

It is what it is?

Week of October 4

What if entrance into heaven could be purchased—bought, worked for, earned—awarded to individuals as a result of their own human strength? Sounds strange, but this seems to be where the rich young ruler was headed as he asked Jesus: “Good Teacher, what must I *do* to inherit eternal life?” Interestingly, the Lord immediately responds to the man’s question with a question of His own: “Why do you call me good? ...Only God is truly good.”

The truth is none of us is good (Romans 3:23) and there is no way any of us could ever earn our way into heaven. The Bible is clear: “Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:9). Accepting God’s free gift of salvation is so easy, and yet living into salvation can be so hard because along the way we find we really don’t want to part with things.

We like our personal space and find it extremely difficult to unclasp our attachment to things. And the thought of change—conforming to new behaviors, developing a new attitude toward money, breaking ties with this world—becomes scary. This is the plight of the rich young ruler. He is eager on a public level to add the “Kingdom of God” to his portfolio, but unwilling on an intimate level to part with his private god of title, wealth, and possessions.

Read Mark 10:17-31

Initially the rich young ruler took steps toward Jesus when he “came running up to Him and knelt down.” But by the time the man began to understand the cost of discipleship—selling all and giving the money to the poor—he took steps away from Jesus.

1. Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you and me. But while discipleship is costly, a fully devoted follower finds that a relationship with Christ is worth it. How has following Jesus been a rewarding journey for you thus far?

Deciding to be faithful even when times get tough truly reflects the authenticity of a person’s faith. Real gutsy faith isn’t about good intentions or doing what feels good. It’s about choosing to be obedient to God’s Word when everyone else is going the opposite direction. Jesus wanted the young man to be unhindered in his desire for eternal life – to be free to follow the Lord, unencumbered by the trappings of riches. But the man was unwilling. At least at this point, he was not ready to trade in his worldly treasures for the greatest treasure, a relationship with Christ. Perhaps somewhere along the way he had a change of heart. We don’t know.

2. How is tithing an act of obedience?

Choosing to obey means trusting the Lord, even when the picture looks bleak. What does the Bible say about obedience in the following passages?

Isaiah 50:7-11

Hebrews 5:7-10

James 1:22-25

1 John 3:16-22

The Bible is clear: if we merely talk about our faith but never act on it, that is a dead faith in serious need of resurrection! As followers of Christ we must guard against the pitfalls of deception and doubt. Deception comes by way of such lies as: “I cannot possibly tithe—I can barely live on what I make now. Besides tithing my income won’t make that much of a difference” or “This is my money, I earned it. How dare the church ask me to tithe!” Common doubts include: “How do I know my money is going where it’s supposed to go?” and “Tithing is Old Testament law. Am I to honor an Old Testament principle?”

First of all, the Lord doesn’t *need* our money, but we need to give. Secondly, it’s not our money. It all belongs to God (see Psalm 24:1). Finally, the pastor isn’t the one asking you to tithe, God is. The Lord expects His children to act on their faith, proving they trust in Him, by giving back the first ten percent of their income to the Lord, God graciously promises to bless the other ninety percent so we will have plenty to live on. The Lord’s ways are always for our own good, and He calls us to faithfully partner with Him so there will be enough “food” in His storehouse (Malachi 3:10).

3. Inner conflict comes when we try to love God and Mammon. But too often instead of humbling ourselves and submitting to God’s truth, as proclaimed through His true messengers (godly pastors, leaders, His Word), we excuse our sin by bad-mouthing the church and accusing the leaders with ulterior motives. God alone gives us breath and sustains our lives. According to the following Scriptures, why is it impossible to serve both God and idols?

Isaiah 42:5-8

Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew 12:33-37

The Lord does not take lightly the condemning words we speak against His Bride. For those of us who have attempted to serve both God and money, the inner struggle is nothing short of miserable because at the core, it’s anti-Christ. In His mercy, the Lord brings us to a point where we are sick of the way we are living—the over-indulgences, the lavish behaviors, the non-stop craving for things—and say, “No more!” As we choose God’s way we learn what the Apostle Paul says is true: that “true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth” (1 Timothy 6:6). When we are content with what we have, and grateful for our relationship with the Lord, we will be at peace with His unchanging Word and generous toward His Bride, the Church.

4. Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Name at least three dangerous pitfalls for those who “long to be rich?”

The Bible calls us to be prudent with our resources, but desiring wealth above all else is a dead-end street. How have you seen this to be true?

Perhaps the most intimate, most private decision we can make is to trust God with our money. The Lord knows every corner of our hearts and He will meet us at our point of struggle and lead us to a place of trust if we will ask Him. **Before we take our faith public we must first take it private**—making things right with the Lord in the secret place. It is a matter of the heart, not the checkbook. By choosing to take one action step forward, we will be taking one step closer in the Lord’s direction. We cannot pass onto our children and family a dead faith. We can only pass on a living faith, one that is active as we seek to be devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

5. Have you agreed to “Take A Step of Faith” by filling out a commitment card to give to your local church in 2016? Share with your Life Group your decision to tithe (or head toward tithing). Close in prayer time, asking the Lord to strengthen you (and each of us) in our decision to follow Him more faithfully.

“And I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sister or mother or father of children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return, a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sister, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.”

Mark 10:29-30

One Year Bible Reading

Oct. 4: Jeremiah 2:31-4:18, Colossians 1:1-17, Psalm 76:1-12, Proverbs 24:21-22
 Oct. 5: Jeremiah 4:19-6:15, Colossians 1:18-2:7, Psalm 77:1-20, Proverbs 24:23-25
 Oct. 6: Jeremiah 6:16-8:7, Colossians 2:8-23, Psalm 78:1-31, Proverbs 24:26
 Oct. 7: Jeremiah 8:8-9:26, Colossians 3:1-17, Psalm 78:32-55, Proverbs 24:27
 Oct. 8: Jeremiah 10:1-11:23, Colossians 3:18-4:18, Psalm 78:56-72, Prov. 24:28-29
 Oct. 9: Jeremiah 12:1-14:10, 1 Thess. 1:1-2:8, Psalm 79:1-13, Prov. 24:30-34
 Oct. 10: Jeremiah 14:11-16:15, 1 Thess. 2:9-3:13, Psalm 80:1-19, Prov. 25:1-5



Text: Mark 10:17-30

The Plain Truth:

We can't take our faith _____ until we take it _____.

We learn three things from the Young Ruler:

- 1) He came running into Jesus' _____ space...**
- 2) He wanted to know the way to _____ life....**
- 3) He took steps towards Jesus when it benefitted him but took many steps away when Jesus got _____.**

There will be a NEW “I was Broke Now I’m Not” class beginning November 4 at Mountain View Campus at 6:30 p.m. Please sign up at the connection desk or go to <http://christnc.com/classes/> and register. This is an impactful 6 week study by Joe Sangl that will lead to financial freedom if the plan is followed. There will be an orientation offered on the October 28 for those who need more information.

Also there is a NEW “I was Broke Now I’m Not” class beginning at Statesville Campus on October 14. This is the same 6 week study and you can sign up at connections at Statesville or at <http://christnc.com/classes/> as well.

October 3 & 4, 2015