

MARK 10:17-31

[INTRODUCTION]

- How are your Xmas preparations going?
 - What percentage of your gifts are bought?
 - And what percentage are wrapped???
 - Some of us already have everything under the tree.
 - Others like to wait for a crazed, wild-eyed Xmas Eve wrapping session—because who doesn't need a little more stress in their life?
 - This season fills up fast—calendars, closets, to-do lists, hearts.
- And so, in the middle of this busy—sometimes frantic—season, we've been asking a simple question: *How do we prepare him room?*
 - As a church:
 - We don't want thin, surface-level lives—where we get **carried along by** busyness and **caught up in** the next urgent thing.
 - Instead, we want something more intentional—something deeper, something better.
 - To be secure in the love of God...
 - To order our lives around him...
 - And to discover that life with Jesus is the best life there is, and after that—eternal life to come.
 - But to do that, we need to *Prepare Him Room*.
 - Something may need to be released.
 - Something may even need to die, so the life of Christ can grow.
 - Which raises a personal question for each of us this Xmas:

Is there something I'm holding onto that's actually holding me back from Jesus?

[Transition]

- **Last week:**
 - We met Andrew...
 - An ordinary man who gave up comfort to follow Jesus.
- **This week:**
 - We meet another man.
 - He encounters the same Jesus.
 - He receives the same invitation.
 - But this time, the story doesn't end the same way.

[Transition]: Before we listen in on that encounter—let's bow our heads and **pray...**

[THE REVELATION]

Jesus's encounter with the rich young ruler reveals how easily good things can become ultimate things that keep us from following him.

- The man who comes running to Jesus in **V17** is impressive.
 - We don't know his name—but the Bible gives us quite a dossier:
 - **He's young**—which, in biblical terms, means under 40.
 - **He's rich**—he has “great possessions.”
 - **He's a ruler**—a person of authority and influence.
 - **He's earnest**—he *runs* to Jesus.
 - **He's humble**—he *kneels* before Jesus.
 - **He's moral**—he's kept the commandments since his youth.
 - **And on top of all that, he's thoughtful**—he asks about eternal life.
 - In other words:
 - If he were your son, you'd be proud.
 - If he dated your daughter, you'd have to make up reasons not to like him.
 - If he applied for a job on your team, you'd hire him on the spot.
 - If he lived in Knoxville, he'd be on every board.
 - And if he joined our church—we'd be excited.
 - This man has everything...
 - Except the one thing that matters most.
 - Which is what? Jesus.
 - It turns out his **self-sufficiency** is getting in the way.
 - And bc Jesus loves him, he puts his finger on the idol he cannot release.
V21: You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.
 - At this, the man walks away sad—not bc money is bad, but bc he trusts it more than he trusts Jesus.
 - A good thing has become his ultimate thing.
 - And it keeps him from the only One who can give him life.
- He's holding onto something that's holding him back from Christ.***

[Transition]: Which takes us to our question.

[THE QUESTION]

The story of the rich young ruler presses a simple but searching question on each of us: Is there something we're clinging to that's keeping us from Jesus?

- Our young man isn't a villain—he's a mirror.

**Is there one thing I lack?
One thing I need to cut out to prepare him room?**

1. **For the rich young ruler, it was money**—and maybe that’s true for some of us, too.
 - The danger is not having money—it’s *loving* money, *hoping* in money, or *needing* money to feel okay.
 - And if that’s true of us, then the command is literal—Cut it out before it kills you.
 - I know people—here in our church—who have done exactly that.
 - They’ve sensed their wealth could be dangerous spiritually.
 - So they’ve chosen to live simply and give generously...
 - They’ve stored up their treasure in mission work, orphanages, the bellies of the poor—and, ultimately, in heaven.
 - They’ve stewarded it by giving it away.
 - Maybe that’s something God is calling us to consider...
 - Year-end is good time to examine the place money has in our hearts.
 - And there’s no better test than by calculating how much we were willing to give away.

[Transition]: But if money isn’t *our* issue, let’s not congratulate ourselves too quickly.

- Because the deeper question isn’t about wealth—it’s about **self-reliance**.
- For some of us, the “one thing” might be something else:

2. For me—one of my things is responsibility... [share my story]

3. What is it for you?

- **Maybe it’s competence:** You deal with life’s problems by working hard, then working harder. It’s the thing you rely on to cope. But while hard work is good, it’s metastasized. You rely on your gifts and work ethic—instead of trusting Jesus.
- **Maybe it’s control:** You manage every detail of your kids’ lives—their schooling, schedule, extracurriculars, and all the rest. To make things okay, you feel the need to manage every outcome—instead of trusting Jesus.
- **Maybe it’s approval:** You’ll do whatever it takes to make certain people happy. You can’t walk into a room, be yourself, and let the chips fall where they may. For things to be okay, you need to manage certain relationships—instead of trusting Jesus.
- **Or maybe it’s being right.** The approval you care about is your own. Even when you’re in the wrong, you talk around it, justify it, and never fully own it. You must make yourself right in your own eyes—instead of trusting Jesus.

[Diagnostic Questions]: Do you know what it is for you?

- It’s hard to give up what we don’t have the insight or vulnerability to name.
 - So, here are a few diagnostic questions we can ask ourselves—not to shame us, but to help us tell the truth.
1. What do I instinctively run to when I feel anxious, threatened, or overwhelmed?
 2. When nothing else demands my attention, what do my thoughts effortlessly go to?
 3. What gets my emotions out of control—too heated, angry, defensive, or upset?

4. What would those who know me best suggest?
5. What keeps me up at night?
6. What, if it were taken away, would make me feel like I wouldn't be okay?
7. What am I most afraid Jesus might ask me to let go of?

[Transition]

- Good things become *ultimate things* when they get in the way of Jesus.
 - If anything—good or bad—sits on the throne of our hearts...
 - Jesus asks us to remove it—to prepare him room.
- And here's the good news: When we let go, he doesn't leave us empty—which takes us to the promise of this text.

[THE PROMISE]

Yes—in love, Jesus invites us to cut out whatever competes with him BUT in response to this sacrifice—he promises joy.

V29: Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time... with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

- You see what Jesus is saying?
 - Whatever you release for my sake—I will replace with something better.
 - The small things you're holding onto—I will replace **a hundredfold**.
 - He's trying to make our lives richer, not poorer.
 - He's calling us to something better, not worse!
- How does this work?

1. Sometimes, he literally blesses us a hundredfold.

- I think of a young adult I love...
 - She came to faith through friends and a campus ministry.
 - Alive for Jesus, she wanted to go to India on a mission trip.
- The only problem was—her parents weren't happy about it.
 - They thought her devotion to Jesus was too extreme, a little cult-like.
 - So she had to raise the money without parental support.
- Until our church heard about her...
 - In just a few hours, you stepped in.
 - You gave more than she needed—and even paid for one of her friends to go on the trip.
 - She thought it was incredible—I told her this is how the church family works.
- But you see what happened, right?

***She gave up family approval; we gave up a little money—
And all of us received more in return.***

[Transition]: So that's one way we receive a hundredfold—but I think there's an even better way too...

2. Sometimes he blesses a hundredfold—and sometimes he is the hundredfold.

- The best thing about giving things up for Jesus is how it gives you more of Jesus himself.
- Do you embrace what I said a moment ago?
 - He's trying to make our lives richer, not poorer.
 - He's calling us to something better, not worse!
- The invitation is to put down counterfeits—so we might receive the real thing in him.
 - The place in your heart that longs for **control**...
 - He's sovereign over all.
 - Why trust in your power when you can rest in his?
 - The place in your heart that longs for **approval**...
 - He loves you as you are.
 - Why chase the praise of the crowd when you have the approval of the king?
 - Even that place in your heart that longs to be **rich**...
 - He'll give an eternal inheritance in the age to come.
 - Why hold onto fool's gold when he offers you the real thing?
 - Can you connect the dots from your **one thing** to his **hundredfold**?
**When we let go of the things that compete with him—
we find we already have all we need in him.**
- Imagine we lived like that...
 - People with nothing to prove and nothing to lose.
 - Bc in Jesus—we have everything.

CONCLUSION

- So here's the question this passage places before us this Xmas:
What is the one thing?
 - The one thing that keeps me from following Jesus wholeheartedly?
 - The one thing I cling to because it feels safer than surrender?
 - The one thing I need to let go of so that Christ can fill me with joy?
- Whatever that “one thing” is—large or small—Jesus looks at us...
 - With the same love he had for the rich young ruler and says: *“Let it go. In return—you'll receive a hundredfold.”*
 - He stands ready to fill empty hands.

Don't walk away sad this Xmas—Prepare Him Room.