

What Does God Require of Us?

Key Text: Luke 18:18-23 | Luke 19:1-10 | Micah 6:6-8 | Matthew 23:23 | Romans 14:19-21

Introduction

If we call ourselves Christians, we likely have some understanding of what God has done for us. But does He require anything of us?

Have we ever considered that? It's a question that's been asked for thousands of years and answered in many "*interesting*" ways. But what does the Bible have to say about it?

1) God's favor cannot be bought

Luke 18:18-23

Consider this man: He's rich, young and powerful. From a Biblical, heavenly, eternal perspective, that's a dangerous combination.

When we look at Jesus' ministry, the people who receive Him the most willingly and have their lives changed are typically (with a few exceptions) poor, lowly, helpless outcasts. Their state in this world has brought them to the conclusion that God is the only one who can help - they can't get themselves out of the mess they're in.

3 Dangers:

1. The man is **rich**: He's self-sufficient.
2. He's **young**: Likely not as wise as he hopefully one day will be.
3. He's a **ruler**: Money and power are a dangerous combination unless we submit them to God's authority.

"*Good teacher...*" - Jesus basically clarifies to him, "If you're calling me good, you better be calling me God."

Early commentators on this passage (first 300 years of the church) all seem to have a general consensus that this is understood to come from the man with general insincerity, and perhaps a hint of sarcasm.

You can almost hear Jesus reply to the man with a similar tone: "You know the rules - don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, etc..."

The man is actually deluded enough to think he has never broken a commandment in his life. Another warning sign.

But oh yeah, there is one more thing God requires of you: Everything. Your very self.

Here's where the man realizes that God cannot be bought. It's not about what he can do for God, but what God wants to do for him. **So at the same time, God doesn't need anything from us, yet requires everything.**

Let's compare this man's motivations with another seeker shortly after this: Zacchaeus.

2) God sees our hearts and knows our motivations

Luke 19:1-10

I believe the stories of the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus appear so closely together in Luke for good reason. They compare and contrast the motivations of the two inquirers of Christ.

They're both rich and powerful. But one approaches Jesus with the assumption that "everybody has their price. What do I gotta do to get what I want from God?" While Zacchaeus simply "...wanted to see who Jesus was".

Zacchaeus' heart was in the right place. He sought relationship with God rather than what God could do for him.

Matthew 6:33 - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God , and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

When we ask the question "What does God require of me?" with the wrong motivations, we get different answers.

Consider: Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell *everything he had*. But when Zacchaeus says he's giving *half* his possessions to the poor (and paying back 4x anyone he's cheated) Jesus says, "Today, salvation has come to this house." We can imagine that if Jesus had told Zacchaeus to sell *everything*, he would have done it.

Jesus sees Zacchaeus' heart, understands his motivations, and knows that for him, earthly possessions are not going to come between him and Jesus.

Keith Green's song from the late '70s: "To Obey is Better than Sacrifice" - "*I don't need your money, I want your life.*"

3) God requires us to be like Jesus

Micah 6:6-8

Verse 8 gives us a 3-step answer:

1. Act justly
2. Love mercy
3. Walk humbly with your God

Simple, yes. But definitely not easy. The Gospel is simple because it's uncomplicated, but following after Christ is a difficult and lifelong journey. (Remember the rich young ruler.) The way is narrow (**Matthew 7:13-14**)

How can one be both perfectly just and perfectly merciful?

- Justice is where the guilty get what they deserve.
- Mercy is where the guilty don't get what they deserve.

Scripture is filled with these divine, holy paradoxes:

- Be a servant if you want to be a leader.
- Die if you want to live.
- Fear God, and yet do not be afraid.

In last week's sermon, Pastor Steve shared from **Matthew 23:23**. Interesting how similar it is to **Micah 6:8** - *"But you have neglected the weightier matters of the law: Justice and mercy and faithfulness."*

The cross is where we see justice and mercy most perfectly displayed in harmony and at once. The price for sin and death is paid, and at the same time, mercy is shown to the guilty.

The one there who's actually innocent is the one paying the price for our sin. The only one with the power to stop it allows it to happen to Him for the sake of these guilty people that He loves so much.

That's our example. God requires us to lay down our lives for the sake of others. Now, we may never be called to actual martyrdom, but we can start small. (**Romans 14:19-21**)

As Americans, we understand that we "have been endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights." I believe that's absolutely true, and I thank God for the men and women who laid down their lives to protect things like we're doing right now: Freedom of religion, speech, assembly, etc.

No one can take Our God-given rights from us, but hasn't our creator asked us to follow His example and lay them down? This is a heavenly calling, and it doesn't come naturally to us. Only spending time with Jesus will help us start to look more like Him.

Only God can truly say, "**I AM.**" We are all in a state of becoming. And with every decision we make we're either becoming more like Him, or less like Him.

Specifically - what is God requiring of you? What has He put on your heart this morning as an area you need to let Him work on? Your money? Your time? Laying down your wants for the needs of others?