

10-10-21

Sermon: Investment of a Lifetime

Scripture: Mark 10:17-31

Hymns: 51, 433, 91

Theme: Following His encounter with the rich young ruler, Jesus discussed the difficulty of salvation for those distracted by pleasures. We are making an investment in something that eventually will pay dividends. Invest wisely!

Our text today reveals the benefit of expository Bible study – considering the Scriptures verse by verse, line by line. While it would be possible to grasp the truth of this text without such an approach, it bears more weight when considered in the context of the preceding verses.

The rich, young ruler had come to Jesus seeking eternal life. While outwardly he appeared to be a prime candidate, there was one major problem – he loved his riches more than he desired to serve the Lord. Jesus knew the condition of the young man's heart and used this encounter as an opportunity to expound upon an eternal truth the disciples needed to consider.

While many had good intentions, few were willing to surrender their lives in service to the Lord. When faced with the choice, they chose to hold on to the life they knew instead of surrendering to Christ.

While the circumstances may be different, this decision continues to face all people. Are we willing to let go of the old life of sin, and the pleasure it brings, in order to follow Jesus?

This is a decision that should never be taken lightly. It is the one decision that has eternal implications. The choice we make regarding Jesus will last throughout eternity. The life we live on earth will follow us beyond the grave.

With these thoughts in mind, I want to discuss the lessons within the text as we consider: **The Dividends of Life.**

I. The Problem with Riches Let's start with verses 23-25 –

Here Jesus addressed the potential problems associated with having riches in this life. Notice:

A. The Difficulty (23) – Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" Following the encounter with the rich, young ruler, Jesus revealed the difficulty those with great wealth have entering the kingdom of God. We will discover in a moment that this is certainly not impossible, but it is frequently difficult for those with great wealth to surrender to the Lord.

Their possession of great wealth and material gain is not the problem. I have known folks who were committed believers, and they had much in this life. The problem is that many do not hold their possessions, but their possessions hold them. They are more committed to their wealth and possessions than anyone or anything else in life.

B. The Despair 24a – And the disciples were astonished at his words. This statement by Jesus was hard for the disciples to receive. They were "amazed" at the words of Jesus. They were literally "stupefied." These men did not know what to say; they were at a loss for words.

This is a difficult lesson to consider. The social gospel promoted by the western church has so cheapened the Gospel that most would never imagine such a thing. In fact, many teach that riches are a sign of God's blessing and the lack thereof is a sure sign of unbelief and doubt.

Most don't like to consider the demands of Christ in regard to receiving salvation. We must be willing to die to ourselves, loving Him more than anything else in life!

C. The Deliberation 24b-25 – But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Again Jesus affirmed the difficulty for those with great material wealth to receive salvation. He used the familiar analogy of the camel and the eye of a needle. Some believe the Lord spoke of a

literal camel and a literal eye of a needle. (That is the view I hold regarding these words.)

Others contend that Jesus spoke of a very small, narrow gate on the city wall that was referred to as the eye of a needle. In my estimation, there would be no difference in either view.

Regardless of which eye of a needle Jesus referred, the principle remains the same – it would require a miracle for either to happen. Jesus emphasized the great difficulty of those who trust in riches to ever recognize their need for Christ and believe on Him by faith unto salvation.

II. The Possibility of Redemption 26-27 – Having revealed the great difficulty of those who trust in riches receiving salvation, Jesus declared this was not an impossibility however. Consider:

A. The Perplexity 26 –The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" The disciples were greatly perplexed by the words of Jesus. Again they were astonished; this time beyond measure. Christ had struck a nerve that challenged their view regarding salvation.

They reasoned if it were that difficult for the rich to be saved, was there really any hope for the average man? Who then could possibly be saved?

Regardless of what we think, this was certainly not a silly question. I believe the disciples understood the depth of Jesus' words. This was much deeper than simply trusting in riches. Apparently these men knew that one could place many things ahead of devotion and submission to Christ. They understood the difficulty of denying one's self in order to be saved.

For those within our circles of influence, riches are not the problem. For many it is the pleasures of the flesh. For others it is pride or denial of personal sin and a genuine need for salvation. It could never be argued that salvation was not a miracle of God.

B. The Persuasion 27 –Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible

with God." Although such conversion was difficult, and maybe rare, it was not impossible.

The Lord could touch and tender even the hardest of hearts, convincing them of their need for salvation, and providing a willingness to abandon whatever stood in the way of faith in Christ. God could do what men could not!

We are unable to save ourselves. In fact, apart from the grace and help of the Lord, none of us would have turned from our sin unto Him for salvation. Through His grace He offered salvation, and by faith we responded to receive it.

There are none so distant that God cannot bring near to Him. There are none so self-sufficient that he cannot reveal their desperate need for Him. With God salvation is possible for all.

III. The Promise for Reward 28-31 – Again we find Peter speaking, but it is quite possible the others were thinking similar thoughts. Jesus revealed the reward promised those who follow Him. Notice:

A. The Sacrifice 28 – Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!" Peter was concerned for those on the other end of the spectrum. He hadn't had great wealth and social status, but he had walked away from everything in life to follow Jesus. He was asking – "Lord, what about us; what will we receive for the sacrifices we have made? We gave everything we had to follow you."

Surely we all have had similar questions and thoughts. We wonder what our reward will be. What will we receive as we stand before the Lord? What is in it for us? Although these questions are often motivated by the flesh, we do wonder at times. Jesus will affirm that those who faithfully follow Him will receive their just reward.

B. The Surety 29-30 – ²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.

Jesus promised that every sacrifice made for Him and the Gospel would be rewarded. Any who have left their homes, their families, or their lands (speaking of lands for cultivation, a way of life) would be blessed a hundredfold.

In essence they would be blessed beyond measure. The Lord would greatly reward those who were willing to sacrifice for Him and the advancement of the Gospel. The greatest blessing promised is eternal life in the world to come. That will make it all worth it when we stand before the Lord and realize eternity has begun!

I want to mention an aspect of this statement that often gets overlooked. Jesus revealed the reward would come with persecutions. Again this is contrary to the social gospel being preached today. The Lord promised to bless those who are committed to Him, but He never promised we would not have difficulty along the way.

If you are committed to serving the Lord, you might as well expect persecution. Paul reminds Timothy in **2 Tim.3:12** - ¹² "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

C. The Sequence 31 -³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Jesus reveals the sequence concerning His blessing – the first will be last; and the last will be first. The Lord's economics are different than man's.

In the eyes of society, the rich, young ruler would have been accepted first and the disciples would have been put off until last. God does not judge as men do.

The things this world puts prominence on are not important in the eyes of God. These men likely had failed to understand it, but they were much richer than the young man who walked away from Jesus. The Lord was aware of their sacrifice, and He was keeping a record.

Many today seek the riches of this life and the acceptance of others. Those things will not matter in eternity. Those who know Christ in the free pardon of sin through salvation are rich beyond measure. This world offers nothing that compares to the blessing

and assurance of being saved by grace. If you have Jesus, you have all you need. He is more than enough!

Conclusion: As we close, I want to look back at the title of the message – “Investment of a Lifetime.” We are all making an investment in eternity as we live this life. Those investments will soon enough pay dividends. What are we investing in?

Where is our devotion and commitment directed? I pray we are investing in the Christian life. It may be difficult here, but the retirement package is out of this world. If there are needs in your life, especially if you have yet to receive salvation, come to Jesus today. I urge you to invest in your future with Christ!

Amen? Let Us Pray...