

“Nothing Compares” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 22 October 20, 2024

- I. **Mark 10:26-27** - ²⁶And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”
- II. **The path of following Jesus is often unpopular.**
 - a. A university professor named Dr. Addison Leach tells the story about two of his students who were brought to faith in Jesus during their time at college.
 - i. Surprising, as much of the time we hear about students *losing* their faith going to college, but not this time.
 - ii. Their faith in Jesus changed their perspective so much that they decided to become missionaries.
 - iii. The interesting part was the response of their parents, who had a different idea of what their daughters should be doing.
 1. One of the mothers called Dr. Leach, thinking that his teaching might be the reason that the girls had become (in the mother’s words) “religious fanatics, going wildly off into the blue.”
 2. They wanted their daughter to get a master’s degree, start a career, and get something in the bank, so she could have some security.
 - iv. The response from Dr. Leach reminds us all about what’s important... as he told her, “Please just let me remind you of something. We’re all on a little ball of rock called earth, and we’re spinning along through space at zillions of miles per hour. Even if we don’t run into anything, eventually we’re all going to die. Which means that under every single one of us there’s a trap door that’s going to open one day and we’re all going to fall off this ball of rock. And underneath will either be the everlasting arms of God or [the complete absence of God]. So maybe we can get a master’s degree to get some security. But the biggest savings account in the world cannot stop cancer. It can’t stop traffic accidents. It cannot stop broken hearts. It can’t give you anything ... any of the things that only God can give you. He’s the only significance you can have. He’s the only love that you can get and can’t lose.”¹
 - b. When you stop to think about what really matters – I said this a few weeks ago after a memorial service – as someone came up to me and said that when it’s all said and done, nothing compares to having faith in Jesus.
 - i. Maybe we have good things, or a great job, or we work and toil for the blessings that God provides through His good creation, but in the end it will all be left behind, so our faith in Jesus is the most important thing.

- III. **Today's Gospel reading is directly after the story of the rich young man.**
- a. A young man came up to Jesus wanting to know, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v 17)
 - i. Jesus knew a good Jew would think getting into heaven was about keeping the 10 Commandments, so He asked if the young man was keeping them... and the answer was, yes, since he was a child.
 - ii. Jesus loved him, and then told him to sell everything and give it to the poor, and he would have treasure in heaven... and then He said to come and follow Him. (v 21)
 - iii. The rich young man went away sad because he was wealthy.
 - b. Our reading today picks up directly after that young man walked away... because God's creation and blessings became more important than God Himself.
 - i. Jesus knew that the young man was short-sighted and trusting in his wealth, so He challenged him to put Jesus and the kingdom first.
 - c. The young man was a wealthy, devout Jew, and Jesus' disciples were amazed that someone like that might not get into heaven!
 - i. Jesus explains that getting into heaven is impossible – except through God alone... as all things are possible with God. (v 27)
- IV. **The point is that we cannot trust in anything but God and Him alone.**
- a. Each of us are tempted to think that we can add some security to our lives with what we do or what we acquire.
 - i. Some of us think that our bank accounts will give us happiness and peace.
 1. I read a survey somewhere that said people who make \$15,000 a year and those who make \$250,000 a year are separated by only 5 percentage points on the happiness scale.
 2. Not only that, but way too many people see their self-worth in their net worth... which is a terrible comparison!
 - ii. Some of us, like the rich young man, think that if we make God happy by being good, then we should be okay.
 1. Yet Jesus clearly points out that doing good is not how we get right with God... and Paul backs that up saying, "For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands." (Romans 3:20 NLT)
 - iii. Still others of us believe that our education or career will set us up.
 1. Once again, highly educated people, corporate executives, and business owners can be very empty and unfulfilled chasing after the next level.
 - iv. And some of us acquire things – toys like boats, cars, and motorcycles – or TV's, clothing, and furniture – or maybe it's antiques, or art, or jewelry... which we think will satisfy our needs.

1. But Solomon says in our Ecclesiastes reading, “As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.” (Eccl. 5:15) – and Jesus also says, “life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15)
 - b. Wealth, possessions, good careers, and having God’s blessings are just fine... but when we make them little gods in our lives... little idols... we mix up God’s good creation and blessings for the only thing that matters.
- V. **All that matters is what Jesus did for us and calls us to.**
- a. Sometimes we think these passages are about dropping everything and working full-time for the Lord.
 - i. Jesus doesn’t need you to give up everything... sell all your possessions and give to the poor... unless you love them more than Him!
 - ii. Jesus doesn’t expect every follower to be a missionary in the farthest reaches of the world... but some people He affirms this kind of service.
 - iii. Jesus isn’t asking all of us to become a pastor, or a Director of Christian Education, or a deaconess, or full-time Church worker... but sometimes He guides men and women into these vocations.
 - iv. Doing any of these things may be a great service to the Lord – but none of them will earn you favor in His eyes.
 - b. You see, the only thing that earns us favor in God’s eyes is what Jesus did on the cross and in the tomb... as He sacrificed His life for our sins and rose up from the grave to make us right by God through our faith.
 - i. Only the work of Jesus gives us any favor in God’s eyes – because it is the favor of grace which He freely gives through no work or effort of our own... it is by grace through faith by which we are saved – and nothing more.
 - ii. No amount good works, living right, going to church every Sunday, or any other offering can do what Jesus already did – forgive our sins.
 - iii. As we believe in this God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... and we fear, love, and trust in Him alone... nothing compares to that security.
 - iv. We are assured of our place in the kingdom – the salvation that was won by Christ crucified and resurrected.
- VI. **You see, God wants our entire being.**
- a. He may ask for our time, talent, and treasure in different ways as He sees fit, but those things are not our self-worth... God calls us priceless even if we had nothing to give.
 - i. Consider the little children – what do they offer?
 - ii. Think about individuals who have experienced severe cognitive and physical decline due to illness – what can they do?
 - iii. God simply calls us to belief, and this is the most important thing.

- b. Remember, nothing compares to the love and assurance we have from our God... knowing that no effort on our part leads to eternal life...
 - i. But, “all things are possible with God.” (v 27) Amen

¹ Source: Excerpt From: Timothy J. Keller. “A Vision for a Gospel-Centered Life.” Apple Books.