

Message Transcript

OVERLOOKING THE ONE THING THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

| THE KINGDOM REVEALED

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So good to be with everyone today. If you have a Bible, head over to Mark, chapter 10, if you would. Mark, chapter 10, we're going to be in verses 13-41. I've been preaching this all weekend long and I've been telling everybody to turn to verse 32, so I'm finally getting it right for the last service, so verse 13-41 is where we're going to be together today.

I want to welcome you regardless of where you may be joining us from, the location, online. I'm thrilled to have you.

And next weekend we launch our Westfield campus, man. We're super excited about that. In fact, today we've had a group of people who have kind of been doing a practice service. They got into the elementary school and came in to help set up and tear down. I've got pictures this morning. They had that thing set up by 7:15 this morning. And they are our fittest campus; that's the reason for that.

I'm really thrilled for our Westfield campus. Man, if you happen to live in the Westfield city limits and you call Traders Point home, would you consider making Westfield your home campus? You would be helping us clear the way, specifically if you've been attending the Carmel location. We turn (roughly) about 50 cars away every weekend. They can't even get into the parking lot. And we're not okay with that. So, you would be freeing up a parking spot and a seat by joining the Westfield location. We're thrilled to see everything that God is going to do there—launching next weekend.

Well, if you've been our church for the better part of this year, we've been in a sermon series all year long called The Urgent Kingdom. And what we are doing is we are just taking our time walking, chapter by chapter, verse by verse through this very fast-paced, action-packed gospel of Mark. And we should wrap it up by the end of November, if we stay on track. And I plan to.

We've divided it up into seven parts. And today begins Part 5 of our message series called "The Kingdom Confronts". So, our passage today, as I've already noted is started in verse 13 through verse 41. If you would follow along with me, let me just go ahead and read it in its entirety and let God speak very clearly and I'll go back through and unpack it. Starting in verse 13 Mark writes these words. He says:



"One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. When Jesus saw what was happening he was angry with his disciples. He said to them 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.' Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them. "As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus asked. 'Only God is truly good.'

"But to answer your question, you know the commandments, 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'

"Teacher,' the man replied, 'I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young.' Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. 'There is still one thing you haven't done,' he told him, 'Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

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

"Then Peter began to speak up. 'We've given up everything to follow you,' he said. 'Yes,' Jesus replied, 'and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and property along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.'" (NLT)
Let's pray together.

Father, we come to You right now and I don't know what we brought in here with us or what is occupying our minds or what is laying on our hearts, but I pray that in these next few



moments together that we could be able to let go of some of those things and lean in to what it is that You want to teach us from Your Word.

We read it clearly. Now would You just help me in the remainder of our time to just amplify what it is that You've already said—no more no less. To make it clear and succinct and to really drive down to the primary application points that You want us to hear today.

So, would You please speak. We are listening. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.

On January 28, 1986 (that is a day that is seared into the consciousness, at least of those of us who can remember it) was the catastrophic explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger. This particular day had recaptured the interest and the enthusiasm of the American public, because, quite honestly there hadn't been much interest in space exploration for a couple of decades. The whole romance around Apollo 18 and Tom Hanks and "Houston, we have a problem," it just wasn't there anymore. So, NASA was trying to come up with some ideas to stir everybody's interest in it again.

They'd thrown a bunch of ideas up against the wall, but the only one that seemed to be sticking was something called The Teacher in Space program where a civilian school teacher by the name of Christa McAuliffe from Concord, New Hampshire was selected out of 11,000 applicants to join a group of trained astronauts aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger as it rocked into space. She was planning to conduct two 15 minute classes to students from space, including a tour of the Challenger, calling it "The Ultimate Field Trip." And she was going to give a lesson on the benefits of space travel. And those lessons were going to be broadcasted out to millions of school children via close circuit TV, since Face Time and Zoom were not yet a thing.

Now, the genius of the idea was that ordinary citizens could experience space travel through an ordinary citizen. Which is why everyone, including kids in classrooms nationwide, was watching the launch live on January the 28, 1986. And I was one of them. I was in the fourth grade at the time. I know, I'm ancient. But I can remember very vividly the teacher wheeling in that TV checked out from the library that was mounted dangerously high on that top heavy portable death cart on wheels. Do you remember? That thing could fall over at any moment. But we watched as 73 seconds into the launch disaster struck as the craft disappeared behind a white, y-shaped vapor and it exploded into several pieces.



When the reality of what had happened set in, a stunned silence washed over our classroom as well as throughout the nation. And if I'm remembering correctly, our teacher just turned off the TV and we went back to arithmetic. We didn't talk about it. She didn't say, "How do you feel? School counselors are available." If you want to know what is wrong with my generation, that's just one example. Alright?

Now, NASA had never lost a crew on a mission and the entire world had just witnessed one live right in front of their eyes. And this is all pre 9/11. We weren't used to that. And people, naturally, wanted to know why. They were like, "How in the world could something like this happen?"

So, a Presidential Commission was launched to investigate it. And they traced it back to a leak in a booster that was caused by a faulty o-ring. And these particular o-rings were very sensitive in colder temperatures. So, at launch it needed to be 53 degrees outside or warmer for this o-ring to perform optimally.

But, on January 28, 1986, it was only 36 degrees outside. And so the question was: Did anyone notice that in fact 36 degrees is less than 53? And what they discovered through the investigation was that there had been a single engineer who had spoken up and sounded the alarm, roughly 12 hours before launch and was concerned because he saw the forecast was going to dip into the 20s the night before and it could become problematic for the o-ring.

And, get this. NASA deemed the concern legitimate but inconsequential for the launch because of everything at stake around The Teacher in Space program and the PR that was associated with it. They didn't want to fail to launch over what they thought was a small technicality.

So, in possibly preventing this catastrophic event they overlooked the one thing that could have changed everything. And as a result it not only cost people's lives, but subsequently resulted in the loss of billions of dollars for NASA and the beginning of the loss of the momentum and enthusiasm behind the space flight program.

They overlooked critical counsel from an engineer and in their foolishness it ended up being disastrous. Why? Because things seemed to be going too well. And they were afraid of what they might lose. And yet, ironically, their oversight would end up costing them even more than they ever feared losing. And, man, if you think that's bad, then you should read the story of the rich, young ruler. Because, long before January 28, 1986, he does the same thing. You know, I think it's safe to say in our cultural moment there are multiple true things that are happening here at once. Would you not agree with that? From



my seat and my lens, I see something happening that I've never seen before in 26 years of full-time ministry. I have never seen more people coming to Jesus than I am right now. And yet, simultaneously, I've never seen more people walk away from Jesus, church, and faith at the exact same time than I've ever seen right now. Both of those things are true at the exact same time.

See, when the Holy Spirit begins to blow and stirs up a resurgence of the faith, we can expect that Satan will not roll over and let that happen. Unholy spirits will come in to stir things up and bring about a resistance to that same faith. It's the book of Acts in a nutshell.

Now, we can assume all kinds of reasons why people might walk away from God. Maybe you have your own reasons. Maybe there was a season in life when you walked away from God. Maybe you know somebody who has. And it could be unmet expectations. It could be church hurt. It could be a crisis of faith. Maybe it's like a personal sin issue or an ideological thing.

But the rich, young ruler is going to walk away from Jesus. And it's not because he's been hurt, it's not because there is a crisis of faith, it's not because of some disagreement over some political or sexual thing—he is going to walk away from Jesus because he just can't bring himself to part with the one thing that had become his personal savior, namely his money and the security that he thought that it brought him. He's like, "Jesus, You can have everything but that." And in all the conversations today, where people are walking away from faith or God or church, I just wonder where plain old disobedience might fit into the equation. But, that's uncomfortable, so let's move on.

See, part of what I love about preaching expositionally through a book of the Bible, like we are doing with Mark this year, is that it forces us to cover topics we wouldn't naturally gravitate to. Have you noticed that?

Many of you know I was away for a 12 week sabbatical this summer. I've been back for a couple of weeks. And since I've been back the passages in front of us have had me covering the topics of hell; last week, divorce; and this week, money. Welcome back. I call it the trifecta, three weeks to empty the church with three topics.

Listen. Here's the thing, man. If I were away for a 12 week sabbatical, I would never pick those three topics to preach on to come back to if I were setting the agenda. That's the beautiful thing about it. I'm not setting the agenda; God is through His Word.

Two of my former preaching professors used to say to me in college, "Hey, man. If you get nothing else right in the sermon, just make sure you get the text right. Let the text win." And so we will.



Now, two weeks ago I pointed out the very inconvenient truth that Jesus talked about the subject of hell more than anyone else in the Bible, including John the Baptist and Paul. And it's not because Jesus loved the topic. It's not because Jesus was relishing anybody going there. It's precisely because He doesn't want anybody to experience it. That's why He talks about it so much.

Another unpopular topic that Jesus talked about more than any other topic was the topic of money. Not because He wants your money. I just want to point this out that in the passage He does not say to the rich, young ruler, "Hey, would you do a fire sale on all of your properties, would you liquidate the Morgan Stanley account, and then Venmo Me the money and then come and follow." He doesn't say that. He said, "I want you to give it away to the poor and then you can come and follow Me."

Thirteen of the 39 parables that Jesus teaches in the gospels are parables or stories that He used to teach and preach are about the subject of money. And He used them directly or in an illustrative way as a means to get to a different end. So, Jesus used the subject to talk about deeper issues and matters of the heart.

But I want to point out that today's text is not a parable. It's a real life conversation with a real guy with real insecurities and real issues and real problems. And, if we're being honest, if we read it carefully, there is a part of him that we can see in ourselves.

This conversation is found in all three of the synoptic gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record it. And they each tell us something different about this guy. Luke tells us he's a leader, likely in the local synagogue. Matthew tells us he's young, likely in his early 30s. By the way, I just want to point this out. He and Jesus would have been about the same age. Jesus was 33.

They all tell us he's a man of great wealth. Actually, the word wealth connotes more than just money. He's not just a trust fund baby, he's a landowner. He's a business guy. He owns real estate. He's a one-percenter.

And, if we're honest we can see at least a part of ourselves in him. And you might push back on me and say, "No, no, no Pastor. I can't relate to this guy. I am not rich. I am not young. I do not rule anything. I can't relate to him."

And I just want to very gently point out here, kind of a different set of lenses. You ever go to the eye doctor and he flips a lens, "How about now, how about now, how about now?" Here's the deal. Most of us whenever it comes to riches or wealth, even those of us who are pretty well off, we don't think of ourselves that way because we can remember back in the day whenever we didn't have money. And we always compare up. Don't we? So, we read



this text and we kind of let ourselves off of the hook. Can I just encourage you not to do that? Don't read this text...

Have you ever done a surrogate reading of the Bible? You read it for somebody else. We're reading this and you are like, "Wow. I know who to send this sermon to. Our neighbors. They just put in a pool and they have a bass boat. We know they have a lake house down in Brown County. They need this more than me."

Hey, how about this? How about this? Can I just very gently point this out to you? If today you woke up on a mattress, flushed a toilet, opened the fridge, made coffee, had food in the pantry, clothes in the closet, put on a pair of shoes and you still have an extra pair on a shelf, you rode in a car to church, have a smart phone in your pocket, then you are in the top 20 percent of the wealthiest in the world.

If you made forty thousand dollars last year, you are in the top four percent, globally. At one hundred thousand dollars a year you are in the top one percent globally. And I point that out to just simply say that it's tempting to give yourself an out as you read this passage because you can't relate to this guy. The rest of the global population looks at you and says, "I can't relate to you." Mark tells us that (for the third week in a row now) Jesus is trying to get to Jerusalem. For what? He's got an appointment with a cross. Why? For you. And He's trying to get there and He keeps getting stopped. He keeps getting interrupted. And it's just like this urgency of Jesus. He knows what is coming. He's like, "I've got a limited amount of time. I'm trying to disciple my guys. They've got all of these questions. I've got all of these people with issues."

And He keeps getting interrupted. This time by a young man who does two unusual things. He runs to Him, which would have been very undignified for a man in the first century, and he kneels before Him, which would have also been very undignified. But you are kind of looking at it as kind of respectful. You are like, "Well, that's kind of cool that he's got this urgency and he kneels down before Jesus."

And then he says to Jesus, "Good teacher." Which is also kind of unusual because the word good here in the original language means intrinsic or inherently good. It was a word that you never used to describe another human being. It was only a word that you used to describe deity. And Jesus is going to kind of file that one away and He's going to come back to it.

Do Inherit

And He lets the guy ask his question. And He approaches the question that at least, at first, is really quite strange. He wants to know what he must do, D O, to inherit eternal life.



So, right out of the gate I just want to point out this observation. Now we're beginning to understand why this guy might be so successful. He's an achiever. He's got a to do list as long as his arm that he needs to slay before noon. And he's like, "Jesus, I've got a 1:30. Could you just tell me what I've got to do, quick and to the point. I'll just do it and make sure that I've got eternal life." And at this point it might be good to draw your attention back to what Jesus said just before this in verse 15. And I think it's the reason why Mark precedes this conversation, this encounter where Jesus says:

I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive..."
He doesn't say, "Any anyone who doesn't achieve the Kingdom of God," He says receive the Kingdom of God," like what? Like a child. Most children don't have a high net worth. He says:
"...will never enter it."

What Jesus is saying is that Kingdom of God is something to be received, it is not anything to be achieved. It is not based on what you do. It is based on what He has done. It is not based on how good we are. It's based on how good He is. And I just want to point out that his question, while sincere, is quite dumb. He says, "What do I have to do?" That's an action word, to inherit—that's passive. How many of you have ever received an inheritance of some kind from an estranged uncle or maybe a grandparent? Nobody has raised hands at any hour. Alright? But if you've ever received an inheritance, you didn't have to do anything. You weren't working for that. You didn't earn it. You received it because of the connection you had to them by way of your blood line. Do and inherit is an oxymoron. You don't do anything to receive an inheritance. You just receive it because of who you are. Inheritance isn't something you can achieve. It is not something that you acquire. Now, when it comes to the gospel, you cannot do anything to achieve it or to earn it or to acquire it. You want to know why? Otherwise it would become all about you.

And Jesus is clearly much nicer than I am here (shocker) because He doesn't point any of that out. Instead He responds to the guy's question with another question, which is kind of a pattern for Jesus. That's what He'll do. And He says, "Why do you call me good? Only God is truly good."

I've got to be honest with you. It's a really familiar passage. I've read it hundreds and hundreds of times. I've preached this dozens and dozens of times and that part has always confused me when Jesus is like, "Why do you call Me good. Only God is truly good." Is Jesus saying He's not good? Is Jesus saying He's not God?



I mean, it kind of sounds odd. And think that what Jesus is doing here is he's talking to a confident yet confused young man with conflicting questions: Do and Inherit. And providing a confounding answer.

See, this guy is using the term good flippantly if not ignorantly. And so Jesus decides to press him a little on it a little bit. And He goes, "Hey, man. Nobody is good except God alone and here's my question to you. Do you know who you are talking to right now?" I think that's what he is doing, "I don't know if you realize that you are talking to God in the flesh."

See, like this young man, many of us can posture ourselves around Jesus and even kneel before Him and yet still defiantly stand against His Lordship over our lives. We can raise our hands, we can profess with our mouth that He is King of kings, we will walk out of here in 20 or 30 minutes and yet defiantly stand against Him over some issue in our life that we just won't submit to Him as Lord. It is possible to kneel before Him as Lord and not fully or wholly submit to Him as Lord.

Public adoration for Jesus is not the same thing as private devotion to Him. But, Jesus doesn't give him a chance to respond. He just kind of moves right along in verse 19, rattling off several of the Ten Commandments. You know, if it was me, and if I'm Jesus and the guy is like, "Hey, what do I have to inherit eternal life?" I think I probably would have answered, "Well, you can't do anything to earn it. You've got to receive it. And you do that by confessing your sin and receiving Me into your heart right now. Go and get baptized." That's just how I would have answered it.

That's not how Jesus answers it. Jesus is going to play along here. So, He rattles off several of the Ten Commandments. Not all of them, just a handful of them. And He says:

"But to answer your question, you know the commandments, 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'"

Those are five of the Ten Commandments. But if you're really paying attention, for those of you who are Bible students, you might notice this. Jesus smuggles one in there that isn't part of the original ten. He says, "You must not cheat anyone." Some translations say defraud. That wasn't in the Ten Commandments.

Now, it was in the Old Testament law, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 24, Malachai 3 all reference this. It's a marketplace term which means to withhold or to take advantage of—to deceive. It's a form of greed.



So, at first it might seem like Jesus is giving him a checklist for how to earn salvation, but I assure you that is not what He is doing. He knows this young man's heart. He knows that he has been trying to follow the letter of the law to a T. And He knows that this guy is struggling with something and He wants him to see it. So, the one Jesus slides in there is the one the guy struggles with. Here's the thing. The reason why Jesus plays along with this game is that He wants him to see:

You can't see your need for grace until you can see your sin

Grace is really not great news until you understand the severity of your sin. And that is the whole purpose of the law. The point of the law is that you can't keep it. It's impossible. And Jesus mentions five out of the 10 here, but actually there weren't just 10 commandments there are 613 of them in the law. And Jesus says, "If you just break one of them you are guilty of all of it."

I find it interesting that Jesus starts rattling off these commands and the guy stops Him at five and goes, "I've done it." Bro, there is like over 600 more. So, what's the purpose of the law?

Have you ever been... You read the Old Testament, it's kind of confusing and you are like, "Man, I don't really know that I like the Old Testament. God seems like He's having a bad day. He just kind of seems grumpy in the Old Testament. I like the New Testament because He seems to be in a better mood. And I like all of the great stuff."

You're misunderstanding the whole point of this. He is not a different God. It's not God on different days. God is setting the standard in the Old Testament for His justice and His holiness and He's showing us if you were to fulfill all 613 of the commandments, then that would justify you before God. And we could never do it. So, God made a way through Jesus Christ.

You're like, "So, what's the whole purpose of the Old Testament law?" The purpose of it is to reveal our brokenness and the consequences of that and our need for a Savior. It shows us our need for grace. Here are some of the analogies the Bible uses to describe the law.

Mirror - James 1

Shadow - Colossians 2

Curse - Galatians 2

Record - Colossians 2

Yoke - Acts 15

Guardian - Galatians 3



James 1 says it's a mirror showing us our true condition. Colossians 2 says it's a shadow of the things to come in Christ. In Galatians 2 it's a curse that Christ ultimately redeems us from. In Colossians 2 it's a written record of debt. In Acts 15 it's a yoke.

In Galatians 3 it's a guardian. In fact it says this in verses 24 and 25:
"The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian." (NLT)

Who needs a guardian? Little kids. You can tie this back to what Jesus just said, "Unless you humble yourself like a little child you'll never enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Little kids, minors, need a parent or a guardian to protect them but only until they grow up. And He equates the law to that.

In other words, the law is like the DMV instructor at your driver's test. Once you pass the test and get your driver's license, you don't need to keep checking in with him to get permission to make a right turn. That would be weird.

And the young man keeps interrupting Jesus and he's like, "Hey, Jesus. I've done all of this. I've fulfilled these commands. And he's reduced following Jesus to a checklist and behavior modification while completely missing the spiritual transformation on the inside, thinking that it is all about the external rather than the internal.

And I do that all of the time. Like, we know the gospel, yet our hearts keep steering us back into working and achieving for something.

Honestly, I think this guy is sincere. I actually like him. I don't know what that says about me, but I like him. I don't think he's a bad dude. I don't think that he's trying to trap Jesus like what we've seen in the last couple of weeks. I think he had a genuine question. I think that he's just struggling with a serious form of sin, which is self-righteousness.

And it just blinds us to a need for a Savior. Like, "I think I'm good. I've got this. I'm not as good as some but I'm not as bad as most. And clearly God is grading on a curve. So, I think I'll get into heaven with a solid B-. Am I enough?

And the framework under all of this... I think really what he is asking is this question to Jesus. He's going, "Hey, am I enough?" And then the question quickly following is, "Will I have enough?" I don't think he's a bad dude. I think he's just been gathering all of these possessions and accomplishments to fill the void of insecurity and fear that is inside each one of us.



Verse 21 might be my favorite verse in the entire passage. Look at it again. It says:

"Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him."

The word love there is the highest form of love. And Jesus is looking... Just imagine that for a minute. Jesus is standing there. Things could have gotten a little contentious and He looks at him and He loves him. He's not looking to dunk on him. He's not looking at a "gotcha" kind of a moment. Jesus just looks at this guy and he can't see, likely because he's got a lot of hype men around him telling him how great he is. But he's got his ladder up against the wrong wall. And Jesus looks at him and He loves. And then He gave him news that he didn't want to hear. He says, "Well, you have many things. I want you to go, sell, give, follow." Jesus tells him the true thing, not the nice thing. And notice He doesn't say, "Hey, give Me the money after the fire sale." He doesn't say any of that because He's not interested in the guy's money. He doesn't want the guy's money to keep him from being a full disciple. And the man's smile falls off of his face and he walks away sad, the text says, because he had many possessions.

I don't know that this means that he didn't have salvation. In fact, I'm inclined to believe (this is just my opinion) that he likely was saved, that we will see him in heaven one day. I just think he'll be living in a one studio bedroom apartment because of what Jesus said on down in the text.

He didn't say it was impossible for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God, it's hard. And, by the way, we've already made the point that, I don't know, a good percentage of us would be included in the category rich in comparison to the rest of the world, whether we feel rich or not. He didn't say it was impossible. He said it was hard because there are so many things that become our functional savior. But He did say there will be many, they will be in heaven, they were great here, least there—least here, great there.

I don't think that he wasn't saved. I just don't think that he... He actually passed on the invitation to be Jesus' 13th disciple. Did you see that? Maybe, I don't know, if he had chosen to follow Jesus, maybe he would have been there at the cross, he would maybe have written an epistle later on. I don't know. But instead, this is all we know about him, he goes back to managing his Airbnbs and that's the last we ever hear of him. He just couldn't do it, man. He went away sad.

And we just have to ask: Do you think that Jesus is suggesting that this guy could have actually earned his salvation by giving everything away? No. Jesus is not saying we're saved by grace through faith and also, by the way, to empty our bank accounts too. He's not saying that.



In fact, understand this. This is the only time in all of Scripture where Jesus asked anyone to do what He just asked this guy to do. The closest He'd ever come is maybe Zacheaus, that wee little man, that tax collector, who climbed up that Sycamore tree to get a view of Jesus.

And then Jesus said, "Hey, come down. I'm going to have dinner at your house today." And Jesus accepts him and receives him. Zacheaus had achieved all of his wealth in a corrupt way. And we know that the rich, young ruler came by it in an honest way.

Zachaeus was corrupt with his wealth. And Jesus received him and accepted him and transformed him. And then Zachaeus, it was his idea, Jesus didn't ask him to do it, said, "Well, I'm going to give half of what I have away. And then I'm going to give back to everybody that I've robbed," after Jesus changed his life. That's about the closest that we come.

You could argue that Jesus said this to all of the rest of the disciples, "Hey, leave your fishing nets and come and follow Me," but in comparison to what this rich, young ruler had, He was asking him to sacrifice far more. And He's basically saying, "Hey, I don't want all of your stuff to keep you from following Me." Jesus looked at this young man and He looks at you and me and He loves us. He doesn't want anything from us He want something for us. And He knew his heart and He knew what was standing in the way of full surrender. This guy was looking at these other things to tell him who he was. And Jesus says, "I want to tell you who you are."

How we think about and handle the temporary resources entrusted to us is a discipleship issue

Understand this. How we think about and handle the temporary resources (because they are temporary) entrusted to us (because they are being entrusted to us) is a discipleship issue.

In other words, this guy's possessions, his estate, his investment portfolio were preventing him from fully putting his trust in and following Jesus. That's him. Can I just ask you this today? What's yours?

What's the one thing that, if Jesus asked you to let go of it, you'd grieve?

Now, I just pointed out that this in the text, this is the only time Jesus ever did this and the chances of Him showing up at your front door or calling you or texting you today and asking you to do this in this way is probably pretty slim.



But what if He called you? And He said, "Hey, you know that thing? That thing you love a little too much? It's not a bad thing. It's not a sinful thing. It's become an ultimate thing. That thing you've been holding onto with a death grip. Would you be willing to let Me have that?" What's that one thing if Jesus called you today and asked you and you'd pretend you didn't hear Him? "Jesus, You're cutting out. Verizon doesn't have coverage here."

Hey, I'll go first. I've shared my story with you before. This is a struggle for me. And just like many of us, it's rooted in loss. When I was in grade school, my family ended up filing for bankruptcy. There were some issues around why. And when I was in sixth grade, I remember vividly, we lost our house, we lost all of our cars, we lost the neighborhood that we were living in. We got relocated. We lost everything.

And I can remember the emotional impact of all of that. I remember as a kid sitting in my room by myself saying to myself, "I will never, ever, ever put myself in a position to feel this again. And an idol was born.

So, growing up I worked multiple jobs in high school and I tried to save and I tried to have that little cushion there, that little bit of margin. And it's been an issue that God has continued to work out in me throughout my adult life. And He's kind of pressing me on it.

Typically where it shows up is whenever I'm balancing the budget or paying monthly bills and that imaginary balance/idol falls below where I think it needs to be in order for us to feel secure—you know what I'm talking about? Am I the only one? Three of you with me. And it drops below and I worship. I panic, "Oh, no." And God is like, "There it is again."

One of the things that I had to do to continually to intentionally be open handed with Him is to say, "Hey, it's all Yours. I'm actually..." Here's how I try to clean up my spiritual language, "I'm not worshiping the resources You've given me. I'm just trying to provide for my family."

Do you ever do that? Yeah. Does He have access to every area of your life? Or just the ones that you are comfortable with Him having access to. The ones you've signed off on.

The word, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, for money comes from a root word that denotes an actual place of confidence and trust. And Jesus is saying that money can be a living, breathing, competing master of your heart, your confidence, your faith, and trust.



Listen, man. He does not need your finances to advance His Kingdom. He already owns it all. What He does want is your heart. And oftentimes what has your heart are the things that make your heart feel at peace. Anything that makes your heart feel at peace, other than God, is an idol.

Giving away everything you own is not a prerequisite for salvation, but surrender is. He asked this guy to give away everything he owned. What He'll ask you and me to do is surrender something. What's that one thing, man? What's that one thing that if Jesus would say, "Can I have that?" Maybe it's a relationship. Maybe it's a job title, a social media platform. Maybe it's your golf clubs, pickle ball paddle. I don't know, pickle ball is strangely cultish. I don't know, it's kind of weird.

But, what would it be, man? That one thing that, "Oh, please don't look at that. Please don't look at that. Please don't look at that. Please don't call that out. I want that too much." You just couldn't imagine life without it. And Jesus is saying to the young man, "You just told me a minute ago that you've kept all of the commandments. But the truth of the matter is you weren't even following the first one, which is 'You should have no other gods before me.'"

And Jesus is not saying it's a sin to be rich. He's not saying that rich people are bad and poor people are good. He's not saying any of that. He is saying, "I just want you to be careful." He's putting His finger on the one thing in this man's heart that he was putting too much trust in. What's yours?

Tim Keller describes idolatry this way. He says, "An idol is anything more important to you than God. Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God. Anything you seek to give you what only God can give." Maybe it's the thing you daydream about. Maybe it's the thing you are thinking about before you go to sleep at night. Maybe it's the thing you worry about. And it's the thing you're finding too much joy in.

Now, listen. You don't have to idolize... You don't have to have a lot of wealth to idolize wealth. You can actually have very, very little and still do the same thing, because when a good thing becomes an ultimate thing it becomes a destructive thing. And there is nothing wrong with owning it unless it begins to own you.

I was talking to a friend not too long ago and he said there was this couple he knows who had a really, really nice sports car. I think it was a Porsche or something or other. And they offered it to him and his wife. They said, "Hey, why don't you take the Porsche out for your anniversary dinner? Take your wife on a nice date with it."



And he was like, "Oh, no. We could never do that. It's too nice of a car. I'd hate it if something happened to it. Thank you for your generosity but no thank you." And they got a little bit irritated with him and they said, "No, please. Please. Honestly, take it." Then they said this, "If we can't share it, it has too much power over us."

So, I just officially offering to help any of you... No. I'm totally joking. I'm totally joking. I debated using that joke every hour because I don't want people to cut that up online and make me say something I didn't say.

How about this? If you feel like you need to do that, do not offer it to me. Offer it to someone. Is it a lake house? Is it a car? Is it a thing? I don't know, man. Does it have too much power over you? Hold it open handedly. It is not a bad thing that you have it. It's a bad thing when you hold onto it desperately. And money must be put in a proper position in your life, not on the throne of your heart. The disciples ask the right question in verse 26. Have you noticed this over the last few weeks? Jesus is having a public conversation with somebody. He says some really hard things. And afterward the disciples pulled Him aside and were like, "Did you really mean that?"

And in verse 26 they did it again. They were like, "Jesus, if this is the standard who in the world can be saved?" And Jesus' response reinforces the gospel. He looked at them intently and said: "Humanly speaking, it is impossible,"

The gospel is impossible, but with God everything is possible. And then Peter, he's always opening his mouth. In verse 28 he blurts out, "We've given up everything to follow You, Jesus. Not like that guy who refused to sell his beach house. We've given up everything. We just want to point that out." And Jesus is like, "Yes, Peter. I know you have. And I'm not looking to cheat you out of anything." In fact, notice what Jesus said in the text. He said, "Anybody who has ever sacrificed anything will never sacrifice because God will pay you back." Do you think God owes you that? "Do You owe me that?" No. But Jesus said it. It's a promise. See, God is not trying to get anything from you, He wants something for you.

So, here are a few truths from the passage before I land the plane. Everything we "own" is on loan from God.

Number one: we've got to understand here that everything we own is on loan from God. And I put own in parentheses because you don't own anything. You know that, right? Your name may be on the title of something, but you don't own it. One hundred years from now somebody else will be living in that thing, driving that thing, spending that thing. You don't own anything. It's on loan from God.



Some of you might push back on me, "Aaron, I've worked hard for my money." And I would say, "Yeah, but who gave the ability to work hard? Who gave you the intellect to do the thing?" You don't own anything. It's on loan. We are stewards, not owners

Number two: Because of that we need to have a stewardship mindset, not an owner mindset. We steward it. Luke 16 says one day we will all stand before God and give an account, not just for what we gave, but how we spent what we had. Ooh, that's a different thing.

You know what I'm a little bit nervous about on judgment day. There are a whole bunch of things I'm nervous about, but one of the things I'm nervous about is this. And I think it's one of the things that God's going to hold me accountable to. Maybe not just me. Maybe I'm not the only one. You can open up all of my Apple subscriptions. Now I'm meddling. This is just me. It's like, "Aaron, really? Nine ninety nine for Hulu. You haven't watched Hulu in three years, man. All these subscriptions. Even down to that minutia.

Listen, man. Nothing is mine. So this means I'm not just giving a portion to God, it's how I spend the resources that He's entrusted to me. And it doesn't mean that we can't enjoy things, nice things, or hobbies, or vacations or anything like that. But because He knows the posture of our hearts, "Am I stewarding it wisely? Am I being frivolous or am I being stingy?" And that's an issue between you and God. You are a steward of what He has entrusted to you.

Faithful, consistent, joyful generosity breaks us free from the grips of greed. And then the last is this. Faithful, consistent, joyful generosity breaks us free from the grips of idolatry and greed. Now, chances are Jesus is not going to come to you today and say, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor and come and follow Me. But what He will say is, "Will you be faithful and consistent and joyfully generous on a regular basis?"

And the reason why I think He'll say that is whatever we do consistently shapes who we become eventually. So, understand this. Just like most of us listening to this right now, very, very few of us think that we have a rich problem or a wealth problem.

And I think very few of us would say that we are not generous. I think most of us would say that we are generous. But the problem with that is that most of the time, if we don't structure generosity into our lives, then generosity ends up becoming emotional rather than faithful, sporadic rather than consistent, begrudging rather than joyful.



What I meant by that is that it becomes an emotional thing. So, whenever Sarah McLachlan comes on the TV commercial and is singing that said song: generous. When you see Santa ringing the bell outside the store here in a few months: generous. When I may offer somebody a few bucks to cover their lunch, "Oh, man. I'm being generous."

And it's not that you are not, it's just that I think that we inflate those moments in our minds. At least I do. And then when you go back to file your taxes and you look at charitable contributions and you are like, "Oh, I thought I was way more generous." Because generosity has a tendency, if we don't structure it into our life ahead of time, it has a tendency to become emotional and sporadic rather than faithful and sacrificial.

He's likely not going to ask you to sell everything you have and give it to the poor. What He will ask is, "Hey, will you trust Me with your first and best? Will you trust Me with at least that? Can we start there? First and best."

This is the genius of structuring... The principle of the tithe, which is this whole idea of... In fact, by the way, when it comes to tithing you don't give a tithe, you return it because it's not yours. You are returning to God just a portion of what is already His. It's actually a pretty good deal because 100 percent of it is God's and He says, "Hey, would you just return 10 percent of it back to Me? You get to keep the rest, 90 percent. Pretty good deal. But most of us are like, "What? Ten percent? Is that gross or net?" And we're like missing the whole point. Aren't you glad that God didn't tithe Jesus? He didn't just tip us on the cross. He gave His first and His best. So, why would I settle for anything less? Some of us are like, "I don't know Aaron. Tithing is in the Old Testament and we're under grace. That's legalistic." Hey, man. How about this? What should it be? What should it be? Should it be more than 10 percent? Should it be everything like Jesus asked of the rich, young ruler? Should it be more than 10 percent? Are you going to suggest to God that it should be less than 10 percent?

How about this? First and best. And the Bible teaches, why don't you start at 10 percent. That's where you start, not where you finish. Which is why part of the way for me to break the stronghold of this in my life...

When Lindsay and I first got married, we didn't have two nickels to rub together. And we just said, "We're going to trust God with this by returning 10 percent back to Him regardless of the paycheck." And then I can't just stay there. Every year I just figure out a way to inch that thing up. First and best. And God always provides.

There is a friend of mine who wrote this out. I thought it was really good. I just want to read it to you as I close.



Why Tithe

It provides for God's church

It tells God I trust Him

It creates margin in my life only God can fill

It reminds me I am not my source

It connects my money to a Kingdom purpose

It gives my job eternal significance no matter my occupation

Transforms money into a seed

Breaks greed and self-reliance off my heart

Reminds everything in my life; you are not above my God

Keeps me from trading true discipleship for a dollar

It's more about my obedience than my generosity

You can't buy your way into heaven, but you can invest in the Kingdom

Why first and best starting at 10 percent?

Number one: It provides for God's church

Number two: It tells God I trust Him

Number three: It creates margin in my life only God can fill

Number four: It reminds me I am not my source

Number five: It connects my money to a Kingdom purpose

Number six: It gives my job eternal significance no matter my occupation

Number seven: It transforms money into a seed

Number eight: It breaks greed and self-reliance off my heart

Number nine: It reminds everything in my life; you are not above my God

Number 10: It keeps me from trading true discipleship for a dollar

Number 11: It's more about my obedience than my generosity

You cannot buy your way into heaven, but you can invest in the Kingdom. And Jesus did not ask this young guy to do what he had not already done. I told you a few moments ago, they were the same age. And Jesus is an even richer young ruler. He ruled everything. He owned everything. He owned the cattle on one thousand hills.

Think about this. He's getting ready to go and give His entire life for us on a cross, sacrificing everything. And it sounds like what He's asking this guy to do is extreme. No, what Jesus did is extreme. He gave up way more. In 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 9 it says:

"You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich," there it is! Jesus is the rich ruler! "yet for your sakes he became poor so that by his poverty he could make you rich." (NLT)



He exchanged your sinfulness for His righteousness. He exchanged His riches for your poverty so that you might become rich through His sacrifice. So, the invitation today... If you have never submitted your life to Jesus as Lord and Savior, I'm going to give you an opportunity to do so today.

The second invitation is this: Whatever that thing was where you kind of cringed a little bit when I said, "If Jesus were to push on that?" What about that? You've given Him everything, but what about that? Would you be willing to let go of that today? You can come to the altar, come down on your knees. Just maybe in a figurative way just kind of let that go, "Jesus, this is the thing I've been holding onto tightly."

And here's the thing. He's a good God. He's a good God. He knows your heart's desire. He knows what you need. He doesn't want your things to own you. So, would you be willing to let that thing go so you can truly follow after Him? Would you please stand to your feet across all of our locations? I'm going to pray and then give you a chance to respond.

Father, we come to You right now. We're so grateful for the hard teachings because we know that through them that brings about transformation. And so, today I just ask that if there is anybody who has not fully and completely submitted themselves to You, both privately and publicly, as Lord and Savior, that they would have the courage and the faith to do that.

Whatever it is, that maybe we're holding on to a little bit too tightly—it's not a bad thing, it's not a sinful thing, it might even be a good thing, but we've made it an ultimate thing therefore it's become a destructive thing—may we have the courage to let that thing go, to be openhanded before You.

Something tells me that we would be surprised by Your grace and Your goodness. That when we let it go, You take it and then You multiply it and You give us far more than we ever thought we were sacrificing.

Thank You for being a God who just didn't tip or tithe Jesus. You gave it all. You gave first and best. And we want to do the same as well with our entire lives. And we ask this right now in the power of Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen and Amen.

