

Title: "What Then Will There Be For Us?"
Date: June 30, 2024
Subject: Those who pay the cost of following Jesus will be richly rewarded.
Scripture: Matthew 19:25 - 30

Simon Peter could put his foot in his mouth with the best of them. And yet, the guy could ask some insightful questions. One was "What then will there be for us?" Obviously, there's a story behind the question.

Read Matthew 19:25-30.

Peter wanted to know what was going to happen to them because they'd left everything to follow Jesus. Earlier in Matthew 19 Jesus was approached by a man who wanted to know what he could do to get eternal life. Jesus pointed out he had a God problem. His god was his wealth. The man wasn't willing to turn from trusting in it... and went away.

Jesus told the disciples it's hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. The disciples' eyes grew big as the blood drained from their faces. They were amazed. Jesus then used a vivid word picture: v. 24. "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

This caught the disciples off guard again. They'd been brought up with the idea wealth indicated God's favor. Rich people were locks on making it to heaven. They were greatly astonished. Mark's account notes this was the second time and they were "even more amazed." (Mark 10:26) The disciples incredulously looked at each other and asked, "Who then could be saved?" Excellent question - who can be saved?

Jesus doesn't leave them flapping in the breeze. V. 26. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Jesus did more than speak to the situation of the rich, but addressed the broad question of who can be saved. Jesus says with people it's impossible. There's no one who can get saved in and of themselves. There's no amount of good works, personal effort, accrued merit, their own blood they could shed...there's nothing they could do to gain a spot in heaven. No way. It's totally, humanly impossible.

Jesus wasn't the kind who simplistically says, "Take your frown and turn it upside down." He provides hope of a way to be saved. Hear again his words at the end of v. 26: "With God all things are possible." The other gospel writers add to our understanding: "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:27), "With man this is impossible, but not with God; All things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27).

This is where Peter's question comes into play. Some feel he was a mercenary trying to make sure he'd get paid. I believe was sincere. The disciples had left jobs, families, wives, children, parents and homes. They'd made the decision to follow. "We aren't like the rich guy. We left all to follow you. What are we going to get?"

It began when Jesus approached them alongside the sea of Galilee and asked them "Come. Follow me. And I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

When Jesus sent out the 12: "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven..."

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:37–39).

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:23-26).

Jesus replied to a man who’d said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go”: “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:57-62).

“Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33).

When Jesus and the disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, he told the disciples he was going to die. James and John requested to be on the right and left side of Jesus in the kingdom. He told them, “You don’t know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” They answered, “We can.” Jesus replied, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with” (Mark 10:38, 39). He said to all the disciples: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45).

In the last week of Jesus’ life, he told the disciples, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me” (John 12:23-26).

That's quite a load isn't it. Jesus frequently addresses the cost people pay for following him. The disciples understood and were ready to give everything as shown by Thomas’ statement when Jesus was on his way to raise Lazarus from the dead: “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16).

Here's analysis from Francis Chan: *“When I look at our churches, this is exactly what I see: a lot of people who have added Jesus to their lives. People who have, in a sense, asked him to join them on their life journey, to follow them wherever they feel they should go, rather than following him as we are commanded. The God of the universe is not something we can just add to our lives and keep on as we did before...Jesus Christ did not die in order to follow us. He died and rose again so that we could forget everything else and follow him to the cross, to true Life... Some people encounter Jesus and say “Sweet! Jesus, do you want to join the party of my life with this sin, that addiction, this destructive relationship, and we’ll all just coexist together?” But repentance*

means saying, "Sweet Jesus, you are the best thing that has ever happened to me! I want to turn from all the sin and selfishness that rules me. I want to let it go and walk with you. Only you. You are my life now. Help me to walk away from the enslaving, worthless things in life" (Crazy Love, pp. 193, 194, 196).

There were people during Jesus' life who said they'd follow him, but when push came to shove, they made all sorts of excuses and decided they didn't want this Jesus' stuff. It was going to be too hard. The price was going to be too high. Too often people seek a comfortable Christianity. They want to know the minimum necessary to be a follower of Christ, something that's moderate and sensible, not too radical.

How would that work in other aspects of life? What's the minimum a person can do to be a good employee, a good spouse, a good parent. How much time, energy and effort would be the least amount that would be acceptable to the employer, spouse or children? Come and go as you want, when you want?

What Jesus described is the minimum, the expected, to be his disciple. Christianity isn't for the faint of heart. As Kyle Idleman writes in his book "Not a Fan" - "Jesus was never interested in having fans. When he defines what kind of relationship he wants, "Enthusiastic Admirer" isn't an option... The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren't actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them" (p. 25).

When Idleman previewed what he'd write about "what it really means to follow Jesus," he says, "I will talk more about repentance than forgiveness, more about surrender than salvation, more about brokenness than happiness, and more about death than about life. The truth is, if you are looking for a book about following Jesus that lays out a comfortable and reassuring path, you won't find it here. Don't get me wrong, I want you to keep reading; I just want to be upfront and let you know there won't be a lot of free bread" (p. 15). That's a reference to Jesus' miracle of feeding 5000 people with many who only followed because of the free bread.

In another passage where Jesus taught about the cost of being his follower, he uses the phrase "cannot be my disciple" three times. He said to the large crowds who were traveling with him: "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'* Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples"

(Luke 14:26-33).

These verses speak to a person becoming a follower of Jesus. They must determine if they're going to place their trust in who he is and what he's done, if they'll accept his guidance and direction, if they'll place the relationship with him above all other relationships. Jesus doesn't settle for second best. If the person isn't willing for the Lord to rearrange his/her priorities and give the orders, then the person really can't be Jesus' disciple.

Jesus wished all people would follow him, but he knew everyone wouldn't or even many wouldn't. We saw the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he must do to get eternal life walk away. Mark's account says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21). Jesus told the man he needed to get rid of his wealth because his wealth was his god and should instead follow him. Jesus didn't do it to be mean. He doesn't do what he does to be mean to us. He wisely lays out what life will be like for those who follow him.

The same attitudes a person needs to initially become a disciple of Jesus are necessary for living out the life of discipleship. Putting Jesus first can be tough. Look again at the list in v. 29 of what Jesus said people might leave for his sake: houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, fields. Some of you have faced blowback from family members. There can be financial consequences as in operating a business by what the Lord wants. Your bottom line may suffer because people won't do business with a Christian or you pursue God rather than wealth.

Jesus also directs attention to the future - the renewal of all things. It's a way of saying he's come back to bring justice, placed the devil in hell and brought in the heavenly forever.

The disciples will sit on 12 thrones to judge the 12 tribes of Israel. Judas Iscariot won't be one as he betrayed Jesus. Someone will take his spot, whether it's Matthias who was selected by the disciples in Acts 1 or it's Paul. We can leave that to God to figure out. The question is: Which tribe will Peter get? Hmmmm.

What Jesus said about the disciples is great for them, but what about us? Jesus doesn't forget about his other followers as is shown in V. 29: "and everyone...."

The promised reward from Jesus is broken into two time periods - this present evil age dominated by sin and the devil, and the age to come lovingly provided by God. Jesus says during this age we'll receive 100 times as much of the homes, families, possessions. Mark's account adds something that comes with the promised rewards – persecutions. This seems totally out of place. However, Jesus keeps it real. "In this world you will have trouble...But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Christian thinker Malcolm Muggeridge: "Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness" (Homemade, July, 1990). Quite the statement.

Is there something that balances out the bad? "Balance" isn't the correct word, but it was the first one that came to my mind as I was writing the message. I decided to keep it because we often think all the bad stuff in the world has to be balanced by something good. God's not looking to merely balance out all the bad stuff.

It's not talking about ballooning bank accounts or give birth to 100 children. The spiritual gain will compensate for the physical loss and it's preferable. It includes pardon from God, peace, joy, hope, part of the family of God numbering in the millions and millions. God wants to do immeasurably more than we ask or

imagine (Ephesians 3:20). “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (NLT, 1 Cor 2:9).

As the song Counting My Blessings (Seph Schlueter): God, I'm still counting my blessings, All that You've done in my life. The more that I look in the details, The more of Your goodness I find. Father on this side of Heaven. I know that I'll run out of time, But I will keep counting my blessings, Knowing I can't count that high...One, two, three, Up to infinity, I'd run out of numbers Before I could thank You for everything.”

“It’s Friday, but Sunday’s coming” is often used to point to Christ’s death and resurrection. I use it for email. We’re in an “It’s Friday” moment, on earth, in this world system dominated by sin. But Sunday’s coming, a really big Sunday is coming. S-O-N-day – when the Son of God Jesus returns and ushers in the New Heavens, the New Earth and eternity where everything will be God-oriented.

After Jesus pronounces the blessings he gives to his followers, he tells a parable. The purpose is to remind Christians that God is of sufficient character and integrity to so as to be able to reward people properly. He’ll “pay whatever is right.”

NIV study Bible note Mark 10:30 “the life of discipleship is a combination of promise and persecution, blessing and suffering. God takes nothing from a Christian without making multiplied restoration in a new and glorious form.”

Daniel Nayeri writes of his mother’s conversion to saving faith in Jesus Christ from a devout Muslim background (in *Everything Sad Is Untrue*). She gave up wealth and social status before being forced to flee Iran because of a death threat. Nayeri writes about one example of her costly faith:

One time she hung a little cross necklace from the rearview mirror of her car, which was probably a reckless thing to do....My mom was like that. One day after work, she went to her car, and there was a note stuck to the windshield. It said, “Madame Doctor, if we see this cross again, we will kill you.”

To my dad, [who is not a Christian], this is the kind of story that proves his point. That my mom was picking a fight. That she could’ve lived quietly and saved everyone the heartaches that would come. If she had kept her head down. If she stopped telling people. If she pretended just a few holidays a year, that nothing had changed. She could still have everything.

My mom took the cross down that day. Then she got a cross so big it blocked half the windshield, and she put it up. Why would anybody live with their head down? Besides, the only way to stop believing something is to deny it yourself. To hide it. To act as if it hasn’t changed your life.

The last words a 3rd century man who was anticipating death wrote to his friend: “It’s a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They’re despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians - and I am one of them” (Today in the Word, June, 1988, p. 18).