

Don't Lose Focus!

Luke 18:18-30

May 3, 2020

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

Opening Illustration: The Gospel assumed is the Gospel abandoned. It is sadly very easy for us as individuals or as a church to lose focus on what the Gospel is and what it calls us to receive, to think and to practice.

Here is what the Gospel is not.

- The Gospel is not a recognition of your importance, purpose or virtue.
- The Gospel is not a means by which good people simply try to be better.
- The Gospel is not a means by which comfortable people try to cover their bases.
- The Gospel is not a means by which we preserve any tradition or cultural identity.

Here is what the Gospel is.

- The Gospel is the exposure of our sinfulness and pride.
- The Gospel is the solution to our guilt and to the just punishment of our rebellion.
- The Gospel is presented to us to be received as our greatest treasure and joy.
- The Gospel is the command to lay down your weapons of rebellion against the God of the universe.
- The Gospel exists to glorify one being [God] over every other.

I. Introduction

A. Last 2 weeks

1. *Losing heart*—beginning to lose our persistence in prayer.
 - a. We were reminded that the question is not “Will God answer my prayer?” but instead, “Am I going to be persistent in prayer in the first place?”
2. *Losing perspective*—beginning to think pridefully about ourselves and our walk with Christ.
 - a. Today we will be challenged in our sense of superiority to others.

B. This week

1. *Losing focus*—beginning to lose clarity about what the gospel is and what it calls us to.
 - a. This morning we will remind ourselves of what the gospel actually is. In other words, we will be reminded of the actual content and call of the gospel.

II. The Confrontation—vv. 18-20

A. The Question—*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*

1. Notice how this Rich Young Ruler approaches Jesus.
 - a. He calls Him “good teacher”.
 - i. Why? What’s his angle?

ILL: You must come to some sort of conclusion as to what sort of person Jesus is. We do not have the right to simply remain neutral. It is amazing to me that every religion has to do something with Jesus. To Jews he is a misunderstood rabbi. To Muslims, he is a prophet like Muhammed. Every other religion seems to feel a need to include Jesus. On the other hand, when was the last time you heard a Christian trying to say that Muhammed was one of us? NO.

B. The Qualification—*Why are you calling me good?*

1. What is Jesus’s point here?
 - a. Is He saying that He is not good?
 - b. Is He trying to draw something out of the Rich Young Ruler?
 - i. He is trying to get the Rich Young Ruler to interact with his own supposed goodness.
 - ii. He is trying to get the Rich Young Ruler to interact with his assumptions as to Who Jesus is.
 - 1) Did he really think that Jesus was good or was this simple flattery?

- 2) Did he really think that Jesus was more than a regular human?
- 3) Did he really think that he and Jesus could be equal?

Point: Compare this with Acts 16:27-31. In this passage, Paul is dealing with a sincere prison guard. In our passage for today, Jesus is dealing with what seems to be an insincere man. There is a difference.

Transitional Point: How would you handle somebody who comes to you and asks what the Rich Young Ruler asks? Would you simply say, “You are ready, brother! Pray with me!”? Would you ask him any probing questions? Would you assume the person knew the Gospel? Jesus is strategic about how He responds. Let’s look.

C. The Commandments—*You know them, don’t you?*

1. Is Jesus really saying that salvation is a matter of obedience to the 10 commandments? No.
 - a. The Bible is crystal clear that nobody is saved by the obedience of the law.
 - b. Jesus is again leading the Rich Young Ruler to a directed conclusion—I am not good. I am a sinner.
2. Jesus is not assuming that:
 - a. Just because this man is asking how to be saved, that he is sincere.
 - b. Just because this man is calling Jesus “good” that he is humble.
 - c. Just because this man is wealthy that he is holy.
3. Notice that Jesus leaves out the commandment that the Rich Young Ruler seems to struggle with the most.
 - a. Again, Jesus is setting him up.

III. The Comment—vv. 21-23

A. What did the Rich Young Ruler say?

1. Obedience? Check! I have done that.
 - a. This shows us the superficiality of his definition of obedience.
 - b. This shows us the stupidity of the Rich Young Ruler.
2. Not only that, but I have been obedient my whole life.
 - a. This shows us the hubris and pride of the Rich Young Ruler.
 - b. This sets him up for one of the classic responses in the history of humanity!

B. How did Jesus respond?

1. Notice that he didn’t argue with the man.
 - a. Jesus didn’t say, “Are you kidding! You are one big ball of sin!”.
 - b. Instead, he approaches the topic less directly.
2. Notice that Jesus exposed the Rich Young Ruler.
 - a. Here is the “one thing” that you lack.
 - i. Does this mean that the Rich Young Ruler only dealt with one sinful tendency?
 - ii. What is this one thing?
 - 1) It is the main thing.
 - 2) It is the obvious thing.
 - 3) It is the most cherished sin in the heart of the Rich Young Ruler

Point: Before you criticize this man too harshly, what is your “one thing”? Could you even narrow it down for yourself? Isn’t it amazing how absolutely blind we can be to our sin? Isn’t it shameful how we teach ourselves to focus on the things that we DON’T struggle with so that we can feel better about (or ignore) what we do.

3. Notice that Jesus challenged the Rich Young Ruler.
 - a. Sell everything that you have!
 - i. Does everybody have to do this? No.
 - ii. Why did Jesus tell the Rich Young Ruler to do this?
 - 1) Because we must lay down our idols...we must reject the things that truly rival God in our hearts.
 - 2) The Rich Young Ruler didn’t own his possessions...his possessions owned him!
 - How about you?
 - b. Give it to the poor.

- i. Jesus was not telling the Rich Young Ruler to sell his stuff and put it in a retirement fund.
- ii. Jesus was not telling the Rich Young Ruler to sell his stuff and give it to Jesus.
- iii. Jesus was telling the Rich Young Ruler to sell his stuff and give it to the very people he despised (the poor) and willingly become one of them.
 - 1) This was simply a call to abandon his idols and humble his heart.
- c. Come, follow me.
 - i. The call of the Gospel is not simply a negative call. It is not simply a call to reject sin. It is a call to discipleship. It is a call to follow Jesus.
 - ii. It is important to know that Christianity is not asceticism. It is not a call to lose this world. It is a call to gain something infinitely better than this world.

C. How did the Rich Young Ruler respond?

- 1. He went away very sad. (perilupon)
- 2. He did this because he was very rich.
 - a. This man counted the cost of following Jesus and sadly determined that it was simply too expensive.

IV. The Conundrum—vv. 24-27

A. It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

- 1. This statement was shocking to the original audience.

B. It is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

- 1. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.
 - a. Interacting with some ways people explain this away:
 - i. The eye of a needle refers to a small gate that a camel had to squeeze through.
 - ii. The “camel” should actually be understood to be rope, not a camel.
 - b. I think that it is best to understand this expression in a straight-forward way. It seems that efforts to explain away this metaphor weaken Jesus’s point instead of strengthening it. It is impossible for a camel to go through an eye of a needle. As we will see in this passage, it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom without a miraculous intervention from God.

C. Then who can be saved?

- 1. If the rich can’t be saved, with all of their advantages and education, who can be?
- 2. Notice that we don’t receive the answer that we would expect!
 - a. Jesus doesn’t say, “the poor” or even “the humble”!
 - b. What does He say?

D. It is impossible for people, but not for God!

- 1. Salvation is in itself a miracle.
 - a. It takes a miracle to regenerate a dead soul.
 - b. It takes a miracle to wean us from the things in the world that we so vehemently cling to.

V. The Compensation—vv. 28-30

A. Peter: *“We gave up a lot!”*

- 1. We have left our own homes.
- 2. We have followed You.

B. Peter [implied]: *What are we going to get?*

- 1. Is the Christian life truly a better life? In other words, does the Gospel provide more than it takes?

C. Jesus: *You will receive more in this age and eternal life when you die.*

- 1. Notice what Jesus says people may give up.
 - a. Basically, a comfortable home life and family.
- 2. Notice why they may give those things up.
 - a. “...for the sake of the kingdom of God.”

- i. There is a very real danger of losing family and friends...losing family over the Gospel.

VI. The Conclusions—*Don't lose focus! Hear the Gospel:*

- A. This is the Gospel. Don't assume your hearers automatically understand it.
 - 1. Whether it is simply "that one thing" or a thousand things, you are a sinner.
 - a. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - 2. There is One who is good, and it is not you or me.
 - 3. This solitary good one, under whose wrath you are standing...He Himself is the one that offers you forgiveness.
 - a. He provided it.
 - b. He offers it.
 - 4. He commands everyone to repent and receive the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf.
 - a. **Acts 17:30-31** "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."
 - 5. Everyone who responds to this will be saved.