

RADICAL: What the Gospel Demands

The Gospel Demands Radical Abandonment – Part 1

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THE GOSPEL AND RADICAL ABANDONMENT – PART 1 **Mark 10:17-31**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Mark chapter 10. Mark chapter 10 and while you're turning there, I got to tell you this story. Over the last couple of weeks we have had the stomach bug floating around the Platt house. I will not go into details how that has played out, but it's not been particularly exciting at times. And we thought it was gone until a few days ago, we had some of the guys from the staff and their wives over to the house for dinner and I was sitting around with the guys. We were just talking there at the table and Caleb comes over. Caleb had had it earlier in the week but we thought it was gone. He comes up to me and I'm sitting there and he says "Daddy. I don't feel good."

So I picked him up and put him in my lap, which was mistake number one, and I said, "Buddy, I'm sorry. Are you okay?" And he just kept saying, "My tummy hurts. My tummy hurts." And then he started to cry. And he was interrupting conversation at the dinner table now, so I picked him up and I started walking away from the table. I got about three steps away from the table and I had put him up on my shoulder and all of a sudden, here's where I am going to get into some details, all of a sudden a basic projectile comes just pouring down my back and I feel it just kind of rushing down my back. And he's throwing up pretty good and I'm kind of shocked by the whole picture and so I turned kind of surprised, too, with my mouth open, I say "Oh" and; yeah, you totally see where this is going.

And so I turned and right about that moment, round two begins and my two and a half year old son is now throwing up directly in my mouth and my ear and he's just bathing me in his you know what. And it just continues. It was like a bath. And the good thing was, there really wasn't a lot to clean up on the floor because it was all on me, just drenched from head to toe. And so he's, of course, crying and so we're rushing out and put him in the bathtub and Heather's trying to get things situated so we can take care of him and Heather looks at me and says "David you need to remove yourself, like immediately, because I'm about to pull a Caleb on you if you don't get out of here."

And so I go and I get cleaned up. It's just one of those times when you just can't wash your mouth out enough. You know, it just doesn't seem to fix the problem. And I'm getting cleaned up. We still have dinner guests downstairs. A good follow up and have some coffee and dessert, and I'm thinking, "You know, I guess this just happens to every parent at some point." And so I go downstairs and I'm talking with the guys and they say, "Dave, you're right. It does happen to every parent, but we have never seen it that bad." It was quite an experience the moment that Caleb and I had.

Why am I telling you this story? I know that during this series, some of you feel like I'm pulling a Caleb on you, week by week, by week. Just kind of putting tough text and just kind of throwing them out and I know they don't always go down the pipe very smoothly and I want you to know I realize that. We are looking at some really tough things in Scripture and some tough words from Christ. And words that elicit a lot of conversation,

elicit a lot of questions, maybe even confusion and even criticism. And I think there are some of these truths that can easily be misunderstood.

What I want to do in part is to address some of those misunderstandings that I think are there. I've heard some conversations wondering about if what we're looking at in the Word is undercutting assurance of our salvation, or if David is preaching a works based righteousness-salvation? And so we're going to address that in the context of the text we're looking at, and with other conversations where people have said, "Well what is David telling us to do?" and "What does the pastor want us to do?" And I want to remind you and I want to ask you, plead with you, not to ask that question.

It doesn't matter at all what David is telling you to do. It matters what the Spirit is telling you to do. This is the picture. My whole responsibility and I want to be faithful to, God help me to be faithful to representing this Word clearly and accurately and to put this Word before you, as your pastor, and then for you to take this Word and go to the Spirit of God and say "Spirit of God, show me what this Word looks like in action." And He's good for that. He will do that.

I want to wrestle alongside you in that. My family's wresting through how this Word looks like in our life, how it applies to our lives, and so we're on this journey together.

But the whole picture is we're on this journey together and it's a journey worth taking. It's a journey worth taking for the sake of the lost and for the sake of the poor and for the sake of the church and for the sake of ourselves. We want our lives to count for that which is right, true and eternal. And so let's walk this journey together and along the way, hopefully avoid some misunderstandings and in the end, find ourselves growing in Christ and experiencing more of the glory of Christ and the presence of Christ and the power of Christ in our lives and the church.

So, toward that end, let's go to Mark chapter 10, verse 17. And a little side note. We'll be in this text for at least the next couple of weeks, if not three weeks. So, Mark 10:17,

"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

"'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.' Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

"Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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.'

"The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but

not with God; all things are possible with God.’ Peter said to him, ‘We have left everything to follow you!’

“I tell you the truth,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:17-31).

Father, we pray that you would, by your Spirit, help us to understand this Word. That you would, by the power of your Spirit, take this Word and bring it to our minds and our hearts and lives, that you would bring this story of the rich young man to life and in our lives. We know, God, that we are a rich people and so we pray that you would help us to put aside our preconceived ideas, put aside our opinions and our thoughts and help us to hear your thoughts and your ways and by your grace, we pray that you will help us not only to hear them, but to apply them and to put them in practice into our lives. We pray this for the glory of your name, Amen.

Two Primary Errors in Interpretation

In this passage, I think there are two primary errors in interpretation that we need to avoid. I just want to put this out on the table. I think it’s something that needs to be out on the table before we dive in. Two errors of interpretation, when it comes to this passage, common errors. One common error is to universalize this passage. What I mean by that is, oftentimes people will take this passage and say, “What Jesus said to the rich man is applicable to every follower of Christ in all history. And so when Jesus says to the rich man, ‘go sell everything you have and give it to the poor’ then that means He tells every person that follows after Him, ‘Go sell everything you have and give it to the poor.’” Universalize it.

But the reality is even in this story right here, you’ve got disciples who the rest of the New Testament gives the picture of these guys, at least a couple of them, still had a home that provided a place for them to stay at points, probably still had a boat. There’s a picture here and the pictures we see in the rest of the New Testament where there are followers of Christ who haven’t sold literally everything they have. And so this passage is apparently not teaching us...It’s not teaching us that if you’re a follower of Christ, that means you can no longer have any private property or possessions. This is not a universal command for every follower of Christ to go sell everything you have and give to the poor. So, it’s at that point we kind of breathe a sigh of relief. “Okay, good. I was wondering if this was something we all had to do.”

But don’t breathe too long, because the second error of interpretation is not universalizing this passage, but minimizing this passage. And what will happen is people will say “Well this is not for everybody. This is only for a few people, and a few people definitely doesn’t mean me or us” in this kind of interpretation. What we need to realize is this is a very serious passage where Jesus addresses a rich man and tells him to renounce everything that he has, the reality that Mark 10 does teach us, is that Jesus does in fact tell some of his disciples to go sell everything they have and give to the poor. So the reality is, if you are a follower of Christ, it’s possible that Jesus would say exactly these words to you. So now we’re kind of sweating again.

And this is the picture. We need to keep this. We have talked about this. We are a rich people. Even in line with some of the financial uncertainty that obviously been in our country the last few weeks and I know some of the tough financial situations that many of you find yourselves in at this point, and the reality is, we have water and food and plumbing and roofs over our heads and cars to drive in and medical care. We are very rich compared to the rest of the world, all of us. And so, this text has huge implications for us and we don't want to minimize it.

One of the mistakes we make along this line of minimizing, is we'll take a passage like this and we'll say "Well what Jesus really means is," and what we'll do when we say "What really Jesus means is this", "this" is usually something...What we say he really means is usually something that squares more with our version of Christianity and accommodates to more of our way of life. And so what we do is, we've got a dangerous tendency to take Scripture and twist it to fit our life. It's an unbiblical way to study the Bible because what we're supposed to do is take our lives and adjust our lives to fit the Word of God, not the other way around. So we got to be careful to avoid both of these errors in interpretation. We're going to stay on the road and avoid both of these ditches, so to speak, on either side, not universalizing this, at the same time, not minimizing this.

A Radical Approach... Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender.

And so, in order to do that, I want to be really careful. We're going to dive in, that's why we're going to spend some extra time on this text. There are ten different truths that just arise from this text. What we're going to do is we're going to see them come one by one and we're going to spend some time turning some other places, especially in the Gospels, to see some other things that Jesus says that helps us understand some of the things that are going on in this passage. So, let's start with the first truth, a radical approach.

Truth number one, Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender. Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender. To this point, we've really got to be honest with each other. According to contemporary seminary standards, and I know, I've taught this. According to contemporary seminary standards, Jesus would absolutely fail personal evangelism class with the tactics that He is employing in this particular passage. If you've got an eager guy, young guy, who comes up to you, begging for you to tell him how he can have eternal life, not just a good, young guy. He's wealthy. He's influential. This is called a prime prospect in contemporary evangelism. You don't let this guy get away. And so you do whatever you need to do. Any evangelist worth his salt will not let this one go.

So you do whatever you need to do. You don't even have to pray the prayer or raise a hand. Just close your eyes and open them at a certain point and that's how. That's how you come. There are all kinds of methods we can make sure this guy didn't get away. Just think, if this guy becomes a follower of Christ, think of all that he can do. We can put him on the circuit and he can speak and share his testimony everywhere. He can write books and he can raise all kinds of money for the cause. We've got to get this guy in.

And if only Jesus had had some of the books that we have on evangelism today then he wouldn't have gotten away. Jesus just doesn't know how to close the sale. He let this one off the hook. What did Jesus say to this guy? He said, "*Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor*" (Mark 10:21). That's not how you pull people in. But this is how...We're

struggling with some of these texts, some of these hard words from Jesus. Just put yourself in the shoes of people in the first century. This is how they were introduced to Jesus.

These are the first things they heard. This is the impression they had. It's no wonder that when you get to Acts chapter 1, there are only 120 people that actually stuck around and done what Jesus told them to do, that were really followers of Christ. 120 people, all the masses have scattered because Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender. This is so, not just counter-cultural, counter-contemporary Christianity. Whole church growth picture and the whole multi-million dollar Christian marketing business is built on felt needs in people and doing things that cater to people's felt needs. Jesus breaks through the whole thing, goes right to the heart of the issue and says "Renounce everything if you want to follow me." He's not playing around with felt needs here. He's going right to the core of His heart.

Salvation is never a matter of external reformation.

Now I want you to see how He does that, how He takes this eager seeker and He shows him that salvation demands total surrender. This is what He establishes. First, He establishes salvation is never a matter of external reformation. It's never a matter of external reformation. A man comes up and says "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" and what did Jesus do? The first thing He does is He points him to Old Testament commands. And he's probably had a very good Jewish upbringing. Probably around 12, 13 years old had become a son of the commandments and had officially established himself as a boy who would follow the commandments of God. He says "All of these I've kept since I was a boy."

What Jesus does is, He takes the commandments that this guy knew and He takes them a step deeper, drives the wedge deeper than he ever could've imagined, ever could have dreamed when he said "*Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor*" (Mark 10:21). Now this is really unusual. I want you to think about this with me. Somebody has just come up to Jesus saying, "How can I have eternal life?" and Jesus' response is "Obey these commands and sell everything you have and give it to the poor." Is Jesus promoting a works based salvation here? "How do I inherit eternal life?" "Obey the commands. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor." That's how Jesus responds.

So, is Jesus promoting a works based salvation? Absolutely not, and I want to show you why. This is what Jesus is doing all throughout the Gospels. He is taking the commands of God that were understood by so many Jews from the Old Testament and He is taking them to a whole other level they never could've fathomed. A perfect example is Matthew chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. About half way through that chapter, a little bit closer to the beginning, Jesus says "You have heard that it was said," this and He quotes from the Old Testament, and He says "But now I tell you this" and basically He says "You've heard that it was said this, and you guys have lived your life at this standard, at this level right here and thought that you were okay before God. The reality is there's a whole other standard up here." And He does that with commandment after commandment after commandment, gets to the very end of that chapter, Matthew chapter 5 verse 48 and He says these words: "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

What Jesus is saying is, "You have to be perfect in order to inherit eternal life." You have to be perfect. Now obviously, that's not possible and what Jesus is doing then is showing this rich young man, just as He shows all kinds of other folks throughout the Gospels that they cannot merit eternal life because they can't be perfect and that's the standard. This is why, when in John chapter 6, He had a crowd of Jewish people who come up and they say to Him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" or "What does God require of us for us to do?" And what does Jesus say in response? He says, "Here is the work of God" and

they're listening for what He's going to say next and He says, "The work of God is this, to believe in the one He sent." To believe in the one He has sent.

Salvation is always a matter of internal transformation.

So what Jesus is doing is He is saying very clearly, "Salvation is never a matter of external reformation, instead salvation is a matter of internal transformation. You've got to believe me. You've got to believe in me. You've got to trust in me because you can't be perfect. You can't obey all these things. You need me. You need to believe in me, trust in me." Now bring that back here to Mark chapter 10 and the rich man. When Jesus says "Go sell all you have and give it to the poor." Is Jesus saying that if this man does this, he will earn salvation? No.

Don't miss it. Based on what we just saw, if this man goes and sells all he has and gives to the poor, it will be clear evidence that he believes Jesus. It'll be the natural overflow, him believing in Jesus and trusting in Jesus and embracing Jesus and following Jesus. This is the overflow of that. He's not going to sell his possessions and give to the poor in order to earn salvation. That would be an expression of the salvation that's happened in him, for a man who has so much wealth to start giving it away to the poor, will be an obvious picture of the fact that something has happened in his heart, an internal transformation.

Now bring it into what we're talking about in the context of this series, what we looked at last week, Luke chapter 16 with the rich man Lazarus. When we looked at James, chapter 2, "*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?*" (Jas. 2:14). Faith, "*If it is not accompanied by action is,*" what? "*Is dead*" (Jas. 2:17). 1 John chapter 3. We saw these things and what we said last week is that caring for the poor is necessary evidence of our salvation. And there is a huge difference between caring for the poor being necessary evidence of our salvation and caring for the poor in order to earn salvation. A huge difference, because what we're seeing in Scripture here is that caring for the poor, for this man to go sell everything he has to give to the poor, for you or I, to make extravagant gifts to the poor and to let go of things in this life would not be done to earn salvation but would be done as an expression of the salvation that's in us.

It would be an obvious picture that there has been an internal transformation in us that is now playing out in an external manifestation of us giving to the poor. Do you see the relationship there, internal transformation that leads to external manifestation? Something happens in our hearts, God changes our hearts. We begin to care for what He cares about and the result of that, the overflow of that is we begin to obey Him, begin to follow Him. Remember what we talked about last week and where it gets a little more prone to misunderstanding, is the reality that if that's the case, if our lives are a reflection of our hearts, and if there's been an internal transformation, it will show itself in the way we live, then if our lives do not reflect the character of Christ, then that means there's a heart issue at work here.

It's not an issue that needs more external reformation—"we need to do this, this and this"—we need a change of heart. And what we're seeing as we talk about caring for the poor is, that if we are indulging ourselves and ignoring the poor then there is a heart problem, a major heart problem that drives us to say "Is Christ in my heart? And if He is in my heart, then why has this not been expressed in my life?" There is a disconnect here. That doesn't mean that I need to go out and start caring for the poor in order to earn salvation, it means that the only way I can care for the poor is if Christ changes my heart and I need Him to do that.

Let me back up here for a second. Some of you think it's a little crazy to even ask "Well is Christ in your heart? Do you need a heart transformation?" Let's leave caring for the poor to the side for a second. Let's think about this illustration. Imagine somebody who claims that Christ is in their heart, but they live a sexually immoral lifestyle, a grossly immoral lifestyle when it comes to sexuality. That they are involved with multiple partners day after day, week after week, month after month, that they are living in direct disobedience to all that Scripture talks about when it comes to sexuality and purity. And year after year they're doing this, but they claim that Christ is in them.

But when shown in the Word where this is not honoring to Christ, they continue in those things and there's no sign of any kind of contrition or conviction or repentance. They just continually, deliberately disobey Christ. It doesn't seem to matter to them at all. If that's the case and they continue in that month after month and year after year, is there reason to at least question whether or not Christ is in this person's heart? Now be careful. I want to be careful.

I'm not saying that I'm the judge of whether or not Christ in their heart or you're the judge of whether or not Christ is in their heart. But there's at least reason to warn them. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. That causes warning there. 1 John 2:3-6, If anyone says that you know God, but you deliberately disobey His commands, the truth is not in you and you are a liar. This is what the Bible says. And so we would say to this person, "Is Christ really in you?" And we need to see if He is, and if He is, you need to repent and turn back to Him and if He's not, you need to ask Him to change you for the first time in your life. Now, that seems pretty clear-cut in an area of sin where we say "Yeah, well that's obvious."

Well let's bring this over to caring for the poor. What about a people who day after day, week after week and month after month and year after year indulge in more and more and more stuff while they ignore the poor, or at least throw scraps to the poor? They continue in that. Is there a reason to wonder if there is a heart problem here? Absolutely there is. Look at 1 John 3:17. It says "*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*" It's a rhetorical question in 1 John that saying "How can the heart of God be in him if he is ignoring his brother in need?"

And this is where we're seeing that if our lifestyles are indulging ourselves and ignoring the poor in the world, then there is reason to look inside our hearts and the most fundamental question we always need to ask is, "Is Christ there?" And if He is there, then what needs to happen in my life for Christ to change me and transform me so that my life looks different? Not so that I can earn salvation. I would not tell this person struggling with sexual immorality, "Get things right so that you'll be accepted before God." That would be horrible advice, unbiblical counsel to give to them. I would say "Go to Christ and ask Christ to change your heart so you don't desire these things anymore, so you desire Him." And it's the same thing we're seeing in the Word in this series.

Not go out start caring for the poor so that you can earn salvation. If that were the case, when will we know when we've given enough? That's obviously not the case. That's not what Scripture's teaching, but Scripture is teaching us go to Christ. Repent and run to Christ and ask Him to change your heart, change your mind about how you spend and how you live. Show that you can live in a way that expresses Christ in you. And only Christ can do this. This is why when we look at the Word of God week after week after week, what I don't want to happen is the last thing I want us to do is to leave after we've studied the Word, especially we're looking at these hard texts and to walk out of here just thinking "I've got

more to do. I've got more to work on. Got to do this and this and this." That misses the point because that's looking at external reformation.

What I want us to do, I want to take the Word, week by week, as your pastor, I want to take the Word and I want to show what the life of Christ looks like in the Word. And pray that God will show us areas, you and me both, areas in our life that do not add up with the life of Christ, so that we see these areas of disconnect and we walk out of here today and we say "I see this area of disconnect and I want Christ. I want Christ more. I want more and more and more of Christ. And I need Christ to change my heart. I need Christ to change me." We're walking out here not driven down and burdened in despair because we got so much more to do, but we'll walk out of here driven to Christ because we want and we need more of Christ week after week after week after week.

And that brings us back to what we were talking about earlier. So we go to Christ and we spend time with Christ. We spend concentrated time with Christ during the week. We're asking Christ about these things and how they apply to our lives. I believe He's honored in that. It's not the easy way. The easy way is what this guy is looking for. Give the check off box so that I can do these external things and know I'm okay. What does Scripture tell me to do? Give me the check off box so I can make sure I'm okay. We want to do everything we can to avoid the hard work of being with Christ, the heart of delightful work of being with Christ and asking him to change our hearts and to change our minds and to change our desires. Let's do that.

Jesus is not merely a respectable teacher.

Let's ask Him to bring an internal transformation in us that will take care of the external manifestation. We need transformed hearts on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis. The only place we can find that is in going to Christ. That's the key here for the rich young man. There was a fundamental flaw in his perception of Christ. Jesus is not merely a respectable teacher. He's not merely a respectable teacher. Listen to how he addresses Him in verse 17. "Good teacher," he asked; verse 20, "Teacher," he declared, "all these I've kept since I was a boy." This man respected Jesus' thoughts, respected Jesus' opinions.

And I love what Jesus responds back. He says "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." I love this. Jesus is hinting here, this guy has absolutely no clue who he is talking to. He has no idea of the gravity of the conversation that he is having at this moment because he is looking at Jesus as a respected teacher and Jesus is nowhere, nowhere looks to be a respected teacher.

Jesus is the sovereign Lord.

He looks to show Himself always and as a Sovereign Lord. The rich man, don't miss it, and the rich man was willing to have Jesus as a teacher to respect, but not to have Jesus as a Lord to obey, and there is a huge difference.

I'm convinced that scores of people, even scores of people in a Church today, are more than glad to have Jesus as a respected teacher who will give advice on how to live life but it's a whole other ball game when He is a Sovereign Lord who determines everything in our lives. Christian, you have sacrificed, lost, given up the right to determine the direction of your life. That is no longer in your hands. And Jesus is not an advice giver. He is the one who determines your steps. Jesus decides what house you live in, not you. And Jesus decides what car you drive, not you. Jesus decides what clothes you wear. He decides what you spend on. He sets your budget.

Jesus decides what you invest in. Jesus decides what lifestyle you live according to, not you or me. Jesus makes these calls. He is not one we go to when it comes to caring for the poor and He is not one we go to for financial advice or financial planning. He is Lord who determines everything, every single bit of our lives including our finances. That's a radical way to live. And let's be honest. It's not an easy way to live in this culture, but this is the radical approach. Jesus' call to salvation. This is elementary in the Gospels. It involves total surrender.

A Radical Affection...

Jesus calls us to give sacrificially because He loves us.

Second radical affection; now don't miss this follow up here. This is where it gets really good. Radical affection; truth number two. Jesus calls us to give sacrificially because He loves us. Jesus calls us to give sacrificially because He loves us. This is verse 21. This is a hard command. Let's be honest. Imagine, put yourself in his shoes. "Go sell everything you have, give to the poor." Can you imagine hearing that right now, all of your assets, all of your money, everything you have, go now, sell everything you have and give to the poor? That's a hard command. It's hard for us, even as we think about it. Even if Jesus doesn't call us to give everything, to sell this or to give this away. These are hard commands and not always easy.

For Jesus to say "Let go of this. Sacrifice this. Give this away. In your life, get rid of what you don't need and give to the poor." Those are hard words. Well here's the beauty of this passage, it is here at the beginning of verse 21, it's not underlined in your Bible, I would encourage you to underline it. "*Jesus looked at him and*" and what? "*Loved him.*" Here's the beauty. Jesus calls him to do this, not because He hates him. Not because He wants the worst for him, not because He wants to make this rich young man's life miserable in this world. He calls him to sell everything he has and give to the poor because He loves him. Here's the beauty of what Scripture is teaching here and all over the Gospels when it comes to some of these passages we're looking at. Jesus loves rich people.

There's good news for us. Jesus loves rich people. Do you know how much? Jesus loves rich people enough to tell them the truth. Jesus loves rich people enough to tell them the truth. I want to show you this. Go over to Luke chapter 12 with me. You got to see this. Luke chapter 12, this is a picture. If we could get our minds and our hearts around this truth, Jesus wants the best for us. He wants the best for every single one of us. He doesn't want the worst for us. Write that down. Etch it on your mind, you heart. Jesus said some of these strong things; He's saying these things because He wants the best for us. He wants the best for you. He wants the best for me. He wants the best for your family and my family. He wants the best.

Now look here in Luke 12 and look in verse 15. What He's going to do is tell a parable here, another one of these strong parables, kind of like the one we looked at in Luke 16:19 last week. Look at Luke 12:15,

"And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll

say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry' (Luke 12:16-19).

I give you a picture of the American Dream. It's as clear as it gets.

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21).

Talk about right between the eyes. This is tough words and what He does; now here's what I want you to see. I want you to see the tough words here, what He follows it up with. Jesus begins to talk about not worrying. "Don't worry. You don't have to store up because I'm going to take care of you. My Father's going to take care of you." Get down to verse 32. Incredible verse right here. I encourage you to underline it in your Bible, Luke 12:32. Listen to what He says and then what He says after this and we're going to put them together. Look in verse 32. *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."*

Okay, He says that and then He says in verse 33, listen to this. *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Luke 12:33-34). Verse 33, pretty tough command? Sell your possessions. He's telling His disciples "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." Jesus just said, "Take everything you don't need and give it to the poor." That's not an easy thing. That doesn't sit well. All of a sudden, as soon as we hear that, all kinds of thoughts come up in our mind. There's insecurity that comes up, "Well what will I do? What will I have? What will I have three years from now? What will this look like?"

He is a Shepherd who protects us.

There's fear that comes up. There's anxiety, there's worry. These are real emotions that Jesus knows that we would have when He comes up to us and says, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." He knows that. So, what does he say right before it? *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom"* (Luke 12:32). Are those not incredibly tender words? Jesus says, "Don't be afraid. You're Father's pleased to give you the kingdom, therefore in light of that, sell your possessions and give to the poor." How do you sell your possessions and give to the poor? When you know that you have a Father who's given to you. This is the picture Jesus is showing us. Luke chapter 12 verse 32 is the dynamite that blows up materialism in our lives. Don't miss this.

Luke 12:32, Hide this truth in your heart and it will completely obliterate the god of materialism in your heart, my heart, because the reality is we struggle in letting go of things. We struggle with giving everything away and giving to the poor. All kinds of insecurity, fear, anxiety, whatever it may be, and Jesus says, "Don't be afraid." You don't have to be afraid, why? Listen to what He says. He says, "God is a Shepherd who protects us. Fear not little flock." You hear the affection there, the endearment there?

When I think about my boys and I talk about Caleb, little guy that we had the privilege of going over in the middle of Kazakhstan to bring into our family, our son, and then coming back and Joshua being the little guy that just caught us completely by surprise. These are my little guys. These are my boys. There's endearment here. There's protection here when my boys are afraid or in a kind of danger. The other day we were out in the yard and there was a snake in the yard and Caleb wasn't sure what to do. See, in those kinds of moments

you just want to pull aside and say, "Hey, little guy, I got you." Somebody bigger is here, than the snake, to take care of this thing. I'd do the same thing with Heather. Somebody bigger is here to take of the snake.

But the picture here, the endearment and protection and intimacy and here's the picture. Jesus knows that for anyone who responds to His call to sell your possessions and give to the poor. He knows there will be insecurity. He knows there will be hesitancy. He knows there will be fear and anxiety in you and He looks at you and He says, "Don't forget, God is a Shepherd who will protect you." What an incredible picture. He will protect you. He will watch over you. You can know this for sure. Don't worry. The Shepherd who protects us.

He is a Father who delights in us.

He's a Father who delights in us. "Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." How do you sell what all that you have that you don't need, maybe and give to the poor and with confidence? How do you do that? You do that with confidence when you know you have a Father in heaven who is ready to give to you. It's a no brainer at that point. It makes sense. There's even kind of a tinge of self serving motivation here because you know that your Father is going to give to you and so it's okay to let go of these things because you have a Father who's giving to you. If He's our Father, what does that make us? Children, right; sons and daughters.

This is the whole picture back in Mark chapter 10. What must I do to inherit eternal life? What does a Father give his sons and daughters? An inheritance. This is the whole picture we saw in Matthew chapter 25. "*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world*" (Matt. 25:34). Think about that. Sons and daughters of God, you have an inheritance prepared for you since the creation of the world. You have no need to worry. You have no need to have any anxiety about selling your possessions to give to the poor because you are, Romans 8 says, the heir of God and a co-heir with Jesus Christ.

What do you have in this world that is that beautiful, that is that wonderful, that is that valuable? Absolutely nothing. You have an inheritance. Don't worry about selling everything you have and giving to the poor. You have an inheritance. Your Father, He delights in giving it to you. He's not going to give it to you begrudgingly. He's not a Father that says, "Well I guess since he's my son, I guess he's in the family he's got to get it." No. He gladly gives it. He's prepared it for you since the creation of the world for you and for me. What a picture.

He is a King who provides for us.

He's a Shepherd who protects us. A Father who delights in us and He is a King who provides for us. What does He give us? "My Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom." He is not an employer who doles out money. He is not a career planner who elevates your status. He is not an agent who promotes your fame and He's not an investor who pours you more stuff and more stuff into you. He is the King who gives the Kingdom. What do you have in this life that can compare to that?

What do you have that you will sell or give away that can compare to the Kingdom of God? Absolutely nothing. All of it together doesn't compare to this. And so give this way. You have a God who protects you like a shepherd and delights in you like a Father does his children. And you have a God who is the King who promises to give you a Kingdom. Jesus calls us to give sacrificially, not because He hates us or wants things bad for us. He calls us to give sacrificially because He loves us. There's great confidence there. Earth shaking confidence there.

A Radical Command... Jesus gives commands, not considerations.

Third truth, radical approach and radical affection, now a radical command. Jesus gives commands, not considerations. Jesus gives commands, not considerations. This is where I want you to come back with me to Mark 10:21. I'm going to read this verse to you that we've kind of been camping out around, what Jesus says to this rich young man. And I want you to count with me how many commands there are in this one sentence. Count how many commands there are.

"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). Did you catch it? Five different commands. Go, sell everything you have, give to the poor. Go, Sell, Give. Come follow me. This one verse is loaded with commands. Five different commands. Now, remember this is where we come back to these two errors that we need to avoid going into the ditch on. Not universalizing this—that these commands are binding on every single follower of Christ.

At the same time, not minimizing. And this is where, inevitably, when you come to this passage and you see what people have written about this passage and you hear people talk about this passage, you will always hear an interpretation that comes up at this point. And it sounds something like this: "Jesus is not calling this man to give everything and sell everything. Instead, He's calling him to be willing to give everything, sell everything he has and give to the poor." The only problem I see with that interpretation is that it's not true.

That's my main beef with it. If Jesus meant "be willing" to sell everything you have and give to the poor, then I think He is capable of saying "be willing to sell everything you have and give to the poor." Why do we twist that? Well let's think about it in this man's shoes. Do you think this rich man could've said, "I'm willing"? Sure. It's pretty easy to say, "I'm willing." Okay, now this fits with my version of Christianity. It's not what Jesus said.

He didn't say, "Consider the possibility this may happen in your life." He said "Go sell everything you have, give it to the poor and come follow me." Commands, not considerations. Now again, not universalizing this picture, but let's be honest with each other. We need to be very careful. The phrase "Well Jesus is just calling me to be willing to do something" is a phrase that is extremely easy to hide behind. Dangerously easy to hide behind. And there's a grain of truth to it. I mean, there's no question. Really, it's basic Christianity. We've already established it. Every single follower of Christ has renounced everything to follow Him and so yes, we're willing to do whatever He calls us to do. No question. That's automatic.

As followers of Christ, we do not consider options.

It doesn't need to be said, it's already here. We need to be careful when we begin to consider what Christ is telling us to do, not to take His commands and turn them into considerations. As followers of Christ, we do not consider options. We do not have the liberty of considering options as followers of Christ. As followers of Christ, we don't consider options.

As followers of Christ, we obey.

As followers of Christ, we obey. We obey, period. Jesus required obedience here in the same way He requires obedience from you and me. Now I love what one writer said. Listen to

this, "The fact that Jesus did not command all His followers to sell all their possessions, gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom He would issue that command." Did you catch that? Let me read it one more time. "The fact that Jesus did not command all His followers to sell all their possessions, gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom He would issue that command." Some of you were thinking "Well I wasn't comforted by it." Okay, that's good. That's good. But here's the picture. We've got to be careful. We are looking to justify ourselves to adjust Scripture to our eyes. We need to be careful here.

When we started this series, first study in this series, if you were here, we spent some time and we took different passages of Scripture and we read through them on our own and we answered some questions based on that. I want to bring back a couple of those questions. We were looking at this particular passage on that first Sunday, and this was a couple of the questions. One of the questions we thought through was, "Do you think Jesus was literally telling this man to sell all he had and give it to the poor?" We established this was a command from Jesus. The follow up question was this: "Do you think Jesus would say the same thing today to you if you were to see Him?"

Do you think He would say the same thing to you if you were to see Him? If the first thoughts coming to your mind are the reasons why He would not say that to you, be cautious. And the follow up question was, "If He did say this to you, how would you respond?" And the reality is it would be very easy to say, "I'd be willing." And we all know there's a huge difference between I'm willing to do something and doing something. And so here's what I want to encourage you to do. Again, we're not universalizing this passage. It's not necessarily a universal command for every follower of Christ.

And so here's what I want to invite you to do. I want to invite every follower of Christ to go to Christ and to say, "What do you want me to give away? What do you want me to sell? And there is nothing that's not on the table. There is a blank check on the table. From my checking to my savings account, to my house, to my car, to my clothes, to my spending this way or that way, to my TV, to my entire lifestyle. What do you want me to give away? What do you want me to sell?" Ask Him that and be very careful not to ask Him that and begin to think through your opinions. Ask Him that and wait for Him to speak.

And that may not happen immediately. It may not happen the first day. But ask Him and what you'll probably find yourself doing; I say this from personal experience. You'll probably find yourself immediately grabbing onto this and grabbing onto this and trying to move things off the table gradually. "Okay, I can see this. Yeah, okay this makes sense. No, let's move that off the table." Be very careful. This is internal transformation. Only Christ can do this in us.

But what happens when a faith family full of 4,000 people goes to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, who cares about the lost and the poor more than we can even begin to fathom and says "In this community, what do you want me to give and what do you want me to sell?" I'll tell you what happens when we say that, I'm convinced the resources of heaven are opened up and poured out on the people to make the glory of Christ known in this community and among the nations in ways we never could've fathomed before. God may it be so. Sound risky? Wondering if you want to stay on this train at this point? This is risky stuff. But don't miss it. Before you jump off the train, follow here with me.

A Radical Reward...
Jesus does not want to strip us of our pleasure; He wants to satisfy us with His treasure.

It is radical risk, but radical reward. This is the next picture. Don't miss this. Jesus does not want to strip us of our pleasure. Instead, He wants to satisfy us with His treasure. Just follow with me here. Jesus does not want to strip us of our pleasure. Instead, He wants to satisfy us with His treasure. This is Mark chapter 10. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have," what? "Treasure in heaven" (Mark 10:21). Jesus is not saying, "Guys, stop caring about treasures. Stop seeking pleasure." He's not saying that to us. Instead, He's saying, "Seek true treasure. Seek full pleasure." If you're not experiencing it now, there's full treasure here. You'll have treasure in heaven that lasts for all of eternity. This is radical reward here.

Go with me over to the left Matthew chapter 13. You have to see this, Matthew 13:44. You have to underline this verse in your Bible. Matthew chapter 13:44. Again, this is that tinge of self-serving motivation here, isn't it? Jesus is saying "Give everything you have to the poor and as a result, you're going to be better off." Is that good? It not only helps the poor, it helps you. Treasure in heaven. Materialism is not just sinful; it's dumb.

It's not smart. It's smart to sell everything you have and give it to the poor. That's smart. You don't find that philosophy, ideology in contemporary culture. But you find it all over Scripture. You do that because you got treasure over here. Listen to Matthew chapter 13 verse 44. Jesus said, "*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his,*" what? "Joy." Circle that. "*In his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*" Sell everything you have with joy. How do you do that? How do you put these words into practice with joy?

Here's how. "Imagine," Jesus says, "You're walking in the middle of the field one day and you trip over this massive treasure. And you look around and nobody else sees it. And you say 'I think I'm going to cover this up.' And you go walking smoothly back into town. And you begin a process by which you begin to sell your house and your car, empty all of your investment accounts and people are coming up to you saying you're crazy. 'Don't you know it's not a good economic time to do that?' You look at them and you say 'I got a hunch. I'm going to take the risk on this one.' So you keep selling everything and you're giving it to the poor, selling it all. Religious people coming up to you 'Do you know what you're doing? Do you think this is wise?' 'I'm going to take a risk on this one.' 'Well we think you're crazy just so you know.' 'Okay. So noted.'"

"And everybody else thinks you're nuts. And you take yourself and you walk back over to the owner of this field and you say 'This plot of land out here, I think I'd like to buy it.' And he says 'You want to pay for that land? You know it's not worth anything,'" which is exactly what the world would say about biblical treasure. It's exactly what our culture would say about biblical treasure and advising us about finance. And you say, "I got a hunch. I just would like this land." Inside you're thinking "all I want is that little box, but I'll take the land and make it a little less obvious." So he says "Okay" and you take the land and you walk out and you take this treasure that is completely yours that is worth more than you ever could've had with all of that put together. Is that a smart move?" Absolutely that's a smart move because you've known the value of this treasure."

The picture here is if we are a people in this community who are running around after the same stuff this world's running around after and holding on just as tightly to our stuff as the world around us is holding onto it, it's a sure sign we have no clue about the treasure that's over here. Because if we did, we'd throw it down. You know what we'd do? We'd throw it down with joy, with joy. He went and sold everything he had with joy. Why? Because he knew he had a treasure and brothers and sisters, we have a treasure. In Christ we have a treasure. We don't have to run around and hold onto things like the rest of the world does. We don't have to because we've got treasure over here. The Father gives it to us and it's worth selling everything. We found something worth losing everything for, everything for.

Which do we want?

He's calling us not to be miserable over here. He's calling us to let go of our trinkets because there's treasure here. So the question is, which one do we want? Do we want short-term treasures that we can't keep—houses, cars, gadgets, toys, memorabilia, decorations, clothes, trinkets, stuff? Stuff we get more, more and more. Do we want short-term treasures we can't keep or long-term treasures we cannot lose? Which one do we want? Jim Elliot, right before he was martyred in Ecuador, soon before his death, wrote that people said he was nuts and people will say you're nuts. People will say you're crazy. They did in Jim Elliot's life, and he says, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." That's smart to do that.

Do we want short-term treasures we can't keep or long-term treasures we can't lose? Which one do we want? Unpredictable investments? Don't we know this? Is this part of the design for the last few weeks? I want to be careful here. I'm not saying I've got some prophetic word, just a part of some end times issue. The picture is these last few weeks are a clear reminder to us that every investment in things of this world is temporary and unpredictable. And if we miss that, we will miss part of the design of the last few weeks in our lives. And not just every investment in the stock market, every investment in things of this world, ultimately unpredictable and temporary. All of it temporary. So do we want unpredictable investments or inexhaustible savings? Turn to the left in Matthew 6:19. Every investment in heavenly treasure last forever. Inexhaustible savings, inexhaustible! This is better than any IRA account there is. Inexhaustible savings.

This story about first century when Rome was persecuting the church. Roman soldiers broke into a house church picture and said, "Where's all your treasure?" to confiscate it. They looked at them with empty hands and they pointed in the corner to a small group of orphans and widows eating a meal that had been provided for them. And they said, they are our treasure. Now that's how to do a church. That's how to live a Christ life. That's treasure. It doesn't add up on the bottom line in the bank account, but it's treasure in heaven and it's worth giving to. This is what Jesus said. "*Do not store for yourselves,*" verse 19, "*treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal*" (Matt. 6:19-20).

The only full security, the only internal security is heavenly treasure, to give your life to that. What Jesus is saying here—don't miss this—what He's saying is "there are two ways to live. There's a way to live that pours your treasure into this earth and there's a way to live that pours your treasure into heaven." Unless we think that we can live with part of our treasure poured into earth and part of our treasure poured into heaven, Jesus says, "*You cannot serve two masters*" in this passage. "*Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money*" (Matt. 6:24).

Where is our heart?

Are you going to pour your life, your resources, your possessions into earthly treasures or heavenly treasures? Where are you going to invest? Where are we going to invest? Where are you investing now? Jesus says this is how you can tell which way you're living. He says you can tell because "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." So how hard will it be to look at a budget or a bank account or spending record and ask the question "Where is my treasure?" And to see the amount that is spent on earthly stuff but to realize that this is a mirror of your heart.

That's what Jesus is saying here. Our use of money is a sure barometer of our present spiritual condition. This is the simple, sobering truth. Our hearts do not lie based on the treasure that we have. It's a clear picture of our present spiritual condition. We'll see where our hearts are when we look at how much we are spending on houses and cars and clothes and entertainment, stuff, food, restaurants. We'll see. We'll see where our hearts are. And it's not just here. Our use of money is a sure indicator of our future eternal destination, of our future eternal destination.

Listen to what G. Campbell Morgan says to us. He says these words, which I'm convinced are to us. He said, "You are not the child of today. You are the child of tomorrow. You are of the eternities. You're the offspring of Deity. You belong to the Infinite. If you make your fortune on the earth, poor, sorry, silly soul, you have made a fortune and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it." Make your fortune. Make your fortune is what Jesus was saying. "Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning." Again, we're not saying put your treasure in heaven in order to earn salvation. Instead we're saying that where our treasure is, is a reflection of our hearts. We need to look inward when we look at how our treasure is showing our hearts are playing on outward.

A Radical Loss...

Love of possessions will inevitably and ultimately rob us of the joy for which we have been created.

We'll close with this, a radical loss. A radical loss, the reality of Mark chapter 10 is this. Love of possessions will inevitably and ultimately rob us of the joy for which we have been created. Love of possessions will rob us of the joy for which we have been created as soon as Jesus said, "Go sell all you have. Give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven." The Bible says this man turned and walked away sad because he had great wealth. This is the only time in the Book of Mark where someone is seen refusing Jesus' offer to discipleship.

Why did he turn away? I think three primary reasons. Number one his eyes were blind. This whole picture in Matthew 6, back at what we were looking at. The eyes are the lamp of the body. If your eye's good, your body will be full of light. Your eye's bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. That's in the context of the discussion about money. The picture is money, foreign gods, blind us, infiltrate the whole body and bring darkness, and blind us to the depth of our sin and blind us, and money blinds us. Blinds us to the depth of our sin and to the depth of the need of the poor. Both of these things this man was blind to. He was blind to his sinfulness and blind to the need of the poor.

This is what we talked about our first week. Blind spots. When I look back in history and I see preachers of the gospel who were preaching the gospel as pastors of churches, but they had slaves in their houses. What were they thinking? How could you preach the gospel and pastor a church with slaves in your house? It makes no sense. It was a blind spot that needed to be corrected.

And I wonder if 100 or 200 years from now, Christians will look back at us, if Jesus hasn't come back, and they will say, "They seemed to be following the gospel, but how could they live in such nice houses and have such nice cars that they were driving around and dressed in such nice clothes and lived such nice luxurious lives while there were so many dying of starvation and preventable diseases? There were so many dying in the poor, impoverished places of the world without the gospel, millions had not even heard. How could they do that? It makes no sense." Blind spots. His eyes were blind.

His face was sad. He came to Jesus eager and he walks away downcast. This is one of the most depressing pictures in the Bible. You've got a guy walking away sad and he's walking away from the only place that can give him joy. This is the picture, but he's convinced this is where joy is and he's running blindly after it and his face is sad because he's missing out. And his hands were full. He walked away because he had great wealth. He walked away from heavenly treasure because his hands were so full of earthly things.

Note: This message is continued in the following sermon, "The Gospel and Radical Abandonment – Part 2.

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