

Luke 18: 28-30; Luke 14:25-33; Riches and the Life to Come part 2; I. Leaving all Behind II. Rewarded in this Life III. Rewarded in the Life to Come

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. It is impossible for man to be saved by way of his own works or obedience. But the inability of our works to save us does not make our work unimportant- nor does it make good work unnecessary as LD 32 says. For those who give up all self trust- who humbly follow and obey- their work in the Lord is not in vain! Jesus is not telling us to do good things to others you will get good things in return- this would be an improper motivation! We are not moved to obedience because we have our heart set on earthly things! As was asked last week- what are you willing to give up? You must give up everything- forsake it all and follow Jesus Christ! Your riches cannot gain life- nor can you serve both God and money! But that does not mean that our God is a spend-thrift! God will not shortchange those who trust in Him! So today we consider the second part of this section- riches and the life to come. With this theme: Jesus promises to richly reward those who give up everything and follow Him!

I. Leaving all Behind

As we come to our first point, we find the calling that Jesus gives to His people- leave it all behind. We found a similar theme in Luke 14- hate everything, renounce it all, deny yourself take up your cross and follow me! So when Jesus said to the rich ruler, sell all you have and give to the poor- Jesus was making it clear that the call to follow Him was a radical call- not one to be taken lightly. In calling us to leave it all- to forsake everything- Jesus wants us to feel the conflict. These are not light, easy words. They pinch us- as they are a sweeping command. The call to follow Jesus is one that must take priority- to be our primary and central identity. Compared to Jesus, everything else must come second! Loving God first means that everything else is hated in comparison! This total commitment is before us! When you see all the things that you have as secondary- I could lose them all- I could get rid of every one of them- and if I still have Jesus- I have gained! I would let goods and kindred go- this mortal life also as the hymn states. Don't hold your life and your things too close. Don't idolize these things of this world. Jesus says these words to challenge you- to get you to think! Do I love something more than Jesus?

If I had to choose this possession or Jesus- would I choose Jesus? Whatever clamors for your attention is an idol that needs to be cast down. So let go of your possessions- your money, house, land or business. Let go of your family- your wife, brother, parents or child. These are not worthy of your total allegiance! These cannot save! To be clear- Jesu is not telling you to no longer take care of your family- nor is He saying that you need to fail to provide for them. But if a choice is necessary- you know what you must do! Forsake all! And some of you have seen this. Some have had to let children go- or cut ties with a family member- other have endured criticism for joining this church or refusing to partake in some event. Some have endured hostility from their own family! Our attitude should be that of Christ- willing to take up our cross- whatever that cross might be! To give up anything that would hinder our faithful following of Christ! We see it with Muslim families who pursue members who become Christians. In Iran you will likely lose your home. In China- persecution by the government. Give up your love of ease and follow me- Jesus says. You can see it in a young man who quits a lucrative business to become a missionary- or a parent that holds off getting a new car so that their children can attend a Christian School. It will look different for each person- but we all need to be willing to forsake, deny, and reject ourselves- to give up anything that would hinder our glad response of faith!

II. Rewarded in this Life

And this is exactly what Jesus disciples did! Peter says in v. 28- see we have done exactly that! We have left our families and businesses to follow you. When you called, we followed! What will happen to us? Well, as I said in the introduction, just because Jesus tells us to be willing to forsake all in order to follow Him does not mean that He is not generous towards those who do follow Him. For you, Jesus continues in v. 29- truly you will receive much more in this time. Jesus begins with a promise- truly- or assuredly. You will receive more- “pollaplasion”- you will get many more in comparison. Whatever you lose- whatever you give up- more will be returned to you than was lost! Now this phrase has been wrongly twisted to mean that if you do good things- or if you give money to others or to the church- then Jesus will give you back more money than you gave away. But let us not forget what we learned last week- if worldly gain is your desire and pursuit- then you are not truly following

Jesus! The good things in this life are not riches that you can hold in your hands as such, but rather other good things that He provides. However, we must also remember that Jesus does not fail to richly provide for His people in this life- and in the next as we will see. So when Jesus says in v. 29- if you have left house or lands for the sake of the Kingdom, you will receive many more times in this life. The fact remains, there is a reward- a benefit that we receive today- in this life- when we are members of Christ's church. On the one hand, there are tangible gifts that we receive! We get to enjoy the shared blessing of Christ- with Christ's people. The gift of hospitality- when others invite you into their homes- when people share with you when you are in need- when people cook meals for you when you are hurting or coping with a new stage in life. Even the diaconal aid of the church is one such blessing that we enjoy in this life as members of Christ's church. We could add to this the God-given Spirit wrought gift of stewardship and contentment that we can enjoy. On the other hand, there are relationship which are from Christ's hand. If you are called to give up your family, Jesus gives you many more family members in this life! Here Jesus is speaking about the blessing of being a part of the community- the body of Christ! For example, living in PEI we were removed from all earthly family- but that does not mean we had no family! No- we had a spiritual family which was a gift from Christ! So when church members become your grandparents- or aunts and uncles- when the little ones here became your spiritual children- you are being welcomed and you are welcoming other people into your family. The body of Christ- the communion of the saints- is one such blessing that Christ returns to those who are willing to give up their biological family for the Kingdom! He gives them a home with others who share their commitment to Christ! As Heb. 6 says, God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his Name in serving the saints. Yet whatever graces we enjoy in this life, there will always be a trials and hardships along with them to remind us of the reward that is to come.

III. Rewarded in the Life to Come

As great as these blessings are- the ones we enjoy in this time- they pale in comparison to the blessing we will enjoy in the age to come. One of the problems with this rich young ruler is that he was nearsighted. He could

only see what he currently had in his hands- he could not live by faith in order to give up what He had in order to gain something far greater! A Christian is one gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what cannot be lost! In the spiritual sense, these blessings include peace, joy, comfort, contentment, holiness and gladness. But there are many more blessings on the way for God's people. The same to categories of blessings we enjoy now can be seen in the life to come- in the age of eternity. We will enjoy both fellowship and possessions! Being a part of the triumphant church means that we will enjoy communion with all of God's people- even our God Himself- for all eternity! Being in possession of an inheritance that can never perish and I Peter 1 calls – means that we will have a residence in the New Jerusalem for all time- and an unfading crown of glory! A heavenly home with streets of gold- mansions in glory- these are promised to those who give up homes of brick and mortar today! This is why Paul could say in Phil. 1:21- for me to live is Christ but to die is gain! So for those called to give up houses or family or possession today- will they miss out in the end? Surely not! Jesus will richly reward- returning whatever was forsaken with interest if you will! Although he may require us to give us something today- He will give us something greater tomorrow! As Luke 12 puts it, 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. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The promise of reward is to encourage you- even embolden you to be willing to forsake things today so that you might follow Jesus unhindered. These rewards are unearned, but graciously promised by Jesus none the less!

To conclude, in our text Jesus not only exposes our idols, He also promises something better than our idols! There is great reward in following Jesus- you will be with Jesus and His people in glory forever! Jesus promises to richly reward those who give up everything and follow Him! So let us learn to have a long term view of what is important- let us learn to not put our trust in things that moth, rust or thief can take away. Rather seek first His kingdom- for where your treasure is your heart will be also!