

Follow Me

Week 10: Eternal Exchange Rate

I. We'll keep the conversation going regarding Chad, but today we're getting back to the Gospel of Mark.

We've been looking at what it means for us to follow Jesus.

Who is Jesus and what does it mean for us to follow Him?

These two questions summarize the Gospel of Mark.

The first 8 chapters unpack Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus has authority. He's our Creator! He's our God!

The last 8 chapters unpack Jesus as the Son of Man. He's our God and He's also our Brother. The One, who is in authority, submitted His will to the Father and suffered so that we might be made right with God.

Jesus exchanged His life for our life and calls us to exchange our life for His life.

Mark 8:34 [Slide]: 34 Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

A. Jesus exchanged His life for our life. We respond to the grace of God by exchanging our life for His life!

B. Sometimes people will pit different parts of the Bible against itself, and this is one of those passages. It's a reminder that both the commitment of God toward us and the commands of God are a vital part of following Jesus. We see this theme in both the Old and New Testament.

1. God called Abraham and declared His commitment to Abraham before God commanded Abraham to go.

God saved the Israelites out of Egypt and committed to them before His commands at Sinai were given.

2. God gave us His commitment most clearly in Jesus Christ.

He extends His love, and His grace enables us to obey.

God's commitment always precedes His command to obey.

But our obedience isn't an elective course.

II. Today, we're going to meet one of the most troubling people that Jesus ever interacts with. He's the rich, young ruler. He's troubling because he comes to the crossroad of eternal life and chooses death. It's a decision that many others also make. Eternity seems so abstract, and the temporal seems so concrete. The more we have, the harder it is to exchange our life for the life of Jesus. But that is what it means to follow as we will see.

Mark 10:17 [Slide]: 17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

A. There are a lot of important questions to wrestle with, but if we believe that we are eternal beings, there couldn't be a more important question to ask! The young man isn't questioning the reality of eternal life; he is questioning the means by which eternal life is inherited.

1. The young man believes that Jesus is the proper source of the answer, because the man knells in respect of Jesus and acknowledges Jesus's excellent nature. "Agathos" (which is translated good) isn't a term of comparison. The man isn't saying Jesus is a good teacher as opposed to a bad teacher. It's a term that means excellent or praiseworthy. This young man has everything the world can offer. He's rich, he's young, and he's a ruler, but he's missing something! He believes this missing piece to his life's puzzle can be discovered through Jesus.

2. Are you missing something in your life today? Do you have everything the world has to offer or maybe you've received something in the past that you thought would satisfy and yet again it has left you wanting? We all need to pay attention to Jesus's answer today and perhaps process it for the first time. Perhaps it's a reminder for us today, but this is the question that we must come to terms with.

Mark 10:18-19 [Slide]: 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother."

B. Jesus responds with a rhetorical question. He's identified Jesus as good in the sense of excellent or praiseworthy and the young man knows that only God is truly in that category. The young man is on to something!

1. Jesus then proceeds to list off 6 of the 10 Commandments starting with Commandments 6-10 and circling back to Commandment 5. If Commandment 5 is a transition between loving God and loving people, then what Jesus has just done is indicated the 6 Commandments that deal with loving people.

Mark 10:20 [Slide]: 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth."

2. The young man has the religious stuff down great, but he's missing a relationship with God.

We must enter into a relationship with God on His terms.

We aren't in position to enter a relationship with God on our terms. That's exactly what this young man was attempting to do! By living an honorable life, he was expecting Jesus to acknowledge that he was worthy of inheriting eternal life.

The young man understood that he was at God's mercy when it came to eternal life. Eternal life must be inherited! It can't be purchased, but inheriting the gift still necessitates a proper response!

Mark 10:21-22 [Slide]: 21 Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing; Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

3. The very One who created the young man was standing before him, looking upon him with love.

Jesus is alive today and He's in authority over all creation and He looks upon His creation with love.

He doesn't force relationship upon us. But He doesn't dilute His love either.

We cannot compartmentalize His love in our lives alongside all these other things.

The love of God is strong and fierce, and it eclipses all else in our lives.

When we accept God's love it overpowers all other affections. It's not that we don't ever waiver or feel the affections of our heart being drawn to things of this world, but we know they are futile pursuits when elevated above our affection for Jesus! All our longings are met in our relationship with Jesus. He is the firm foundation of our worship. Anything else will eventually break under the weight of our worship.

That's why Jesus doesn't cheapen His love by offering it as an option for our lives.

4. [Slide]: We go all out! Why? Because halfway following Jesus is not an option. We can't pursue two directions in life!

- C. What does this passage teach us about who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him? Jesus is worthy of our supreme affection. He offers His love freely but uncompromisingly.

It's the most inclusive offer the world has ever been given. God gave His Son so that whosoever believes in Him will not die but have eternal life (John 3:16).

At the same time, it is an exclusive offer.

[Slide]: Follow Me!

1. It's not about perfection but it is about direction! We cannot be going in two different directions in life. We fail forward; Jesus scoops us up. We keep pursuing. But we can't be in pursuit of two affections. It's impossible.
2. The rich young ruler couldn't follow Jesus and hang on to all his stuff. Jesus with compassion in His eyes looked upon the young man and told him to get rid of it and follow. He was unwilling to give it up. In the end, his possessions possessed him. Eternity was on the table and the young man didn't open His heart to Jesus because it was jammed packed with his stuff.
3. The more I experience other cultures, the more I realize how difficult our culture is when it comes to following Jesus. That might sound like a strange statement to make so let me explain. The U.S. is one of the few places on earth that tricks us into believing there is a:

[Slide]: 3rd Option

- a. There are a few ways we could describe it, but let's call it convenient Christianity. When Jesus fits into the life I've built than great! If He doesn't fit into a part of my life, then I will hold that under my own control. That's a Jesus of convenience not of commitment. That's not following Jesus but a god we've created in our own image. We live in a very dangerous culture, because we convince ourselves that we're good if we just have a little Jesus.

- D. There are only two options: to follow or walk away. To trust or turn away. The young man wasn't earning Jesus's love by giving away His stuff. He was called to respond to the love of Jesus that was already being extended. Our obedience is always in response to the grace of God, but obedience isn't optional. We sometimes live our life that way, but obedience opens up the abundant life God has provided!

1. The young man walked away, and Jesus didn't chase after him. Jesus, couldn't you go back and lower the standard just a little bit? Jesus loved him too much to compromise.

The guy's stuff was in possession of him and if left unchecked would lead to death. For us it might not be our stuff, but anything that holds the supreme affections of our life apart from Christ will destroy us.

Jesus calls us to follow Him because He is leading us to life!

2. If this sounds tough today, it is!

But we tend to focus on what we must give up rather than on what God wants to provide.

The eternal exchange rate is really good!

And we don't have to wait for eternity to experience the abundant life of following Jesus!

Mark 10:29-31 [Slide]: 29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said, "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time- houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions- and eternal life in the age to come. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

3. If I told you today you could invest in something and get a 100-fold return on that investment, we'd all be lining up to invest, right? When we respond in faith to the love of God, and we follow Jesus, there is a tremendous blessing in store.

And it goes into effect now and extends into all eternity!

The greatest blessing of following Jesus is the life-giving relationships that Jesus supplies to those who are following Him.

As we pursue Jesus, life will often get hard, but we will begin to discover others that are on the path too.

a. [Slide]: Picture of Assane and Pierre

Pierre and Assane have been following Jesus for over 30 years and most of that time they've been joined at the hip. They're not brothers but they are brothers. Both walked away from their Muslim upbringing when they met Jesus, and their bond is something special to behold.

One day we stopped by this "fancy" restaurant in N'Djamena and Assane got this little cup of ice cream. And I see him getting this bag and wrapping it up. And he's determined to take it with him. It's 110 degrees outside, so I know it's not going to be a good move, but Assane is determined to get his ice cream to go. When we got to Pierre's home, I realized what Assane had done. He unwraps his ice cream and it's melted, but he pours half of it into another cup. He slides it over to Pierre and they enjoy the ice cream together.

For Assane it was better to have half a melted ice cream with his friend than the whole cup back at the shop. And that's a picture of their friendship.

4. Following Jesus will put us on a path that will intersect our lives with others who are also on the path.

Friends that become like family. Life-giving relationships, first with Jesus, but also with others, are the greatest blessing of following Jesus and He promises to give them to us in abundance. Bonds that will be forged for all eternity!

E. I want us to experience the joy of following Jesus so much! Jesus demands our loyalty not because He's selfish for His own sake, but because He loves us! He alone leads us to life. We can't follow in two directions, but Jesus promises to grant us life abundantly when we follow Him. It's an exchange we will enjoy for all eternity!