

# **The Great Gain of Sacrifice**

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**Mark 10:17-31**

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David Livingstone was born in 1813 and gave his life to missions in Africa. Maybe some of you have heard of him or read a biography of him. On December 4th, 1857, he addressed the students at Cambridge University with a message on the benefits of leaving England behind. And he said these words, "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. It is emphatically no sacrifice." In fact, he said these words, he says, "I've never made a sacrifice." That's an astounding statement. Hudson Taylor said something very similar. He was a missionary to China. And he said the same words, "I never made a sacrifice."

Now, for some of you who may be thinking, well, that's kind of a strange thing to say, isn't it? Because we're doing this Cross-Taking Life series and we know that the Bible tells us that we take up our cross and follow Him and that there are sacrifices to be made. So how can that be so that they really actually did make several sacrifices to go to China, to go to Africa, as many others have, and yet they can say these words? It's a bit of an oxymoron for them to do that. How is this possible?

Well, if you have listened to any part of this series, or if you haven't, I'm going to catch you up to speed. Emphatically, God's Word calls us to take up our cross to follow Him. It's essential for a Christian. There's no such thing as a disciple of Christ who doesn't take up their cross and follow Jesus. That was message one. Message two was, in fact, it's a daily exercise. We daily take up our cross and follow Him. We don't just do it one time, we do it every day and we don't drop off the cross until we die.

The third message spoke of the dangers of being an almost Christian, one who wants to follow Jesus but on their own terms and not be fully committed to him. The fourth message reminds us to count the cost. Cost is involved. So how is it that someone can give up so much and say the opposite? I've never made a sacrifice. Jesus calls us to take our cross daily to deny family, to deny possessions, deny even self. But the end goal, and this may be a shocker, is not sacrifice. Sacrifice is just part of it. Actually, we sacrifice for what is gained.

That's what we're going to focus on today. These four messages prior to this establish the essential nature of the sacrifices we make as believers, as we take up our cross to follow Jesus. However, we're going to focus on what those sacrifices are for, for what is gained in this process. The great gain of sacrifice comes into focus here in this interchange that Jesus has with what we call a man... We call him the rich young ruler based on what scripture and how scripture describes him. And in this interchange, we get an understanding of the gain of following Christ. It's a lesson in sacrifice, and yet it's also a lesson in blessing.

Our main point in this passage today is this, that Jesus calls us to nothing less than sacrificing everything for Him. And yet, those sacrifices cause a multiplication of blessings. Let that sit in for a second. Yes, there is sacrifice, but it's for blessing. There is gain, much like the Olympic athlete. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 9. We run the race just like runners run in the Olympics or in their games that they had in those days, where they ran, they made these sacrifices to be an athlete to get what? A temporary prize.

Olympic athletes are training today, as we speak, for the Olympics that we're not even thinking about yet. They don't just show up the day before and go, I think I'm going to run a race today, hoping to get a medal. Now, they're hoping to get a medal, but the truth is we don't even really remember a lot of them who do. Paul says that. He says, they run to get a prize that's temporary, that fades. We run the race. We make these sacrifices for an eternal crown that never perishes, and that's ultimately the point of this. That's why the goal isn't sacrifice. It's what that sacrifice brings.

So, now we find ourselves in Mark 10, and the part that we're going to start at is in verse 17. Jesus is on his journey. It says He sets out on a journey, and that journey is to the cross, and yet, just before this, I want to set up exactly what's taking place into context here. There's a positive interchange between Jesus and some children. Some parents came. Some of you know this story. They came, they brought these children to Jesus, and the disciples were trying to shoo them away, don't bother Him with children, and Jesus rebuked them and said, "No. Don't hinder the children to come to me." In fact, He says this, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

There's a focus on Mark on what it takes to enter the kingdom of God. Here, Jesus is setting this up, Mark writing this, and what happens next is a contrast. That interaction with the children is a contrast to Jesus' interaction with this rich young ruler. So as it is our tradition here, because we respect God's Word, as it truly is God's Word, we stand when we read it. So, would you do me the honor, do Him the honor, do God the honor of standing for His Word as I read a portion of this passage, we're going to look at today? This is the situation that sets up a sermon that Jesus gives after it.

Let me read this situation to you, starts in verse 17, and it says this, "And as He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" And he said to Him, 'Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.' And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing. Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me.' Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

You may be seated. That is God's Word, and we're going to unpack this today. Here's the situation. Mark identifies this man as a man. This man has come to Him. In Matthew, in the same

story, Matthew refers to him as young, and Luke in this story refers to him as a ruler. So we affectionately refer to this guy as the rich young ruler, and we know that he's rich because of verse 22, that what Jesus says to him hits him right where he lives, cuts to the bone, and he walks away because he had a lot of possessions. We're going to take a look at what that means today.

This guy came. He ran up, in this account of this, says that he ran up and knelt before Jesus. That was a shameful thing to do in that culture, and yet, why did he do that? Well, there's an eagerness maybe in his running up to Him. The kneeling part, maybe he's trying to show respect. We don't really know. Not only that, but he starts the conversation in a very un-normal way for their... Is that a word? Un-normal? I just made it up. Maybe. I don't know, a not normal way. He referenced to Him and called Him good teacher.

Now, Jesus, whether that guy was doing it for flattery or some type of respect, Jesus jumped at that. We see Jesus takes over this conversation and steers the direction. Whatever this guy's intentions were, Jesus is going to test him, and He starts right off the bat. "We're not going to play with words here," basically, is what He says. "Why do you call me good? In fact, no one is good except God alone." Now, some have wrongfully interpreted that. See? Jesus is denying His deity. That's not what's taking place. Jesus affirms His deity in several places in the Gospel. The all of scripture affirms Christ's deity.

So then why did He say it in this way, almost like in the third person? Well, one possibility. It's His ongoing veiling of His deity. He kind of clouded His deity a little bit until it was time to reveal who He truly was. That's possible. But here's what's more likely and what I believe was taking place here. Jesus is elevating this rich young ruler's idea of what is good, and I think it's obvious by what unfolds here and what Jesus discovers. He reforms this rich young ruler's definition of what good is.

This conversation didn't quite start the way this rich young ruler had probably anticipated or hoped, but Jesus is steering it and He's trying to make a point in this young man's life. So then he gets to the question, or here's the question that he asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This idea of inheriting eternal life was a very Jewish notion. For them, they believed in inheriting the land. That's what was promised to Abraham in that first covenant, that the Jewish people would inherit the land. Well, now, it's gone beyond that to, "How do I inherit eternal life?"

Now, that's synonymous with several other passages here where Jesus talks about entering the kingdom of God in verses 23 and 25, what the disciples referenced in being saved in verse 26. They're all synonymous. Inheriting eternal life, being saved, entering in the kingdom of God is all in regard to salvation. This is a salvation story. Mark is focusing on this here in Mark 10. Now, why would he ask this? As a Jew, he would have no doubt of what to do, or supposedly, or hopefully. So why is he asking this question? Again, we don't really know. Is he looking for an affirmation? It's a good possibility. He wants to make sure. Maybe he's missing something. Maybe he's just looking for an attaboy, like, hey, you're on the right track. Keep going.

Jesus springs this on him now with that new idea of what good is, and then he goes into telling him and reminding him about the second table of the law. What is that? We have the Ten Commandments. The first table of the law has to do with the vertical aspect of the law. Those first four commandments in the Ten Commandments focus on that vertical part of it, "Have no other gods before me. Don't take the Lord's name in vain. Remember the Sabbath." Those are all referring to that. The other six refer to the horizontal relationship that we have with one another.

So, Jesus follows that pattern, the Hebrew order. He moves the honoring of parents to the end, and He does replace coveting, "Thou shall not covet, do not covet," with "Do not defraud." Now, defrauding would've been an outward sign of the inward coveting that someone might have. He's giving this guy some tangible things to think about. Jesus tests him and uncovers this rich young ruler's perspective, and what does He reveal? He reveals that this young man was blinded by a self-righteousness.

I like how John MacArthur says it here in reference to this. He says, "Jesus preached the law to him but not the gospel." Not yet. He gets there. "Sinners are not ready for the good news of the gospel until they accept the bad news that the law condemns them as guilty sinners." That's where you start. You start with understanding the need. The good news isn't good news until you understand the bad news. But here's a shocking answer. Look at the audacity of this young man in verse 20, and he said to Him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." That's an astounding comment, isn't it? Is he joking? Does he actually believe this? Does he say this with a straight face? Yes.

You see, the Pharisaical system that was the religious leaders took over Judaism, the Jewish belief system, the Old Testament. They saw the law, and rather than do what the law was meant to do, convict them of their sin and their need for a savior, they went, that's not enough. So, they added a lot of legalistic practices, but such that someone could follow their list, look themselves in the mirror, and go, I got it. What a delusional understanding of the law, and this young man looks at Jesus, straight-faced, yeah. I've done this since I was young. You've got to be kidding me. He wasn't.

Jesus' response though says that He looked at him. You'll see that phrase several times in this passage. Jesus looked at this young man. He looked at His disciples. It's much more than He just turned His head and opened His eyes. He's looking deep into the soul of His audience, and then says He loved him. We know in the original Greek that this was written that there are several words for love, and one of them is agape, and that's the one that was used here. He agape him, which is compassion. It is not a love based on merit or response, but on need.

He felt for this guy because this guy was delusional. He was wrong about his perfection, about his self-righteousness. In fact, He said, "You are lacking something." That Word there means being self-deficient. You see, he thought he was self-righteous, and Jesus says, "You're lacking. You are actually self-deficient." Then He tells him this, He says, "Go, sell all you have, give to the poor, follow me." And right smack dab in those four brief commands, He says, "And you

will have treasure in heaven." Those four commands indicate one overriding command, and that is give up one's total life for God.

The specifics, to him, were his possessions. This wasn't a mandate for everyone everywhere that follows Christ to give up all they have and become socialists and live in a commune. He was hitting this man exactly where he lacked, and it was his riches, and it says so. He was discouraged by this, and he left. Jesus' test revealed that this rich young ruler did not want true treasure after all. He was not willing to let go of all that he had to save his soul. Remember when Jesus said, "What good is it for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" This man here was willing to forfeit his soul because of what he had. He was willing to lose it.

So the question is, you haven't left yet, and that's good. Please don't leave, because it's actually going to get worse first and then it's going to get really good. Okay? I'm just warning you of that. Stay here. Don't leave. This rich young ruler left too soon. Is there something that you're not willing to give up? Maybe it's not money. Maybe you think, I don't have any money, so I'm fine to give that up. Sometimes we think that way, right?

When I came to faith in Christ, I gave up smoking cigarettes. Well, I never smoked them, so it was really easy to give that up. Yeah. I'm now following Jesus. We kind of play games like that, right. So, we're like, hey, I'm off the hook here in this story because Jesus is talking about money, and I don't have any. However, for us as Americans, we're pretty rich compared to the rest of the world, and we are absorbed in it so much, we don't even really realize.

But maybe it's not that. Maybe you're okay with that. Maybe it's an addiction that you have. Maybe it's entertainment. Maybe it's a sin that you just love. Maybe you've even renamed that sin so it doesn't feel so bad. The world does that all the time, right? Switch the labels. Maybe it's just simply apathy, Jesus is just not worth getting out of bed sometimes. This young man left, but Jesus wasn't done yet. He left before Jesus got to His sermon and got to the good news.

So, now we get in verses 23 and following, Jesus gives some commentary on what just happened, because the disciples are sitting like, what just happened This guy left. Jesus said some pretty intense things there. So, we are going to see five conclusions in this sermon, in this commentary of Jesus regarding riches, blessings, and salvation. And the first one comes from what's taken place here, and that's this. **#1) *Self-righteousness Leaves You Bankrupt***, bankrupt in your soul. This man thought he was rich. He was bankrupt. He bought into this system of self-righteousness.

And maybe we don't buy into the legalism of the Pharisees. Maybe we've developed our own code of doing good so that we outbalance the bad, so that we feel better about ourselves. You talk to a lot of people. When you would, I'm good enough. I'm better than I'm bad. That doesn't count. Jesus was getting at a principle that's talked about later in the New Testament in James 2:10, where the apostle James there says, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." See, apart from Christ, even the good works that you do are tainted by sin.

It's not for His glory. It's not for His goodness. It's not from the right motive. It's maybe trying to earn something, earn respect, look good, all those things. Even though it's a good work, it's done the wrong way. Here's the clue in this. Jesus gave the answer first. That little interchange about what's good, He said it there, "No one is good except God alone." Went right over the rich young ruler's head because then he went on to talk about how good he was, I've obeyed the law. You weren't listening. Only God is good. He missed it.

Self-righteousness is selective. It helps us think in our mind how to cover our shame, our cherished sins. It's like Adam's fig leaf outfit that he made after his shame in the garden. That's the worst outfit ever made, right? I mean, by the afternoon, that's got to be...not going to last, right? We laugh at that, and rightfully so because that's how preposterous our way of trying to cover up our sin is. What things do you do that falsely make you think that you are good enough for God? What are the fig leaves that you dress yourself with? What code is that? We're good at self-designing these things. Right?

The Greek word for sin in the New Testament is hamartia, and that means literally missing the mark. But we've designed a system where we shoot the arrow and then draw the bull's-eye around the arrow. God is the one who sets up the mark, and he says we've all fallen short, and here we are with our fig leaves. Jesus addresses this in the Pharisees in the Sermon on the Mount. It's a key aspect of that whole sermon, the greatest sermon ever preached. Matthew 5, 6, and 7. We see some places where he gets right into it. The law says, "You shall not commit adultery." And there's some there, oh, yeah. I've never done that, and then He raises the ante, "Have you ever lusted?" Oh, okay. Law says, "Thou shall not murder." Well, never done that. I'm doing pretty good. "Have you ever hated anyone?" Uh-oh. See, Jesus was digging into this because the answer wasn't do better, work harder, be good on your own, but rather look at the law and go, whoa, I fall short. I need help. In fact, I need a savior. We design our life around things that we like to call good so that we feel better, I recycle. I buy fair trade coffee. Okay.

Maybe you're a Disneyland dad. Your job owns you and you work hard and become a workaholic and, I'm going to make up for it for one week and take everybody to Hawaii, to Disneyland, to Italy, to some place. That's it. That covers it, right? Covers all the other 51 weeks. I'm a constitutional American. Good. I'm not divorced. Well, that's the low bar. God calls for more than just not being divorced, and in no way am I being insensitive to those of you who've gone through that painful thing. What I'm saying is that we get really hypocritical, and we get a little weird as we draw our bull's-eyes around our arrows. Maybe it's simply that you've plateaued in your growth. You came to faith in Christ, and man, that was a radical change in your life. You made some radical changes in those first few years. Man, you just grew by leaps and bounds, and you look back and go, man, I'm not the person that I once was. Hallelujah to that.

But you look back and go... You're still the same person you were 20 years ago. Maybe not the one 30 years ago, but the one 20 years ago, 15 years ago. Again, I'm not trying to add legalism to that, but there's a change that's supposed to take place and be never-ending as Christ continues to

conform us in the image of Christ, that God is conforming us to the image of Christ. J.C. Ryle, a famous Anglican bishop in the late 1800s, says about this passage, he said, "Let us learn one thing from this passage, the self-ignorance of man." The self-righteousness blinded this man to his greed, and it left him bankrupt. Let me ask you, has your self-righteousness left you bankrupt? Has it blinded you to your real need?

Well, it gets worse. Number two, we go for this, riches can hinder true treasure. This is the next conclusion. Self-righteousness leaves you bankrupt. Riches can hinder true treasure. Look at what Jesus says here in response to this. Jesus looked around, He was reading the room of His disciples, and gives them something they needed to hear, and He said to His disciples... They're probably wondering, this guy just left, that was sad. "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God?" The disciples were amazed at His words, but Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult 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 person to enter the kingdom of God." So the #2) there is ***Riches Can Hinder True Treasure***. Jesus' Word is clear. Wealth is a huge obstacle to salvation. Of course, why is that? Well, some of you, I think, have figured that out. It's a false sense of security. It makes you look around and go, I don't need anything. I got it all. I don't need a savior. I've done a pretty good job saving myself. I'm comfortable.

When I came here, before Arizona, I lived in Silicon Valley. It's the richest county in the country, or at least one of them. The tech industry just exploded. It's expensive to live there, and this may be surprising to you, but the Bay Area has now become the most unchurched place in the country. I wonder if there's any correlation between the riches. Yes. The answer is yes. Jesus just told us. It's not a coincidence that one of the wealthiest places in the country is the most unchurched, where less than 2% hear the Gospel in a church, in a county of two million.

Why is that? Because of this, and it says here that the disciples were amazed at this. Why were they amazed at this? Hasn't that been obvious? Yet for them, as Jews, there was a predominant viewpoint that thought, if you have riches, that's because you have a divine favor on you. God blesses us, has blessed many of you with incredible riches, all of us, really, if we want to get down to it. But they equated it like many of the false teachers of today, the health and wealth teachers, the prosperity gospel, that if you're really good and you can really trust and have faith in God, you can have whatever you want.

This was the Old Testament version of it, or the New Testament, early church version of that, like, wow, this rich guy doesn't know God and he turns away? This false sense of security had led him down the wrong path, and it's ultimately why this rich young ruler walked away. He didn't like the answer that Jesus gave him. It was truly an inconvenient truth. Paul warns of this to Timothy, the young pastor. He says, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Not money itself, but the love of it. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."

Jesus covers this in the Parable of the Four Soils. Right? In that parable, the seed goes out. That's the Word. It goes out, and there's four types of soil that it lands on. One's a hard soil. They reject it outright. The fourth one is the good one where it goes in, and it grows and it keeps growing. And the two in the middle, there's a little bit of growth. There's the rocky soil where it doesn't grow very much, persecution and difficulties, then they give up on the faith. And the third one is the thorny one, and in that, Jesus says, "The cares of the world are like thorns. The deceitfulness of riches are like thorns," and they choke out the Word. This young rich ruler was choked out. The Word was choked out for him because of this.

You see, wealth masks for us what is deficient in the soul. It's fig leaves. It's like self-righteousness masking the depth of our evil. It gets worse. Look at what Jesus says here in verse 25, "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." Now, let's take a look at what that really means. Okay? "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." You just repeated what you said. Yeah, because there are some who have wrongfully taught that, oh, yeah. What that really means is there was a gate in Jerusalem that was called the Eye of the Needle and it was really small, and so it was really hard to get a camel through there, so you had to strip down the camel and push him through. It wasn't impossible, it was just really difficult.

But here's a problem to that interpretation. There's no gate that exists that's called the Eye of the Needle in Jerusalem. What Jesus was using was a euphemism that was popular in that day, taking the biggest animal and the smallest entrance and the impossibility. That was a 'when pigs fly' comment from their day. It wasn't a, let's kind of reevaluate that. It's not impossible. It's just really difficult, because there are those who still want to say, I had something to do with my salvation, when here is Jesus saying, you can't. Riches hinder true treasure. It is impossible.

Again, if you're like, well, that's cool. I'm off the hook because riches aren't my problem. Notice how Jesus said that twice to them. He talks about wealth, how hard it is, how difficult it will be, how impossible it will be for those who have wealth into the kingdom of heaven. But then he says it a second time and he leaves out wealth. Why? Fill in the blank. What's your idol that's keeping you? There's something, because there's nobody in here that can get there on their own. It's like a camel going through the eye of a needle. It can't be done. It's impossible.

Okay. Take a deep breath, because one and two are leading to number three. Now we get the Gospel. We get the good news. Look at what He says here. Look at what Jesus says. Well, they first say, they get it here, "Then who can be saved?" See? It wasn't just hard. It was impossible. Hey, if the rich guys who are supposedly blessed by God can't make it, it's impossible for them, how in the world are we going to make it? Here's what Jesus says. He looked at them. There are those penetrating eyes again, "With man, it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." #3) *God Alone Saves*. No amen to that? Amen.

Thank you. This is the pinnacle of these five points. This is one of the most encouraging verses in all of scripture, because what we've seen so far is, oh, no, is there any hope, and there's Jesus saying, "Yes." What's impossible with you, what's impossible with him, what's impossible with



me, and all of us is possible only with God, who does the impossible. He saves, and the rich young ruler didn't stay long enough for the Gospel.

I was so sad in the first service last night. There were some on the front row who left before we got to this point. I don't know why they left. Maybe it was emergency or something like that. But in my fantastical imagination, it was because this was too hard. This was like the rich young ruler and they left. Please don't leave. Hear this now. God saves. This is the good news that he missed and didn't get to hear, but the truth was, he didn't care.

He left with the weight of the law and the denial of the truth. He'd rather have the whole world. He'd rather have his self-righteousness, and in it missed true treasure. That's what the Pharisees were all about. That's why they killed Jesus. He threatened their system because he was talking about grace alone. He was talking about the depth of their sin, I'm not a sinner. I've obeyed the law since I was young. No, you haven't. You need a savior, and that's who he is, and that's what He's come to do. How about you? You're stuck in that seat right now hoping this is over soon. You're holding on with white knuckles, I hope this guy shuts up soon. I'm going to just keep on hanging on. I'm going to pretend that nothing's wrong. I'm going to confess nothing.

The rich young ruler didn't stay long enough for the best part. Knowing means responding to this. Ignorance is not bliss. Maybe you're encouraged by this. I hope you are. I hope most of you are encouraged, like, yes, it's the Gospel and a reminder of the good news of Jesus Christ that saves me from sin and hell. Maybe you're convicted by it, because either you're a Christian who's wandered back into some things that's holding you back in your faith, or maybe you're not a Christian yet and you're feeling the weight of the law on you. Turn to Jesus in this moment, but please, whatever you do, don't be willfully ignorant of what's at stake.

Recognize your spiritual bankruptcy. Come with those open hands that are empty and say, I've done nothing. Only thing I've done is the sin that has earned me a place far away from God, a sin that needs to be saved, and Jesus is the one who saves. Why cling to the fake pearls of the world when you can have the pearl of great price that's offered? He missed it. You can have treasure in heaven. There's the gain. Yes, you'll give away these prized... But it's fake pearls for the real thing, for the best thing. Here's Christ offering what only He can give, and that is salvation. Don't leave here pretending. Don't hold on and white-knuckle it. Turn to Jesus. That's number three.

Now, things get flipped a bit here going into number four, what we learned in this. Here's Peter. Peter responds, good old Peter. Peter began to say to him, "See? We have left everything and followed you." Okay. That was my dramatic interpretation of what the scripture says here and how I imagine it. It probably wasn't quite like that, but I think you get the heartbeat, because here's what Jesus says to him, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."

Peter just got rebuked for saying what seemed to be the answer that the rich guy missed. But he missed it. He missed it. You see, #4) *sacrifices multiply blessings*. We did it, Jesus. I know, this poor guy. We've left everything to follow you. He's waiting for the attaboy. The rich young ruler was waiting for the attaboy. Peter is waiting for the attaboy. Neither one of them gets it. Here's the truth, and just as a side note, Peter actually hadn't left everything. He still possessed his boat. We see that from other places in the Gospels. He still possessed his home. They went there.

So the point of this isn't, again, get rid of everything you have and live in a commune. That's not the point, but don't let any of those things keep you from Jesus. Then on the flip side of that, don't think that there's not something to be gained in the sacrifices that you have made. Yes, there's a sacrifice, there's a loss, there's persecutions, and yet, sacrifice brings an amazing blessing. One commentator says it this way, "But to conceive of discipleship solely in terms of its costs and sacrifices is to conceive of it wrongly, as though in marrying a beautiful bride, a young man would think only of what he was giving up."

Blessings not only come in the future, that's the ultimate treasure, that's the eternal life that He says in verse 30, but now, and that's the reality, right? I'm not talking about the prosperity gospel, but there is prosperity. God has changed our life and given us new life. It's not about a Cadillac or a Mercedes or a big mansion, big home. But yes, Jesus gives us grace upon grace. If he were to only save us, we would be rich indeed, give us salvation, and yet, he doesn't stop there, does he?

You may sacrifice family. Look around, just this service. I don't think anybody has a family this big, but maybe some of you do. You don't have to come tell me later about it. But most of us don't have a family this big if we were to gather them all together, at least that we would know all of them. This is just one service. There's a bunch of folks over at the Ministry Center. There were a bunch of folks in the last four services. That's all family, and for some of you, that's the only family you have. Yet, it's a hundredfold what maybe you've given up with that parent who thinks you're crazy for following Jesus or that child that thinks you're crazy or maybe even a spouse. You have family. Yes, you've given that up, but look what Jesus has done. This is just on this campus. You've got family around the country and around the world and throughout history, family you've never met before. You don't even know. It's really a millionfold. Jesus is being modest; think about the blessings that you've received as a believer beyond just a ticket to heaven. It's immense.

James 1:17, half-brother of Jesus says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." I bet you can think of some good gifts that God has given you, even if your week was horrible. How about Romans 8:32? "He, God, who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him, with Jesus, graciously give us barely what we need, give us a little bit?" No. What does he say? "Give us all things." All things. That's good news. That's not everything you want. He's not a genie, but what he's giving you is beyond just what you barely need to get by. That's the blessing.

Yes, it's a sacrifice, but in such a way that one could say, I've not sacrificed anything. Look at what I've gained, and that leads to **#5) *In God's Kingdom, the Values are Reversed.*** Verse 31, some scholars have said this verse doesn't fit here. It's crazy. It's the summary statement of everything that's been going on here, "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first," because God has a different value system. His kingdom looks differently.

The rich young ruler wanted eternity, but not at the cost of his wealth. He would've been esteemed as top dog in that society, and they were. That's why they were amazed. This guy? Oh, he's so blessed of God with all his wealth, and he's obeyed the law since he was young. No. Yet, those little children who he tried to shoo away and disregard, who were not to be hindered in coming to Jesus, they had nothing. They came to Jesus with nothing and they left with everything. This rich young ruler came with everything and he left with nothing.

That's a different value system. What seems like loss and is truly a loss in this world transforms into something greater. I experienced this in a weird way. Many years ago, on the way to a mission's trip, we stopped by the World Expo. If you look it up, you'll realize how old I am when that happened, in Vancouver. I remember going to the McDonald's there with my US \$20 bill, and I paid for my lunch and I got \$23.75 in return. I'm like, "Wow, I'm making money while eating at McDonald's. This is great." Well, of course, the problem with that was that the US dollar was more valuable than the Canadian dollar at that time. And so, the exchange rate meant it looked like I made money, but I really didn't. It was the right change for the value of that.

That's the opposite of what takes place here. We toss in those fake pearls and we receive the treasure of heaven, the true treasure of heaven. Those who seem to have it all and reject Jesus will switch places with those who do not have anything in this life but have Jesus, and this is how Jesus' kingdom works. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be. Where's your heart? Where's your treasure? Taking our cross is how God helps us to understand His reverse value system. We take on the cross and the sacrifices we make, but it's worth it. It's what results in a statement like this, I've given nothing. I've sacrificed nothing. It's been worth it all.

Jim Elliot, who's another famous missionary, and his most famous quote is this one, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot modeled that. He went with four other missionaries to make contact with the Auca Indians in Central America, and in their first contact, the Auca Indians killed all five of them, left widows and orphans behind. Those widows and orphans kept the mission going, and that sacrifice turned into that whole tribe coming to faith in Jesus Christ. He lived that very principle, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

That's what Jesus is saying here, give up your treasure, rich young ruler, and you'll have the treasure of heaven, because you're holding on to that like it's everything. Let it go. The world and the flesh puppeteer by the devil offers a counterfeit everything. Our world is celebrating it in this month of Pride. It offers a counterfeit identity, a counterfeit joy, a counterfeit sexuality, counterfeit pleasure, counterfeit meaning, counterfeit value, and a counterfeit treasure. Jesus,

seen through His eyes, we see true treasure and what is offered by what only God can do, and that's the impossible. What is your value system?

So here, as we conclude this, in one instance, Jesus gives a message for the one who is holding on to something that's keeping them from fully following Him. In the other instance, Jesus has a message for the one who thinks that sacrifice is only about what is lost and not what is gained. One is not a Christian and is in jeopardy of trading their soul for the fading treasure of this world. The other is a Christian who is wrongfully thinking that following Christ is a misery of self-martyrdom and a treasureless pursuit. The answer for both: Give all for the sake of Christ, all the while receiving all that following Christ gives.

Is there hope? Maybe you're fully convicted. Take courage from how Jesus responded to this rich young ruler. He looked at him and He loved him. Keep that in mind today as you let this drive you to the cross and to the salvation that is free purchased by Christ himself. Self-righteousness leaves your soul bankrupt. Riches hinder true treasure. God alone saves. Sacrifices multiply blessings, and the values of this world are reversed in God's kingdom. This is good news. Paul understood this. In Philippians 1:21, he said the most succinct understanding to this, "For me, to live is Christ and whatever that brings, and I won't regret it, because if I die, it's gain. For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Listen to what he says in Philippians 3, starting in verse 7, and this is where we'll end, "Whatever gain I had, I counted a loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead." Great gain is found in sacrifice. Take up your cross knowing that there's a crown and that there's blessings every step of the way. Let's pray and prepare our hearts for a very fitting response to that, and that's remembering Christ in communion.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have given us Christ, that we may have every blessing that we need. And then when this life is over, we go and get to be with you forever. There's nothing on this planet, even if we were to gain the whole world, that would be worth losing that, would help us to live with that mindset, with a heavenly mindset, and help us as we approach the communion table today, that we would reset our treasures as we remember what Christ has done. We pray this in His name. Amen.