

SELL EVERYTHING YOU HAVE. THEN COME, FOLLOW ME

Luke 18:15-30

Key Verse 18:22

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

First, “Anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it” (15-17). Look at verse 15. While Jesus was preaching, some parents brought their babies to Jesus to have him touch them. They saw that Jesus was a great servant of God, and they wanted their babies to be blessed by him. But when the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. Their idea was that Jesus’ time must be used for more worthy cause than for children. But how did Jesus respond? Look at verses 16 and 17. Let’s read these verses together:

¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Jesus welcomed children and told his disciples not to hinder them from coming to him. Why? Jesus says, “for the kingdom of God belonged to such as these.” He did not mean that the kingdom of God belonged to the little children, but to those childlike people. Then, Jesus proclaimed, “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” When they are told, “We will go to Disneyland tomorrow for the family trip,” children are so fascinated at it that they cannot sleep that night; they receive that news so wholeheartedly; they think about it, talk about it and dream about it. They are completely in it. Jesus says that anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. What about those who say, “I believe in Jesus,” yet, are not so fascinated at the kingdom of God? They will never enter it. What about those who have attended many worship services? Unless they receive the kingdom of God like a little child, they will never enter it. What about those who have great Bible knowledge or those who have PhDs in theology? If they do not receive the kingdom of God like a little child, they will never enter it. What about the apostles? If they do not receive it like a little child, they will never enter it. This is Jesus’ standard. Then, you can imagine what kind of people are the citizens of the kingdom of God – all those who have been completely fascinated at the kingdom of God and thereby, pursued it wholeheartedly. Some people may say differently about who enter to the kingdom of God, but Jesus confirms this, saying, “I tell you the truth,” meaning, “This is really true. Don’t be bothered by what others say, but you can trust in what I say.”

Here, the expression, “receiving the kingdom of God” is about how we respond to the messages or news of the kingdom of God. Simply, based on Jesus’ words here, we see that it is up to how we respond to the messages of the kingdom of God that our eternal destiny will be decided – either the kingdom of God or somewhere else. So, we must ask ourselves, “How do I receive the kingdom of God?” Do I receive the kingdom of God like a little child, completely fascinated at it and thereby, dreaming about, thinking about it, and putting hope in it? Or do I receive the kingdom of God like a well seasoned politician, trying to analyze it, or saying, “Later, I will think about it when I retire”? We must never assume that we will go there as default, because we do this or that for God. We must never take it for granted either. Instead, we must repent of all our worldly desires and pursuit that divides our hearts from the kingdom of God.

Second, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (18-23). Look at verse 18. A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” According to Matthew 19:22, he was a young man. In such a young age, he was a government ruler and had great wealth. He got all we dream about. When people achieve great things in their young age, usually, they lose the direction of their life, become empty and then, pleasure-seeking. But this young man was different. Even after such great success, he did not become worldly, or materialistic or pleasure-seeking. Instead, he was a faithful worship service attendant, never missing it, arranging all his schedule around the worship service time, giving it his first priority above all his business meetings and family matters. He kept all the laws and regulations wholeheartedly, bringing his one tenth offering to God and doing other requirements faithfully. He denied all his worldly and fleshly desires to keep all these laws. Moreover, he did many good things such as serving food for homeless people on special holidays or donating a lot of money for good cause. He never cheated anyone, but he was honest and faithful. What a great man he was! He was a role model for all young people in his country. Everyone praised him. What was the secret of his great life? What made him live such a good life? It was all because he was seeking eternal life; he did all these to inherit eternal life. His sincere desire for eternal life made him overcome the corruption of the world and become such a great person.

But the problem was that, even after all these struggles, he still had no confidence in eternal life. He was not sure if he had eternal life or not – when he honestly checked himself out, he did not have it. He had done all the requirements – he denied his own desires and fleshly passions; he took up all the required burdens by keeping the laws and doing good things. But still, he did not say that he had secured eternal life. The worst thing was that now, he didn’t know what else he should do to inherit eternal life. He was lost. This man asked Jesus, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” What an important question this is! What must I do to inherit eternal life?” This is the very fundamental question all people have. One lady was dying at the age of 93. But she said in her death bed, “I don’t want to die.” All people want to have eternal life. But how can we have it? Buddhist suggest that we have to sit in front of a

wall for 20 years; many people followed this instruction; then, they went crazy, being possessed by demons. Where is the way? What must we do to inherit eternal life?

Based on the question this young man brought to Jesus, we can see his understanding of how he would have eternal life that was, by doing good things. That's what he had pursued thus far, but all the good things he had done were not good enough for him to inherit eternal life. It seemed that he should do something really good so that he would inherit eternal life. This something good must be so big and would require him to sacrifice a lot; but he was willing to do it only if he could secure eternal life. But he did not know what that something good might be, which would give him eternal life. He considered Jesus as a great servant of God; it seemed that Jesus had eternal life; it seemed that Jesus had the confidence in eternal life. So, he brought this question to Jesus. What was Jesus' answer?

Look at verses 19 and 20. Let's read these verses together:

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.” Jesus first pointed out his mistake. Jesus showed him that no one is good except God indicating that the young man too could not be good enough to inherit eternal life by doing any good thing. Eternal life is not something we can earn through what we do for God. With our own efforts or good deeds, we cannot buy it. Our own righteousness is like a filthy rag compared to the value of eternal life, or compared to God's standard of righteousness. And then, Jesus said to him, “You know the commandments.” When the man asked him, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answer was: You know the commandments – “Why do you ask me? You already know it.” The way of inheriting eternal life is in the commandment. His point was that if he had kept the Commandments, he would have had eternal life. Then, he came up with the second half of the Ten Commandment.

When we think about this answer of Jesus, we can see that there is no secret or mysterious way in having eternal life – it is plain and simple that everyone who believes in God knows. Some people are so concerned about their eternal life; they have no confidence if they have eternal life or not, even in Jesus. It is not because they do not know the way to have eternal life, but because they do not do what they are supposed to do. They don't do what they know they must do, so they have no confidence in God at all, but they are afraid and they live in suspense. Do what God commands you to do, then, you will have the confidence in God's goodness for you and you will enjoy a beautiful life, even eternal life.

This man did not have the confidence in eternal life, not because he had not done something really good, but because he had not obeyed God's commandments.

But the man said, "All these I have kept since I was a boy." Was he telling a lie? No. That's what he really meant; his conscience testified for him. What a great man he was. Yet, he missed the point. If he had kept the commandments, he should have had eternal life; yet, the fact that he still did not have eternal life showed that he had not kept the commandments. How did Jesus respond?

Look at verse 22. Let's read this verse together:

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Fundamentally, there was a gap between his understanding of keeping the commandments and Jesus' understanding of keeping the commandments. So, Jesus showed him how he could really keep the commandments, saying, "You still lack one thing." Wow! The young man was almost there – just one more thing, and if he only did that one thing, he would completely keep the commandments, and thereby would have eternal life. Just one more thing – how close he was to eternal life! What was that one thing, which he lacked? Jesus said to him, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." This is how one can truly keep the commandments – completely selfless life. Keeping the commandments is more than restraining one's action from doing bad things such as adultery or murder or theft; rather, it is to not live for oneself any longer, but for God and for others alone. Indeed, only by loving God and loving neighbors with all heart, soul and strength can we truly keep the commandments. In order to do so, we must sell everything we have and value in this life so that our heart may not go to it, but to God and to people.

Jesus said to him that only when he sold everything and gave to the poor, he would have treasure in heaven. Once his treasure was in heaven, his heart would be there, thinking about it, dreaming about it and talking about it day and night; he would have real hope in heaven. Then, what should such a person do? Jesus said to him, "Then come, follow me." Those people who sold everything have no hope in the world at all; the world is simply not worthy of their time and energy; no meaning to spend their life for anything in the world. Such people come to Jesus and follow him as his disciples pouring out their time and energy, their talent and life for God's kingdom work – they are the ones who live for God and God's flock; they are the ones who love God with all their heart, soul and strength, and love their neighbors as themselves.

How can we inherit eternal life? Sell everything you have and give to the poor. Then come, follow Jesus. This is the way to have eternal life. This is how we

can truly keep the commandments. What kind of people are these who sell everything they have in this world for the kingdom of God? They are the ones who receive the kingdom of God like a little child.

Based on today's passage, you see what kind of people gather in the kingdom of God. When you go to the kingdom of God, you will see that all the citizens there have one thing in common – they have received the kingdom of God like a little child, so fascinated at it, and pursued it selling everything they had. In that sense, they are one. I pray that we all may join in them as well. How can we join in? By selling everything we have and following Jesus as his disciples.

Oh, when the saints go marching in,
 Oh, when the saints go marching in,
 Oh how I want to be in that number,
 when the saints go marching in.

At this, how did the man respond? Verse 23 reads: "When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth." After many years' struggle, finally, he got an answer, and he knew what to do – just one more thing, and then, eternal life. He was really close. But alas! There, right at the gate of the kingdom of God, he turned away from it and went away sad, because he didn't want to do that one thing. He didn't want to sacrifice what he valued – his wealth – for eternal life, because fundamentally, he valued his wealth more than eternal life. Between eternal life and his wealth, he chose his wealth. So, he failed to have eternal life. After this, he would still go to worship service. But no matter what he might do, he knew how he had rejected eternal life. What a painful and miserable life it would be.

Here, we learn how to keep the commandments, and how to inherit eternal life. We must sell everything we have. If we value anything in the world more than eternal life, because of that thing, we cannot keep the commandments, and we end up rejecting eternal life to secure that something we value. Jesus says that we cannot love both God and our own treasure. The Bible tells us that we must not love anything in the world; if we love anything in the world, the love of God cannot be in us. Sell everything you have; give it to the poor. Then, you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Jesus as his disciples, living to build God's kingdom on earth.

Third, "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (24-30). Look at verses 24 and 25. Let's read these verses together:

²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, 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."

Many people think that entering the kingdom of God is so easy – just say magic words, “I believe in Jesus,” then you have salvation. But Jesus does not think so. In Luke 13, we see a disciple asking a very important question, saying, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” Actually, this is the question so many people have. At this, Jesus replied, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.” (Lk 13:23,24) Now in this passage, Jesus says that it is really hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. Why is it hard? It is hard because they have difficulty to give their money up; they have difficulty to sell their wealth and give to the poor to secure eternal life. The more they have, the harder it becomes for them to give it up. Even Jesus says that it is almost, or totally impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God – a camel cannot go through the eye of a needle.

At this, many people may say, “I am okay because I am not rich; I am broke.” But having no money does not mean that you are not rich. You may still have something you value highly. All young college students are rich in future – some people have promising future, while others have unpromising future; yet, all of them are rich in future and they value it. To some people, their relationship with their boyfriend or girlfriend is their treasure. They refuse to exchange it even for eternal life – they turn down God’s call, God’s offer to secure what they value. Indeed, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Look at verses 26 and 27. Let’s read these verses together:

26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?” **27** Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

At Jesus’ teaching of how hard it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, the disciples were shocked; in their eyes, it seemed that there was no one who could be saved, if such a high standard was applied. If people have to sell everything they have to be saved, then, who will do that? They exclaimed, “Who then can be saved?” Even that rich man who had pursued it wholeheartedly could not accept the deal! At this, Jesus agreed that it is impossible for people to be saved on their own. With man, this is impossible.

Then, isn’t there any way for people to be saved? Yes, there is. Jesus says, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.” With God, men’s salvation is possible. With ourselves alone, we cannot secure salvation, because we cannot sell everything on our own even for the sake of eternal life. But with God helping us, with God’s intervention, we sell everything and follow Jesus. Nicodemus knew that Jesus was a man from God; in his heart, he believed in Jesus, but he was hesitant, because, if he exposed himself as a disciple of Jesus, then, he would lose all his money, position and title in the society. But when he saw how Jesus boldly died on the cross for God’s purpose, he was deeply touched that he boldly exposed himself as Jesus’ disciple willing to lose everything in the world for God. When God’s inspiration comes to them, young people give up their career dream

and dedicate themselves to God's work. When one word of God touched their hearts deeply, doctors give up their secured life and go to poor countries and live as Jesus' disciples. When God's inspiration comes to them, many people turn to God decisively cutting off their relationship with their boyfriends and girlfriends. This is what we all experienced – with ourselves, we were only agonized, knowing what we must do, but without being able to do it – we were really like this young man, knowing what to do, but not willing to do it. Then, during Bible study or while hearing the message, one word of God touched our hearts, and we were set free to turn to God and pursue Him. With God working for men and helping them, men's salvation is possible. With God, many people sell everything and follow Jesus. God says in Isaiah 49:8, "In the day of salvation I will help you."

When we think about this, we can see that we are the products of God's work; we can say that only by the work of God I am what I am. God knew each of us, saved us by intervening into our situation, by giving us that perfect word for us, and making us turn to him; then, he gathered us here together as a church for his special mission. That's why each person here in the church is precious. Let's pray that God's work of salvation may be abundant at the conference.

Look at verse 28. Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" It seemed that until this time, Peter had a kind of casual attitude toward salvation, assuming that he had already secured eternal life in the kingdom of God because he worked with Jesus. But now as he learned from Jesus, he realized that securing eternal life or salvation was far more difficult than he had thought – it required real struggles, and it was impossible for men to be saved. Realizing this, he wanted to make sure that he was saved, and he wanted to have a kind of confirmation about it from Jesus. What was Jesus' response? Look at verses 29 and 30. Let's read these verses together:

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God
30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

Jesus fully understood what Peter was talking about and gave his confirmation of not only eternal life in the age to come, but also God's blessings in the present life. Amazingly, this confirmation is for all those who leave everything behind – when you leave everything to follow Jesus, this confirmation is then, for you. You will not fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.

Jesus mentions about several things we leave behind to follow Jesus – home or wife (husband or boyfriend or girlfriend) or brothers (sisters) or parents or children. Home is the place where you enjoy a comfortable life. To some people, this home is everything they have and value. But for the sake of serving God's kingdom, you sell that kind of a comfortable life. To some others, wife – marriage

dream or happy family life – is everything. But for the sake of serving God’s kingdom work, you sell that dream. To some others, parents are everything. Your parents may have a certain expectation for you – maybe, some support emotionally, or materially; or they want you to be successfully in the world. But as you live for God’s kingdom, you cannot live according to their desires. So, they feel abandoned or ignored – they feel sorrowful and betrayed; they misunderstand you and even get angry at you; embracing all the pains and sorrows, you live as Jesus’ disciples. To some others, children are everything. They want to make sure that their children are amply supplied, loved and well educated. Maybe, they had painful childhood or abandoned or mistreated; they don’t want their children to go through such pains or sorrows. They want to make sure that their children grow with beautiful parental love, so they struggle hard to spend time with them; they want to purchase a house with big backyard so that their children can grow with beautiful memory; they want to make sure that their children receive best education, so, sending them to public schools is not acceptable; so they sent them to expensive private schools. As their hearts go to their children, what about serving God? They just go through the motion, doing just minimum, considering God’s mission as a burden. When they live for children, they cannot live for God. Jesus mentions about giving up this desire for children – he fully understands humans. It’s painful. But for the sake of Jesus and his kingdom, we deny this desire and serve God’s kingdom work. When you leave these things to follow Jesus, He confirms with you that you will never fail to receive many times (100 times according to Matthew’s gospel) in this age and in the age to come, eternal life. It means that God blesses you with a much better job than the job you left; you come to have many parents who show deep concern for your wellbeing; you come to have many brothers and sisters who share deep bond of love and unity; you come to have many children who show deep love and respect to you and obey you.

When we think about Jesus’ confirmation of blessings and eternal life for those who leave everything behind to follow him, we can see how much Jesus truly appreciates them. He fully understands how hard it is for us to sell everything to follow him; he fully understands all the pains and sorrows you have swallowed to leave everything to follow him. And he appreciates fully what you have done and how much you have done for him by pouring his blessings in addition to eternal life in the age to come. He knows you. Isn’t this what you truly desire in this life – Jesus knowing you and appreciating what you have done for you?

Today we learned the way of eternal life. Let’s receive the kingdom of God like a little child so that we all can enter it. Let’s sell everything we have so that we can have true hope in heaven and live as Jesus’ disciples. When you do so, certainly you will not fail to receive God’s blessings in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life.

One Word: Sell Everything You Have. Then Come, Follow Jesus