

BETTER
What Is This?
Mark 10:17-27

I still remember a popular commercial from back in the day when I was a teenager. In this commercial, several rugged looking dudes in jeans and flannel shirts were standing around a campfire somewhere out in the great outdoors drinking a cold one together. One of these men looks at his buddies, holds up his beer and says, "It doesn't get any better than this!" Now, drinking a beer in the woods with a bunch of rednecks may not be your idea of paradise, but memories of this commercial got me to thinking: **What is This for most people? Seriously, what scenario in life would prompt you to say, "It doesn't get any BETTER than this!"?** Would it include a palm tree and white sands on a quiet beach? Some may claim that their "this" is an endless bank account that makes room for fine cars and beautiful homes. Maybe your "This" is simply a peaceful life with the people you love the most. Others might say that their "This" is a moment of triumph on a sports field or in a corporate office. **All of us spend our entire lives PURSUING some kind of "THIS" in some way. If you have chosen to follow Christ, how would you say that your idea of "This" has changed since that day? I wonder; do you ever think about how your pursuit of "This" affects both your EVERYDAY life AND your ETERNAL life?**

Please allow me to introduce you to a man who had finally achieved the good life. When it came to his LIFE ON EARTH, he might have said, "It doesn't get any better than this!" I believe that all of us can learn something from his tragic story.

Mark 10:17-22 NLT

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young." 21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

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This is the true story about a man who genuinely wanted to know what he could do to get eternal life. Now, he was a successful man. Think about it: He was young and he was rich. In Luke's account of the story, he points out that this man was also a ruler; maybe even a religious ruler! This guy had it all. **But he still knew that something was missing in his life!** (Do YOU feel this way?) So, he went to Jesus to

find out what he needed to do. That was right on! But Jesus was MORE than this man realized, and there is more to eternal life than just a few religious deeds. This is why Jesus said, "Only God is good!" (His understanding of Jesus –He only called him Teacher the 2nd time! – and his concept of good wasn't good enough!) Then Jesus REALLY messed him up! He asked him to GIVE UP the one thing that ruled his life: His money (he was rich!). This revealed to the man his REAL god, and showed him that he was not nearly as GOOD as he thought he was! Jesus will mess you up as well! How would you respond to this question?

Do you think you have anything that is BETTER than what Christ offers?

This man walked away sad because he truly believed AT THAT MOMENT that what he had was better than eternal life with Christ. He was not willing to sacrifice his true god for the Lord. [I don't wonder what he thinks now.] **So, what are you afraid that you are going to have to give up if you come to Christ?** Is it your money, or your sex life, or your party friends, or your high-powered job? I have talked to so many people over the years that think that God is all about STEALING their fun and their pleasures. God is the great Killjoy! I can see why you might think this, but **please let me help you understand something about God. First, God loves us enough to warn us about the things that are killing us! Second, he will not stand for any rivals when it comes to his relationship with his people.** He wants us to love him more than anyone or anything on this earth. The depth of his love for us deserves this, and wisdom demands this! Our wealth is bankrupting us! The first commandment that he ever gave us was just that: **"Love the Lord your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind, and strength!"** That is a relationship without equal. This is why Jesus made statements like this: **Luke 12:21 NLT**

21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

This man's wealth was standing directly between him and God. What is standing between YOU and God? Jesus also made this astonishing statement:

Luke 14:25-27 NLT

**25 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them,
26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison--your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.**

So – YES – Jesus does call us to forsake all to follow him! Every true believer knows that! He calls us to love him more than any other person, and more than even our own life! **(When you see him for who he is; you will do this!)** This was the TENSION in this young man's story. He loved his own life most and trusted in his

own riches first for his real satisfaction and hope; he just tried to add eternal life on as another accomplishment. I know many professing Christians that have done the same thing! **But Jesus wanted him to know that eternal life is not a religious goal that you achieve; it is a RELATIONSHIP that you experience.** John MacArthur says this about the nature of eternal life:

“Eternal life is not just a long time of living, eternal life is a quality of being alive to God, a quality of possessing the life of God, of being aware of the environment of the divine.”

This man was asking Jesus about how he could get eternal life because he KNEW that he did not have the life of God in him, even though he was quite religious! That is the case with many of you here today. **Jesus had to point out to this man that the wealth that he was worshiping was completely DESTROYING his ABILITY to RECEIVE what the Son of God alone could give him.** You cannot have TWO GODS! You need to know the same thing! In his case, he was going to have to stop trusting in his WEALTH and stop denying his own SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. These two things were standing in his way of experiencing something FAR BETTER! **It was Jesus’s LOVE for the man that caused him to speak these hard words to him up front!** Now, before you write Jesus off as too harsh, **I want to remind you of a truth that you already know but seldom want to think about when it comes to your stuff.** Let me put it to you in the form of another question:

Do you think your STUFF will EVER be enough?

What will happen when you finally achieve your dreams? Do you think that it will be enough to satisfy you for the rest of your life? [Job, Trophy, Boat, Girlfriend, New Spouse, New House] **The tragic thing about our broken human nature is that, once we get THIS, it is NEVER enough! After we get “This,” then we always want “That!”** **Something is messed up inside of us.** We get what we want, and then we start to crave for something even BETTER. We are caught in the trap that Solomon wrote about in **Ecclesiastes 1:8 NLT**

8 Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

This simple little verse gives a PARTIAL EXPLANATION of why so many of us betray relationships that are precious to us, become enslaved to addictions that destroy us, or worship treasures that bankrupt us. We live on the treadmill of a “This” that is less than better. **[Give an example of football heroes who win the Super Bowl]** When Jesus talked with the Woman at the Well in John 4, he said that he could give her “living water!” Their conversation afterwards is compelling: **John 4:12-15 NLT**

12 And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?" 13 Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon

become thirsty again. 14 But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." 15 "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

This woman had 5 HUSBANDS, and she was living with a 6th man when Jesus met her. Yet, she was dying of relational thirst! I firmly believe that life can be much better than that exhausting cycle of dissatisfaction. **We do not have to live our lives at the mercy of an ever changing "This."** That is where Jesus comes in. He is the ever better One that can rescue us from this deadly treadmill. He offers living water! But there is ONLY ONE WAY to actually find this out. That is the point of this message. It is a simple truth that outsiders must EXPERIENCE and believers must PRACTICE if they want to experience the better life that Christ has promised.

The only way to find out that Jesus is better is by stepping out in FAITH.

Part of the reason why some of you will not follow Christ is because you are getting just enough satisfaction from your current life that you do not feel like you have to let go. **Salvation will never come to you UNTIL your satisfaction with things is EXCEEDED by your dissatisfaction with not knowing Christ! Enjoying what you have requires no faith!** Letting go of what you enjoy is a big risk when you actually step out in faith on the hope that Jesus is going to be worth the trade. But the only way to FIND OUT is to STEP OUT. Let me also remind the Christians that are listening to me that this is also the only way that you will CONTINUE to discover that Christ is better in every way. How are YOU stepping out in faith in your daily life as a Christian right now? This is how you grow. Beware!

But there is another reason why some of you will not follow Christ no matter how dissatisfied you become with "This." You will just keep on chasing some new "This" because **you not only do not see Christ as he truly is; you do not really see your SELF as you truly are. You think you are doing ok. You do not see your SIN.** When you hear the commandments of God, your response is just like this guy: **"I have kept all of these commands since I was young!"** You fail to see where you have fallen short of God's commands. You may not have committed adultery outwardly, but you are filled with lust. You may not have killed a person physically, but you have hated many people in your heart! You may look like a good neighbor, but you have failed to love your neighbor enough to serve him the way you serve yourself! (If you loved yourself the way you have actually "loved" your neighbor, you would have died long ago!) **Worst of all, your love for God is almost non-existent!** You do not really see that you are a sinner that has deeply offended a loving, holy God. This is why Jesus always confronts the idols of our heart. **This man's possessions were worth far more to him than eternal life with Christ because his heart was dark and deceitful.** He knew the greatest commandment, but his only response was to walk away sad when he saw his real priorities. He didn't repent because he didn't see any reason to repent!

Now, I want to make something very clear. Jesus is not here teaching us that we have to give up our wealth in order to be saved. He is not telling us that we can make certain sacrifices that will then result in our salvation. No! In fact, what Jesus is saying is that salvation is IMPOSSIBLE without the inner change that can only come by GRACE through FAITH. When God's Holy Spirit speaks to us, he shows us the ugliness of our own sin AND the beauty of Christ. When you see and accept these things as they truly are, then you will be enabled by faith to humbly receive him and joyfully obey him in any request that he makes of you. But if we refuse to see our own sin, then we will not see the reason why Christ is BETTER than anything else in this world. [We don't want a Healer when we don't know we are sick. We don't want a Savior when we don't know that we are in eminent danger. We don't want a Redeemer when we don't know we are slaves to sin!] This man WAS NOT WILLING to give up his possessions for Christ because he simply could not see that Jesus is the Perfect and Only Hope for his eternal life AND his present life. This is why Jesus had the following conversation with his disciples after the man walked away. **Mark 10:23-27 NLT**

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" 24 This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. 25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" 26 The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked. 27 Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

Your salvation is impossible apart from the power of God. This is why Christ died. If you feel the inadequacy of stuff to satisfy your soul, then you are headed in the right direction. But you also need to be BROKEN by your own sin and the undeserved love of Christ. **Salvation is a gift that only comes when we see Christ as the HIGHEST TREASURE of life!** It cannot, It WILL NOT, be any less. And it cannot get any better!

Now, this is not just a message about a one-time experience of salvation. Too often, people believe that salvation is something that happens at one point in their life in order to simply guarantee their entrance into heaven. But it is so much more! Jesus said, "Come, follow me!" This is the essence of true Christianity. It is a living relationship that is built on the FAITH that FOLLOWS Christ as Lord. That is what CONTINUES to make him precious and indispensable to you. Next week, we are going to look at how the FAILURE to continue walking by faith causes some Christ-followers to stray or grow weary in their Christian life. Allow me to finish this message with a question for all of us:

What are you searching for that Christ has already promised to us?

Let's pray.