving it all up, laying down your life will be rewarded. (v. 28-30)

Why wealth is so difficult. You cannot love both God and money. Why not? You will love one and hate the other.

Why? B/c they both offer the same thing > security. And they both demand full allegiance. But look at Jesus' appeal to the rich ruler > you will have treasure in Heaven. He appeals to the future, to the long term.

Why would anybody do this? B/c of the promises! The rewards!

Peter: “Jesus, See?” Behold! Look at what we have sacrificed, given up!” He sees. He rewards. This is what you were made for. Jesus does not expect or demand grunt workers, chain-gang slave labor, demanding, whip cracking workers. He calls you to joy and that joy is inspired by the prospect and promise of rewards!

Some of you could benefit from pausing and taking a look around and seeing what you have been given! And some of you need to look around and see what others sacrifice in order to store up treasure in heaven – the value of giving that is lived out here!

Spurgeon: You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart, and let Christ be your treasure, and let Him have your heart. —*C.H. Spurgeon*

When you live for the kingdom of God, you get to see Him provide many times more than you would or could ever expect or imagine. Sit down with me and I will tell you some stories sometime.

And consider again... what can your most prized earthly possession, heirloom, vacation, toy or hobby give you? Can it give you eternal life? You know that they are just gilded toys of dust! But only Jesus will you trust!

We happen to be on this passage when our culture celebrates Mother's Day – Look at what Jesus points to as far as what Christians are called to give up: They are familial things. To leave one's house would be to leave a family business in order to follow Jesus. To leave wife or parents or children does not mean abandonment of responsibilities, but is referring to allegiance to the kingdom of God that responds to the call to follow Jesus above all else.

And these rewards > “many times more” > speaking of family, the ecclesiastical family is much larger and more dear and longer lasting – eternity -- than your biological family. We are the family of God.

Conc: Do you see, then, how evangelism is giving hope, offering hope, offering life? And consider how effective evangelism is when you are experiencing the same hope. See why all the synoptic gospel writers include this story? B/c they want us to see how Jesus shares the good news. If we are seeing that it is good news for us, and repenting of our own loves that are not of His kingdom, then we will know that we need it, too. When you are buying and using the product you are trying to convince others to buy, the credibility increases 100 fold. Glory, then, rejoice in, the rewards of your treasure in Heaven and watch God use you to tell others.