

May 31, 2015

Rewarded Sacrifices

Mark 10:28-31

B.I: The call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.

Read Mark 10:17-31

One of the things I love about NT teaching is that God so often repeats the same truths in different terms in order to help us bring His Word to bear upon our unique questions and circumstances. The overarching principle I see Jesus teaching his men here is that the call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward. Jesus has already communicated this truth to His men, but they – like us – were slow to understand.

- A. Mat. 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” In other words: The call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.
- B. Mat. 13:45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” What’s the message? The call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.
- C. Mark 10:21 “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” What’s the point? The call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.

We see this truth not only in the teaching of Jesus but in His followers as well.

- A. Phil. 3:7-9 “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.” In other words, The call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.
- B. Heb. 11:24-26 “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” What did Moses understand? Simply this, that the call to follow Christ is an invitation to personal sacrifice for the enjoyment of extravagant reward.

1. I have come to believe that one reason we are inclined to make such small personal sacrifices for the glory of Christ is that we are moved more by what we stand to lose than by what we stand to gain. Or to say it positively, I believe the cause of Christ in this church and the community in which we live would be much more powerfully advanced if we, His people, were motivated more by what we stand to gain than by what we stand to lose.
2. You see Satan is all about switching price tags. His plan is to deceive us into thinking that the things that are eternally valuable are actually worthless and that things that are actually worthless are really priceless. On the other hand, God has given us His word to combat such eternally devastating misinformation. God wants us to understand that true riches, and real joy, and genuine satisfaction both in heaven and in this life are available to those who will sacrifice the lesser in order to enjoy the greater.
3. That's why Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He appeals to our desire to be blessed as abundantly as possible. Yes it is a blessing to receive. But if you really want to be blessed... GIVE! Do not think that there is no self-interest in following Christ. We follow Him for His glory, YES; a thousand times, YES. But He is also glorified when we follow Him with the expectation of soul-satisfying joy!
4. Unfortunately, the rich young ruler of Mark 10 was successfully lured away by Satan's deception. He was deceived into thinking that it would be better for Him to be rich in money and property than to be rich in relationship to the Son of God. And he followed Satan's lie at the cost of the pearl of great price. Or, to say it in Jesus' own words, "he gained the whole world but lost his soul."
5. When we come to v. 28 Peter raises...

I. A Question About Sacrifice:

1. Now the disciples, who were standing there watching all of this play out between Jesus and the rich young man, were no dummies. Jesus had promised the man treasure in heaven if he would sell everything he had and join His band of disciples. And Peter, never one to miss an opportunity to say what everybody else is thinking – responds by saying (v. 28) "Hey, we have left everything and followed you!"
2. And indeed they had:
 - A. Peter and His brother Andrew were casting their nets in the Sea of Galilee when Jesus came walking down the beach one day. Jesus cried out to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers or men. Immediately they left their nets [sacrifice] and followed Him" (Mat. 4:18-20)
 - B. Going further along down the beach Jesus came upon a man by the name of Zebedee who was with his sons in their boat mending their nets. Jesus called them and "Immediately they left the boat and their father, [sacrifice] and followed Him."

C. Matthew Levi was a white-collar “business crook.” In fact He had a rather lucrative career working for Rome’s Internal Revenue Service collecting taxes (Mark. 2:14), and Jesus said to Him simply, “Follow me. And he got up [leaving everything behind] and followed him.”

3. In fact, all of the disciples had come to the correct conclusion that being with Jesus was far better than whatever it was that they had each previously devoted their lives.

4. So Peter says, “We left [sacrificed] everything to follow you.”

A. Notice that this is a declarative statement intended to serve as an uncommitted question. Namely, “Since we did what the rich young man failed to do, what is our reward? I mean, we didn’t just give a little more money in the offering plate for that special cause last Sunday; We didn’t just cook a meal or mow the lawn for that brother who recently had knee replacement surgery; We didn’t just set a week aside for an exciting mission trip. We left everything! Our careers, our families, our comforts. Every- thing!

B. So what do we have to look forward to? If the rich young man was going to inherit “Treasures in heaven,” What’s our reward?

5. Now at this point we might expect Jesus to swing around and put Peter in His place. We might expect Him to say something like, “Peter, when are you going to grow up? When are you going to realize that this is NOT about you? Can’t you get your motives fixed on Me rather than yourself for even one minute? Don’t you realize by now that when I speak of things like “treasure in heaven” I am simply using a metaphor for eternal life? Come on!

6. But, to our surprise, that is NOT how Jesus responds. Read v. 29-30.

7. To our surprise the question about sacrifice leads to...

II. The Promise of Reward:

1. The fact is, in many parts of the world when a person comes to Jesus Christ, he must often turn his back on significant family relationships, which are very dear to him. Many times coming to Christ means a person’s family, even his own wife, will turn against him. In many cultures around the world, this means being disowned by one’s relatives. And in the Muslim world it may mean facing the risk of beheading.

2. That’s what Jesus meant when he included the phrase “with persecutions” (v. 30). This promise is meant to ground the disciples with the kind of unshakable encouragement that will keep them steady and joyful even in the face of personal rejection and persecution. Jesus’ promise here is that everyone, who experiences personal loss for associating with Christ will be abundantly compensated not only with eternal life in heaven but with abundant life now as a member of the precious family of God.

3. Following Christ promises a host of new fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters with whom we will be united forever in the family of God. Wherever we go in the world we will meet precious loved ones who sense a deep and immediate bond of love with us owing simply to our mutual relationship with Christ.

4. And notice there are NO exceptions! Jesus says, “No one” who has sacrificed for Christ and the gospel will go unrewarded. Everyone who makes the costly sacrifices necessary to follow Christ will be rewarded beyond their ability to fully take in.

5. Now, I have never been good with numbers, but don't you just love Jesus' math here. He doesn't say we will be compensated with 100 percent more, but a hundredfold more! “One house gone; but a hundred doors are open! One brother in the flesh lost; but a thousand brothers in the spirit, whose love is deeper and whose kinship is profounder” (Hughes, vol. 2; p. 66)

6. You see, beloved. Following Christ does require great sacrifices, but it's not ONLY about sacrifice! It is also about great reward. James Edwards writes: “To conceive of discipleship solely in terms of its costs and sacrifices is to conceive of it wrongly – as though in marrying a beautiful bride a young man would think only of what he was giving up... The sacrifices we make in leaving ‘homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and farms’ (or dearly believe church families) to follow Christ are nothing compared to the returns we receive in the community of faith both now and in the life to come.”

7. That's why Paul could write (Rom 8:18) “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Application:

1. I love this passage of Scripture and I'm so grateful that Jesus revealed these things to us, especially at this moment in the life of our church.

2. For the past three years we have been praying, and planning, and training, and calculating, and laboring for what is taking place this week. It's hard to believe that the time has come to send Brent and Les away with nearly 50 members of our beloved Calvary Family. Those of you who are leaving are making significant personal sacrifices, and those of us who are staying will experience significant personal loss as well.

3. Personally, after 12 years of fruitful - almost daily - ministry together it is going to be hard for me to lose Brent. Over the years He has proved to be not only a faithful co-laborer in Christ, but a wonderful example of personal godliness, giftedness, and humility. The Lord has used him to wash my feet many times, and sanctify me in more ways than I can describe. Sending this brother (and his dear wife, Keri) away, is going to be a significant personal loss. And a real sacrifice. And that not only true of the Osterberg's, but also of the Trammels, the Allens, the Church's, the Hinkle's, the Lamb's, the Medley's, the Wabbersens, the Whitings, Goodwins, Jenica Moore, and Marianne Peradowski. It will be a great sacrifice to lose each and every one of you.

4. And that's why we need promises from God like the one before us this morning. What could possibly motivate us to send 50 godly, gifted, and fruitful people away from this church family? We are NOT making this sacrifice to earn favor with God. We are not doing it to shorten our eternal punishment. We are doing it for the glory of Christ. And Christ is greatly glorified in us when we make the sacrifices faithfulness requires, believing His promises of great reward.

5. Having said that, beloved, let me also say that I believe that what lies ahead of us as sister churches in the coming months and years is blessing from the hand of Christ that we hardly know how to ask for or imagine. I can't wait to see it, because it is going to be great!

Benediction:

Now, may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, equip you for every good work until we are finally reunited before His throne, to the praise of His glorious grace. And all the people said... Amen.