Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Impossibility of Salvation, Part 2
Scripture: Luke 18:18-27
Code: 42-233

If you will, open your Bible to the eighteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke as we continue in our second message, dealing with the passage where the encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler is described. Luke chapter 18 and actually it runs from verse 18 down through verse 30.

Just by way of a bit of a review from last Lord's day, in this passage we meet a young man. He is a young man by all human standards who is everything that a young man could be and should be. He is moral. He is religious. He is devout. He is a leader. He is prosperous. He is respected. He is influential. He has been elevated to a position in society of Israel reserved for those who are just the very, very best. He is the ruler of a synagogue and that would be an achievement of great note for a young man.

But there is a huge missing element in his life. By his own admission, he does not possess eternal life. That is, that quality of life which connects him to God. Yes he is religious, yes he is moral, yes he is by all human standards good and devout and has fulfilled all of the duties and responsibilities of his religion, all the ceremonies, rituals and rites, in every sense he is a leader morally and spiritually and socially, but he is empty of what he wants most and that is a relationship with God defined as possessing that life which belongs to God and lasts forever. It is that kind of life in Jewish thinking that brought peace and joy and rest and hope and confidence and security and assurance and heaven. He knew he didn't have it.

And he came to Jesus. Somehow in some way he had come to the conclusion that the way to finding that eternal life, Jesus must have known. No doubt he had heard the remarkable teaching of Jesus, perhaps had seen the remarkable ministry and miracles of Jesus, whatever the background, he comes and he asks the question that we would love to have someone ask us anytime and any place, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" I suppose most of us have lived our lives as Christians and never had anybody ask us that question. In that sense you would have to say that this is the hottest prospect for entrance into the Kingdom that appears on the pages of the New Testament. He is a can't-miss prospect for salvation and eternal life. He is the ideal seeker by today's evangelistic definition. Let's meet him in the story again, verse 18.

"And a certain ruler questioned Him saying, 'Good teacher, what shall 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 commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness,

honor your father and mother.' And he said, 'All these things I've kept from my youth.' And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, 'One thing you still lack, sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor and you shall have treasure in heaven and come follow Me.' When he had heard these things he became very sad for he was extremely rich. And Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God, for 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.' And those who heard it said, 'Then who can be saved?' But He said, 'The things impossible with men are possible with God.' And Peter said, 'Behold, we've left our own homes and followed You.' And He said to them, 'Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.'"

There was no necessary pre-evangelism in the case of this young man. The typical obstacles that hinder people coming to the Kingdom of God seem to have already been eliminated. That is to say, he believed in the God of the Bible, the true God of the Old Testament, he believed in the Scripture, he...he believed in heaven, he believed in judgment and he wanted to escape it. He believed in eternal life and he wanted to possess it. He is asking the right question about the right subject to the right person.

And the amazing part of the story is, as...as good a prospect as he appeared on the surface, he went away without what he came to find. And he went away without what he came to find when he came to the person who gave it to all who truly sought it. He never received eternal life this day, or for all we know any other day. And we might ask the question...did Jesus somehow bungle this opportunity? Would it have helped Jesus if He had been to some evangelistic seminar and found out how to take people who have most of the barriers already eliminated and find an easy path to conversion? Did Jesus somehow fail as an evangelist? Did Jesus flunk Evangelism 101?

As we saw last time, he was asking the right question. He was asking it to the right person. He was asking about the right subject. And Jesus surely knew the right answer. Yet he went away without what he wanted, what he sought passionately.

Now you have to understand something that's underlying this. Jesus never ever was interested in superficial commitments. Early in His ministry it is said that there were many people who believed in Him in John 2, but He never committed Himself to them because He knew what was in their hearts. That is to say, He knew the kind of belief it was and it was not sufficient. There were some disciples who were following Him in John chapter 6 and He spoke to them in such strange and demanding language that it says in John 6 at the end of the chapter that many of His disciples walked no more with Him. He had a way of driving out the superficial...the superficial seekers. Always Jesus was very, very protective of the true faith and the true repentance and the true gospel and He did everything necessary to eliminate superficial followers all through His ministry. And the writers of the

epistles instruct us to do the same. Here is a man, as I said, who affirmed his faith in the true God of the Old Testament, believed in the God of Scripture and the Scripture written by God, the threat of judgment, the hope of heaven, the things of eternal life...all that he believed. And there were a number of areas of common ground between him and Jesus theologically. All those usual barriers weren't there. But instead of Jesus moving him to quick prayer or some kind of rapid decision, instead of Jesus finding some acceptable terms to get him the final step, Jesus put up absolutely unacceptable terms that stopped him dead in his tracks, spun him around and sent him home as empty as he was when he came.

Now let's go back to the text and remind ourselves that this account falls in to two categories, really, in the broad sense. There is a human side and we hear that from the lips of the young man, and there is a divine side, and we hear that in the conversation between Jesus and the young man.

To begin with, we said last time that there are some very positive elements on the human side. Number one, he knew what he wanted, verse 18. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He had it all frankly. He had money. He had power, influence, honor, prestige, virtue, morality, religion, leadership. He was young. He was rich. He was a ruler in the synagogue. You have to remember now, Matthew gives us an account of the same event, Matthew 19. Mark gives us an account of the same event, Mark 10. So we have Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 18, combining them all we fill in the details. But with all that he did have, what he didn't have was eternal life. He didn't have the life of God in his soul, that kind of life which belongs to the eternal one. Not a duration of life, not a quantity of life, but a quality of life, he didn't have the life of God in his soul and so he was empty and restless and troubled and unsatisfied and lacked peace and assurance and confidence and hope. And as we said last time, he's a lot better off than the Pharisees who also didn't have eternal life, but didn't know they didn't have eternal life because they were such careful and astute hypocrites.

So first of all, he sought for the right thing. He knew what he wanted. Secondly, he felt deeply the need. There is a kind of passion here found in this young man, about the right things. This is a deep thing he's thinking about. He doesn't come and ask Jesus to fix his marriage. He doesn't come and ask Jesus to help him through a twelve-step program so he can get over sexual addiction. He doesn't come and ask Jesus for anything at all superficial. He's not looking for some psychological boost in his life. He's feeling deeply and profoundly the absence of God in his life...that is a good thing. He knew he didn't know God. Religion he knew very well, well enough to be esteemed above his peers. God he didn't know and confesses it.

Thirdly, he seeks diligently. In fact, Mark tells us he came running. He came running. He sprints to Jesus. There is a...there is a strong, passionate, driving enthusiasm in his heart to get this issue settled and he has come to believe that Jesus by virtue of His teaching and His power must know how to get eternal life. And when He arrives at Jesus, it also says he fell on his knees. He comes running through the crowd, falls on his knees...this indicates passion, zeal, diligence. He ran down

the aisle before there was an aisle.

Not only that, he came to the right source. We said, he came to the One who, according to 1 John 5:20, is that eternal life. He came to the One who is eternal life and who gives eternal life. And he recognized that Jesus had a connection with God that he didn't have...that's why he calls Him "Good Teacher." I told you last time, never can we find in any Jewish writings where rabbis were addressed as good, that was reserved for God alone. And so if you addressed Jesus Good Teacher, you are elevating Him above all the other teachers and you are affirming that there is an element of the divine connected to Him and since what he wanted was eternal life, this is consistent...good teacher...good teacher.

He even asked the right question...what do I do to inherit eternal life? Inherit...to take possession of, to grasp for my own. But the fatal flaw comes through in the question also, and it's in the verb "I do." He was part of an "I do" system. He was part of a works/righteousness system, achieving righteousness, achieving a relationship with God, achieving eternal life, if you will, achieving heaven by what you do morally and religiously. And the little verb "I do" is a pretty indicator of the fact that he was a part of a deeds/action/works system. Of course, he is a Jew, he is living in first-century Israel. He is a part of the Pharisaic apostate Judaistic system which was a system of believing that you earned your way into eternal life, you earned your way into a relationship with God, you earned your way into heaven. He has no understanding of any other kind of religious system. He like the Pharisees has no category for grace. It's all about ability. And really he thinks that he's done so much that he can't figure out what he hasn't done. The real issue on his heart is, I've done everything I know to do to the maximum of my capability which showed up in the respect and honor he had been given by being made a ruler of the synagogue, and he said I can't for the life of me figure out what I haven't done. He thinks he's left out one good thing. Somehow that one good thing has alluded him. And he thinks Jesus must know that because Jesus obviously has a very unusual extraordinary connection with God, manifestly demonstrated by His miracles and His teaching. In fact, in Matthew 19:20 he says to Jesus, "What am I lacking? I can't figure it out." This is the dilemma, this is a fastidious, careful, thoughtful, diligent, zealous Jew who cannot figure out what he has omitted.

Now that's such a hopeful beginning...such a hopeful beginning from a human viewpoint. You say, "This kind of a seeker is a can't-miss prospect." But this is a superficial seeker. Ah, no man on his own, no matter what is driving him religiously, morally, emotionally, no man on his own seeks after God. In a true sense, that's Romans 3, no man seeks after God. He was seeking in a superficial way, as it turned out, he was seeking from the standpoint of his own felt need. That is a very dangerous thing to affirm. And so when he says, "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answers him this way in verse 19, "Why do you call Me good, no one is good except God alone." And He reiterates what they all knew, that good was reserved for God, *agathos*, truly, inherently, intrinsically good...that was God, that was not man, that was not even the best of men, not even a rabbi. So He is saying, capitalizing on the young man's own words, "Are you saying that I am

connected to God? Is that what you're saying?" He sort of seals the young man in his own confession. "Are you prepared to live with the implications of what you have just said?" And the implications would be that if you recognize Me as having a connection with God and you are asking Me as one who is related to God who possesses the life of God to tell you what you need to do to have that eternal life, then I must assume that you're prepared to do whatever I tell you. Those would be the natural implications of that self-made confession. If I am from God, are you prepared then to hear through Me God's way to eternal life? If you're really honest in calling Me good, then you must obey what I say because you have confessed yourself that I come with truth from God.

And He did speak for God immediately. You know the commandments, He said in verse 20, "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother." Matthew 19:17 says, "Jesus also said this, 'If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.'" Jesus said to him, "You know that if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Why would Jesus say that? We're not saved by keeping the commandments, we're not saved by works. Jesus says this, I believe, facetiously. I think Jesus is speaking to him in his own language. He's jumped into his own paradigm, if you will. All he's ever known is works, all he's ever known is achievement. All he's ever known is self-made morality and spirituality and relationship with God. And so He's saying somewhat facetiously, almost in perhaps a sarcastic way, "Well you know that if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

This is a serious indictment. This is a severe blow to this young man because in response, in verse 21, he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." You know why that's so important? Because if you have in your own mind kept the Law of God your whole life from your youth up, and done it to such a degree to be honored by the other religious people around you and elevated above them, and you still don't have eternal life, that is a significant confession...a very significant confession. Jesus is saying, "Well, aren't you supposed to get eternal life by keeping the commandments? What went wrong here? If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. That's the party line. That's what you've been taught. That's what you've been trained to believe. And you've done that, you've just told Me, from your youth." And he's scratching his head, this young man, and I think he really believed he had done that. I think he had managed to convince himself that he could make this kind of statement and get away with it.

What is our Lord doing here? Well, let me just try to help you understand there's two elements to what our Lord is doing. This young man failed to understand two things. He failed to understand by the law his own sinfulness, that's very clear. And he has managed to redefine the intent of the law in ways that let him off the hook so that he can say, "All these things I have kept from my youth." Now I think he really believed that he had done that. I don't think he's saying, "I have never told a lie. I have never in my entire life dishonored my father or my mother. I have never done anything wrong." I don't think he's saying that. He may not have committed adultery. He may not have murdered. It's likely that he probably has taken something in his life, stolen something that didn't belong to him. But

I think in the general flow of his life he is saying, "I really have from my youth been at this a long time, this law keeping, I really have worked hard at keeping the Law. I am up to my proverbial neck in this thing and I always have been."

And at this point, we are now introduced to the two divine requirements. We have seen the human side of this encounter, let's look at the divine side. What is missing? First of all, Jesus says, in effect, "You must confess your sin and inability to come to God by the Law." Really two things here. Sure, he had not rightly responded to the law...not at all. He had seen the law as a means to his self-elevation. He had seen the law as a means to feel good about himself, not bad about himself. So he had taken the law lightly and superficially. He had failed to understand the Old Testament truth that if you break the law at one point, you've broken it all. So he had taken the law far too lightly, but that's what his society did. That's the way the system worked. He had certainly not loved the Lord as God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength and his neighbor as himself, which is a summation of the Decalogue, the first half and the second half. But he had comfortably fit himself in to the general idea of the Law of God in such a way that he had compared himself with other people and he was more religious, more moral, more devout, more virtuous than they.

So, first of all, he did not have a true understanding of his own sinfulness because he had not truly applied the precision and demands of the Law to his own life. But secondly, he had also failed to see not only that all the Law can do is render you a sinner, that the Law cannot save you. The Law had not done its work in his life to reveal to him his sin because he had resisted that and convinced himself that he was more righteous than he was. He, like Romans 10 says, went about to establish his own righteousness, failing to understand the true righteousness of God as revealed in the Law. But beyond that also, he had not come to the conclusion which was an absolutely necessary conclusion and he should have come to this conclusion that by all this effort at law keeping, he still didn't have eternal life. So he had failed to see the true purpose of the law to reveal his sin and he had failed to see the impossibility of using the law to bring himself to salvation. And the whole population of Israel missed the point. They didn't want the law to be the sword, as it were, that slew them. They wanted the law to be the means that brought them to God.

And so, Jesus speaks to this young man in his own paradigm, in his own terms. "Well you know, you know what God has said...you think I'm from God, right? You've said I'm good, I'm from God, God alone is good. You know what God says, I'll just reiterate what God said." And He gives him some commands from the second half of the Decalogue...the half that has to do with human relationships just to elicit from him this obvious response that he thought he was righteous and he couldn't for the life of him figure out what he hadn't done. As far as he knew, the law should have made him righteous, the law should have reconciled him to God, the law should have given him eternal life, the law should have gotten him into heaven...but it hadn't. And this is the head scratcher. He was at the opposite extreme. He saw the law as a means of salvation, not as a means of slaughter. He saw the law as a means of making yourself righteous, not a means of coming to the fact and the realization

that you are unrighteous. And I think Jesus just presses home the issue primarily here that with all his law keeping, didn't get what he wanted. And He shows the emptiness of that system. He shows the inability of that system. There is no system of morality and religious ceremony that can bring anybody eternal life. It can never happen. And there isn't just one more rule, and there isn't just one more ritual, and there isn't one more ceremony, or one more virtue, or one more code of morality, or one more ethical behavior that's going to push you over the top. There just isn't one.

This is so typical of those Jews of that day, but it's also typical of all religious/works systems. On the one hand they fail to see the work of the law which is to bring them to the end of themselves and to expose them to their own wretched sinfulness because they cannot keep the Law of God perfectly.

And secondly, it is also to demonstrate to them that by the Law no one is justified, as Paul says in Romans 3. This young man is very much like the Apostle Paul. In fact, Paul may be a perfect illustration of this. Turn to Philippians chapter 3...Philippians chapter 3. We're going to look at this a couple of times in this message this morning. Philippians chapter 3, I guess Paul would have fit into the category of a respected, honored, been trained by the finest minds in Judaism, had been given authority to persecute Christians. He was highly respected by his peers, religiously. He was a very moral man. He was a member of the Pharisees so he was a part of the most fastidious of all Jews, therefore he would have been elevated above all the rest. He says in verse 4, in the middle of the verse, "If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more." If you want to talk about achievement, religious achievement, moral achievement, I'll stack my stuff up against anybody and I think I'll win. "Circumcised the eighth day." From the very outset, from the very beginning, I followed the ritual of the nation of Israel. "I'm in the right race of the tribe of Benjamin. I belong to the privileged tribe, one of the noblest of the tribes, a Hebrew of Hebrews," meaning traditional, kosher we would say. "As to the Law, a Pharisee, the most religious, fastidious of all Jews. As to zeal, no one had more zeal than I did. I persecuted those who were the enemies of my religion." He was essentially a terrorist for Judaism, doing what he could to assault and attack and destroy Christians. "As to the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless." On the superficial side, as far as everybody knew, on the surface you couldn't find anything to blame me for in violation of the law.

Wow, that is exactly where the rich young ruler saw himself, right there...right there. But something powerful and dramatic happened to Paul in the process of his conversion. And to understand what that was, look at Romans chapter 7...Romans chapter 7. And this is a description of what went on in his heart at the time of his conversion. The middle of verse 7, "I would not have come to know sin except through the law." There was a time when he thought by means of the law, by the basis of the law, measured against the law, he was blameless, right? He says that in Philippians 3, "I was blameless, I couldn't find anything against myself. Then all of a sudden I was exposed to the real intention of the law and I wouldn't have ever come to know sin except through the law, I wouldn't have known about coveting if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin taking opportunity through the commandment produced in me coveting of every kind for apart from the law, sin is dead. I was

once alive apart from the law." There was a time in my life when I never really submitted myself to a true understanding of the law and I thought I was doing fine. I was alive, everything was great. I was going strong. All of a sudden the commandment came." What he means by that is I came under a true understanding of the law of God and sin became alive and I died. The law didn't give me life. The law slew me. And this commandment which I thought was a result in life proved to result in death. Nothing wrong with the law, it's holy...the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

That's the turning point. When all of a sudden the one who thinks he's going to gain eternal life by keeping the law begins to realize that the law is not giving the...giving him life, the law is killing him because it is rendering him guilty before God for which there will be eternal unrelieved judgment. This is what our Lord was endeavoring to do in talking to this rich young ruler, to assess his perception of his relationship to the law. And when you evangelize people, it's absolutely critical to do that. And you're looking for two things. One, you want to see how they measure themselves up against the law. And whether or not as according to the law they either are made alive or are slain. And if they think they have been made alive by their keeping of the law, then they are not in a position to take any steps toward entering the Kingdom of God, no matter how they desire eternal life. They need to be convicted as violators of the law of God so that it slays them and so that they are left bleeding, near death, fearing the next blow to be without remedy, catapulting them into eternal hell. This young man wasn't there. The law had made him alive, he thought, and he just couldn't figure out what the one little deal was that he hadn't quite yet gotten around to doing.

And the second thing that the sinner must recognize is that not only does the law kill you, that's really all it can do. And it must be immediately abandoned as a means of salvation. All that gets exposed in that little dialogue. He had a wrong view of sin because he had a wrong view of how precise and demanding the righteousness of God revealed in the law is, and for him the law gave him life, not death. So he missed the whole point of it. And secondly, he thought the law was a way to get eternal life and wanted to know what do I do beyond what I have done.

Our Lord grants him his point, for the sake of argument, and moves on. Verse 22, and introduces us to a second component. From the divine side, there must be the confession of sin and inability to earn eternal life by the law. But there's a second thing as well. And I want you to see how it unfolds. When Jesus heard this, He didn't argue with him, He knew where he was. He knew at that point that he was an illegitimate seeker. He knew at that point that all of his passion and desire and all of his anxiety and all the emptiness of his heart, all of those things that were driving him there were merely human desires for a kind of felt need satisfaction apart from understanding the true righteousness of God and his own sinfulness and with no category whatsoever for grace. But Jesus grants him that for the sake of this discussion and says this, "When Jesus heard this, He said to him, 'One thing you still lack.'" I'll grant you, okay? You kept the law. Jesus knows that it's a wrong understanding of the law, both as a revealer of righteousness and a means of salvation. But I'll grant you that. He says, "If...in effect...that were true, there's still one thing you lack. Sell all that you possess, distribute it to the

poor, you'll have treasure in heaven, come follow Me." This is just...this is just way over the top. Are you kidding? What does this have to do with anything? What does this have to do with grace and faith? What in the world is Jesus saying to this young man?

Well it's pretty simple. Here's His second point. "You must submit completely to Me and abandon all earthly priorities." You must submit completely to Me, and abandon all earthly priorities. Jesus put up a huge barrier by telling the young man he had totally misrepresented his relationship to the Law of God and he had totally misunderstood the purpose of the Law of God, it was not a means to salvation. And now He says to him, "You want eternal life? You must obey Me and here's My first command...after this there will be many more, implied in 'Follow Me,' but My first command is to disconnect yourself from everything that matters to you."

It says in Mark 10:21, "At this point Jesus looked at him and loved him." Sort of a love of pity. What in the world is Jesus saying? You don't get eternal life by giving away your money. This isn't anything new. It's absolutely what we've been hearing Jesus say all through His ministry. It's the same old...same old...same old that Jesus always says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, follow Me." How important it is...is it for you to have this eternal life? How important is it? Will you give up everything that is precious to you?

So He says, "Sell all you possess, give it to the poor." I'll tell you what that will do. Number one, that would divest you of everything you had. And number two, that would really make your family mad. Right? Whoa... You've got to understand that wealth in those days was held by families and the extremely wealthy were wealthy in land and animals and they were wealthy in crops. And that was a family estate and no doubt that estate had developed by being passed down generation from generation to generation to generation. This young man during his life is the trustee of this great family's wealth. His responsibility is to increase that family wealth and pass it on for the distribution for the next generation. And as a good son who always honored his father and mother by his own confession, he would have had great respect for his parents, great respect for what his parents had passed on to him, great sense of responsibility for being a steward of that, not wanting to steal it, that is to by stealing it to embezzle or diminish it, by not wanting to lie or operate on deceptive basis at all so as to catch himself in traps and diminish his riches, as often happens of people who operate in a dishonest way. He tried to be an honest guy with this. He tried to be honorable in his family. And Jesus is telling him you must right now divest yourself of all of this and give it all to strangers. This would end any relationship he had wit his family, right? They would be...they would be incredulous, first of all, they would be irate, secondly, they would disown him. This isn't anything different then Jesus has been saying all along. If you go back in to the fourteenth chapter of Luke, "If anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he can't be My disciple." It's the same thing. You've got to give away all that you think defines your life, all that you think makes you the man you are, be willing to abandon all that you own, all that you possess and even give up all your naturally, instinctively

important relationships.

"Whoever doesn't...next verse...carry his own cross, come after Me, can't be My disciple." Then down in verse 33 of chapter 14, "No one of you can be My disciple who doesn't give up all his own possessions." What is the Lord saying here? He's saying, "Well first of all, we want to find out what you relationship is to the law. And you're messed up on two counts there. Now we want to understand what your relationship is to the Lord. Are you willing to be obedient? Are you willing to give up absolutely everything if that's what He asks?

You say, "Well that's asking a lot." Let's go back to Philippians 3, let's look at Paul again. Paul said, "I had all that, circumcised the eighth day, nation Israel, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness in the law, found blameless and I considered that gain." That's right where the young man was. "I considered that gain, but now those things I have counted as loss. All that gave me nothing." It went from the gain column into the loss column. It wasn't neutral, it was damaging. And then I love what he says in verse 8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." When Paul came to Christ, he lost all his friends, all his family, all his resources, all his respect, he lost everything, absolutely everything. That's okay...he said...it was all rubbish, *skubalon*, dung, compared to Christ.

So, Jesus is saying to the young man...how...how...how tightly do you hold to human possessions? How tightly do you hold to human relationships? That's the issue. And Jesus said in that same fourteenth chapter, "You know, if you're going to come to Me, you're going to have to be like the guy who went to build a tower, you better count the cost and know that you can finish what you start. Or the guy who is going to go to war, you better assess your troops and what your capability is before you go into battle. Jesus is saying this, "Are you willing to forsake all?" See, those are the two components that we always deal with in evangelism...confession of sin and the inability of one to achieve his own salvation by his own works which is an element of one's sinfulness. It is not just sins that we commit, but is sin itself that enable...disables us to ever being able to please God. But secondly, it is that willingness to abandon all our own self-possessions, self-ambitions, and all relationships for Christ. It's...it's...it's arriving at the point where you're so aware of your sin, so aware of the reality of eternal judgment, so desirous of deliverance and salvation and eternal life, that if you were asked to give up everything, you would give it up in a heartbeat because it's all rubbish.

Oh and by the way, and we'll look at this next time, Peter says in verse 28, "We left our homes, followed You." He's saying basically the same thing. We left everything. We dropped our nets, we dropped our relationships, we dropped our friends, we dropped our careers and... And Jesus said to them, "Well truly I say to you, there's no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who shall not receive many times as much at this time, right here in this life and in the age to come, eternal life." You're not going to give up anything that

you're not going to get back multiplied. Paul lost his old friends, lost his old job, lost his old career, lost his old financial resources, lost everything. But what he got in addition to Christ was the church and a sweet fellowship of saints and spiritual children, the body of Christ. And we'll see more about that next time.

It all looked so good with this young man. But it always comes down to this. What about sin and what about sovereign lordship? Always the issue. Jesus knew it was the issue. Will you acknowledge your sins before God and will you affirm that your good works can never save you and therefore cast yourself on the grace of God? And will you abandon all your present perishing priorities and follow Me no matter what I ask, affirming self-denial, self-sacrifice and submission? Will you, to borrow the language of Matthew 13:44 to 46, sell all to buy the pearl of great price, sell all to buy the treasure hidden in the field?

Our Lord is not saying salvation is gained by giving things away, feeling bad about sin. He is saying salvation is reserved for those who face their sin and inability and come in total abandonment and submission to Jesus Christ. And that's nothing new...nothing new. The man held on to his earthly morality, held on to the law as a way to please God, held on to his wealth, held on to his relationships and went away without eternal life. To put it in the terms of the great commandment, he was not willing to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Verse 23 tells us, "When he heard these things, he became very sad, he was extremely rich." You know what that tells me? Maybe...maybe he would have responded to a better understanding of the law, maybe he would have understood that he was a sinner. Maybe Jesus could have pealed back the facade that had been carefully crafted and placed over his own conscience and brought him to some better understanding of his sinfulness by virtue of the law. And maybe Jesus could have even convinced him that law keeping wasn't a way to get there. But in the end, Jesus knew his heart and he knew that the one thing that was going to stop him dead in his tracks was that he would not abandon his possessions and his relationships. That was too defining in his life. He was who he was because of what he possessed. He was who he was because of his relationships. And so, Jesus looked at him and said, verse 24, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God."

Prosperity is a seduction, isn't it? And then Jesus made this amazing statement, "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." How easy does a camel go through an eye of a needle? That's impossible. So that people who heard it said, "Who can be saved?" He said, "The things impossible with men are possible with God."

What you're looking for when you do evangelism is a true seeker. And you know how you can tell a true seeker? A true seeker has come under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit by virtue of a true understanding of the law of God. A true seeker has been broken and contrite in heart by being measured by the law of God and found guilty before God. A true seeker knows that there is no way to earn salvation by works. And a true seeker is so desperate for eternal life as to gladly abandon

everything in this life for that greatest of all gifts and willingly submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Those are the tests that separate the false seeker from the true seeker. The true seeker can be saved because God alone produces that kind of repentance and submission. The false seeker cannot be saved because it's impossible if you're just coming on your own. We'll see more about this next Sunday.

Father, we thank You for the richness of our Lord's teaching, power of it, clarity of it. And we thank You, O God, for opening our understanding of these things. We're so enriched to know the heart of our Lord, He's such a perfect example for us as we do His work of evangelism in the world. May we do it the way He did it. May we be anxious never to aid and abet the superficial seeker to give false assurance, false hope. May we always put up the necessary walls, the necessary hindrances, the necessary barriers, speak of the unacceptable things. It is hard to believe, it's really impossible apart from You. So, God, so what You can do and You alone and save sinners. Grant them repentance from their sins and their trust and ability to earn salvation. Grant them submission to You as Lord and an eager willingness to abandon all earthly priorities as useless. And in doing, gain far more in this life and in the life to come. Do Your work, Lord, in hearts even today. We pray in the Savior's name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gtycanada.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2013 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).