

Oct 30

Mark 10:17-31

We have left everything to follow you! v. 28

Call to Worship

L: We are called to follow Jesus.

P: But following Jesus isn't easy.

L: No. It will demand our dedication and our energy.

P: It will change our whole lives.

L: Come, all of you. Come and learn of the Lord Jesus.

P: Lord, we come, seeking your wisdom and your guidance.

Title: What Are We Following Jesus For?

Mark 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.' " 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

28 Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, 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 good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Have you ever made a deal with God – perhaps even without realizing that is what you were doing it?

When I graduated college, I made a deal with God. I said, "I'll serve you in the inner city for a year. Then you can tell me what I should do with the rest of my life." You see how that turned out.

The man who runs up to Jesus and kneels before him wants to make a deal. He wants to know what he needs to do to “inherit eternal life.” He isn’t looking to looking to live forever. He’s wants to know how to have a good life. Based on the exchange, we know he is good man, a moral and upright man who has played by the rules and enjoyed worldly success. But given his desperation, it clear that it’s providing the happiness, the purpose, the contentment he craves. Being wealthy doesn’t guarantee happiness in the first century any more than it does in the 21st.

So Jesus encourages him to give everything away, and then join Jesus, Peter and the others.

He can’t do it. He can’t imagine being of worth without his stuff, and the status and influence and comfort that come with it. It is so, so easy for us to believe who-we-are is based on what-we-have. That’s why Jesus encourages him to offload it. I don’t want it, Jesus says. I don’t need it. Give it to the poor. Give it to someone who needs it. Then come join me. Because you know what? You are not your stuff. You matter to me for who you are. And I never want to you believe that I am inviting you to be one of my disciples because you are rich.

**Jesus to the Rich Young Ruler:
I want you for YOU.**

This is so impossible for the man to believe that he walks away. What Jesus is suggesting just makes no sense to him.

You know who else thinks it doesn’t make sense? Peter, that’s who.

Peter and the man who just walked away might seem to be very different people. But there is one way that they are the same: They both want to make a deal with God.

Peter is upset because Jesus has just watched the rich young man walk away instead of getting rid of everything he owned. Peter’s statement, in essence, is: Hey Jesus, we have sacrificed everything for this project! I thought we had a deal! We’d follow you, and in return we’d receive great rewards... the kind of things you just told that guy to give away!

So the question for us this morning is, **What Are We Following Jesus For?**

If I follow you Jesus, if I surrender my life to you, if I live a moral and upright life, then I’ll be blessed, right? Lots of good stuff, not too much bad stuff? You’ll bless my work, keep my kids from harm, improve my marriage, spare me from serious illness or injury, right?

Jesus’ response to Peter is indeed a promise of blessing. But it’s not the kind of individualistic blessing we want when we want to make deals with God.

Let’s listen again to what Jesus says:

“Truly I tell you, 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 good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”

And then he repeats what he told the disciples when they were having the “who is the greatest among us” argument back in chapter 9: **But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.**”

Many follow Jesus believing that doing so will promise blessings. But Jesus does not offer us a transactional relationship. He offers us a love relationship... a family.... With all the beautiful and difficult things that go with that.

What do you think Jesus means when he talks about receiving this a hundredfold?

Surely, he means the church. He means the people beside you in the pews, as well as his followers around the world, of every ethnicity and every language. He means our adoption into the family of God – past, present and future. He means being counted as daughters and sons of Sarah and Abraham – covenant kids just as much as he means the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and continue to cheer us on. To those who will sing and say “I have decided to follow Jesus, to turning back, no turning back” Jesus promises that you will know what it means to belong, now and forever to God. The illusion that you are separated from God and from one another will once and for all be shattered.

You will have it all... with persecutions. Life as part of this family won’t be easy. It won’t be pain free. Jesus never promises a life that is easy. He promises us a life that counts.

Call

This week is a good time to reconsider the deals you have made with God. Talk to God about, and about the kind of relationship you want apart from deal-making. If your life hasn’t turned out the way you want, it’s time to ask: How is God blessed me in ways I haven’t fully appreciated, but need to thank God for now?

Jim Elliot was not well known in life. He grew up in a Plymouth Brethren church and attended Wheaton College before following God’s call to be missionary. Elliot is remembered as martyr, being killed along with Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and Nate Saint. They were killed by at the hands of the very people they were trying to reach, the Huaorani Indians of Ecuador. His story – and the story of how the Huaorani ultimately came to believe in the gospel – are recounted in his wife Elizabeth’s biography [In the Shadow of the Almighty](#).

It was 73 years ago yesterday when Jim, meditating on scripture, wrote in his journal:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.
– Jim Elliot’s journal October 28, 1949

In just a few minutes, we are going to hold have a congregational meeting. We are going to hear the recommendation of the Transitional Team – a recommendation that will almost certainly bring up feelings of hope and of grief... perhaps in equal parts. We are coming to terms with the fact that there are things we cannot keep. We must also remember all that we cannot lose. We belong to God. We belong to each other. We belong to the great chain of faith. We are now called to consider how we may send that faith into the future. We have given up everything to follow Jesus. We will not be disappointed.

Amen.