

Luke 18:18-30

As we look at this familiar story in Luke 18 this morning, it will spur 4 very serious questions that we must consider.

1. We need to see the story, and ourselves in this story.
2. We need to feel the depth of the questions that surface from this story.
3. We need to respond honestly...and repentantly...and reset our lives on a course that is more reflective of the teaching and example of Jesus and his followers.
4. We will end by seeing 7 ways we can help guard against the spiritual and eternal danger that this rich ruler found himself engulfed in in this morning's text.

READ

Do you see yourself in this story? I hope so because we desperately need to stop and feel the depth of the four questions that are about to surface. As we consider each question, try to respond honestly...and let's commit to think different about prosperity and possessions together this morning.

I. Is Jesus Good or is He God? v18-19

18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

1. Jesus quickly responds with, "Are you saying that I am God? Because no one is really good, but God."
2. Jesus is either God, or He is not good! He is either a liar, a raging lunatic, or He is Lord, but He is not just a good teacher.

3. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "*I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*"

We must answer the question this morning: Is Jesus good, or is Jesus God? There is a big difference.

1. If Jesus is just good, we can look to Him for advice
2. If Jesus is God we must look to him for total leadership in our lives, even if that means going against everything our affluent culture and maybe even our religious neighbors might tell us to do...and maybe even Dave Ramsey!

II. Do I Lack one Thing Among all my Possessions? V20-22

20 You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" 21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." 22 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."

2 common errors people make in this passage

1. Some try to universalize Jesus' words, saying that he always commands his followers to sell everything they have and give to the poor. Wrong! Whew....
2. The other error is to assume that Jesus never calls his followers to abandon all their possessions to follow him.
3. Robert Gundry wrote, "*That Jesus did not command all his followers to sell all their possessions gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom he would issue that command.*"
4. This is a question we must ask ourselves; if Jesus were to corner us this morning, would we lack one thing?
5. Luke 14:33 *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

In Mark's gospel we find that when Jesus looked at this ruler, He loved him.

1. This is important for us to see because it lets us know that this advice was given in love, for his good...not as some sort of penance meant to punish him.
2. This is not a punishment or sacrifice. This is loving invitation to make an investment that guarantees eternal return. **V28-30**

28 Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." 29 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, 30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

III. Do I Qualify as Having Wealth? V23

23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

I know that many of us may not believe that we live in luxury.

1. Our tendency, when we think about the rich, those who have wealth, is to think of "them."
2. Think about this
 - a. Over 1 billion people live on less than \$1 a day
 - b. Almost 2 billion more live on less than \$2 a day
 - c. 37% of the world makes less than \$825 a year.
 - d. 84% make less than 10,000. Top 16%.
 - e. If you make \$42,000 or more a year, that puts you in the top 2.5% of the richest people in the world.
3. We may not be wealthy from an American context, but we are wealthy from the world's context.
4. Which context do you think God is looking from?

IV. What must I do to be Saved...from the American Dream?

v24-27

24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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." 26 They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

The American dream is... "Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can"...so you can retire and enjoy your golden years.

1. We think of this as being blessed...after all, God blesses those who follow Him and live holy lives, right?
 - a. This is primarily an Old Covenant concept
 - b. Old Testament is pretty clear...you obey you get blessings, you don't you get judgment
 - c. But listen, we live under the rule of Christ in the New Covenant.

2. Craig Blomberg wrote, *The New Testament carried forward the major principles of the OT and inter-testamental Judaism with one conspicuous omission: never was material wealth promised as a guaranteed reward for either spiritual obedience or simple hard work. Material reward for piety never reappears in Jesus' teaching; and is explicitly contradicted throughout.*

We are fine with thinking of affluence, comfort, and material possessions as blessings. But could they be barriers?

1. Luke 16:13 *No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

2. 1 Tim 6:9-10 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

3. In light of these verses...
 - a. Could it be possible that the American dream is more like a spiritual nightmare.
 - b. Could it be possible that our possessions are subtly deadly...blinding our eyes to what really matters and to real needs around the globe?
 - c. *Iranian student at SBTS who told Wade it is too dangerous here.*

So, How can we be saved, or at least guard ourselves, from the American dream? 7 principles that we can strive to live by. I got these from a friend...I will try to link the whole article after the service

1. Do not buy anything that you cannot give away.

1. Luke 12:33-34 *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

2. What if we bought our houses, cars, clothes, and toys with a willingness to turn it loose at the least indication from God?
3. There is never going to come a day when I stand before God and he looks at me and says, I

wish you would have kept more for yourself.

2. Stay totally out of debt.

1. Rom 13:8 *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law*
2. Prov 22:7 *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.*
3. For most of us, if not all of us, at the very least, that means we are going to have to change our lifestyles completely.
4. For some of us, that means we are going to have to also work to get out of debt.

3. Save, according to God's direction, but be willing to give it all away at His direction.

1. If you are going to stay out of debt, you will likely need to save and plan for the future.
 - a. But you should save because you are prudent, not because you are greedy.
 - b. Matt 6:19-20 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
 - c. You should save with a willingness to give it all away at the slightest hint of God's direction
2. Maybe savings accounts are intended to be resources at God's disposal...not ours.

4. Pray for other's needs only if you are willing to be the answer.

1. Prov 28:27 *Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.*
2. *Robert Sheffey*, the circuit rider of the late 1800's came upon a family, in the middle of moving, stranded because their horse died. He sat down to pray...really you would require that?

5. Look for Opportunities to Give.

1. 2 Cor 9:6-8 *The point is this: **whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** 7 Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver.** 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work*
2. Luke 6:38 *give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*

6. Fight against covetousness

1. Luke 12:15 *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*
2. Jesus said, we must take care and be on guard against all covetousness.
 - a. Certain areas of covetousness are not okay.

- b. We must guard against it all, because it will overtake us and could cost us our soul
3. We can fight against covetousness by setting a cap
- a. That is what *Wesley* did. He identified a modest level of expenses that he was going to live on every year and committed to give the rest away.
 - b. At one point Wesley was making the equivalent of about 160,000 a year in today's terms, but he was living as if he were making 20,000 a year.
 - c. What if you and I had simple caps on our lifestyle and were free to give the rest of our resources away for the glory of Christ in the neediest parts of the world?

7. Strive to be content with whatever God chooses to provide

1. 1 Tim 6:8 *But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content*

- a. It is a constant battle to resist the temptations to have more luxuries, to acquire more stuff, and to move up the social ladder.
- b. It is a constant battle to resist the temptation to have to live in a certain type of house, drive a certain type of car, wear a certain type of clothing, and have certain things.
- c. It is a constant battle to resist the temptation to pursue a bigger and better house, a newer and nicer car, more and nicer cloths, finer food, and more stuff.
- d. It is a constant battle to live out the gospel in the middle of an American church culture that for the most part is pursuing an American dream much more passionately than they are pursuing Christ.
- e. It is a battle to be content, so we must strive.

2. Phil 4:11-13 *Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Conclusion:

You are not going to walk down an aisle and get a dose of Jesus this morning and this danger be defeated in your life forever. No, it will be a daily war with the culture that we must fight.