

Introduction: Pg. _____

“We Follow Jesus” Luke 18:18-30

Pray. Last week: God leads us. This week: Jesus invites us - FOLLOW ME. — ESSENTIAL CHURCH.

Read Luke 18:18-30

STORY

The question (18)

- There was a young millennial (as Matthew’s gospel tells us :) , who was a ruler. We don’t know if he was a religious leader or a civic leader. We just know he was influential & interested in spiritual matters.
- That interest, led him to ask Jesus one of life’s most important questions: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus response (19-21)

- Jesus redirected his question with a question: “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”
- Then, in verse 20, Jesus measures the young man’s goodness in light of the Ten Commandments, specifically commands 5-9, which all relate to our relationships with other people.
- What is Jesus doing here? His response is multi-directional...
 - First, Jesus wants him to see our goodness is not that good! Let those four words sink in: “NO ONE IS GOOD.”
 - Then, perhaps with a twinkle in his eye, Jesus says: “You’re calling me good. No one is good except God, and I’m not refuting you calling me good, because I AM God!” HA! You’re looking for a path to eternal life, but it’s found in a person (cf. John 17:3)
- But the ruler doesn’t get it. Verse 21: “Hey, I’m a moral guy. Based on the commandments you just listed, I’m in good shape... I got this!”
- His response is both sincere and extremely presumptuous. Like so many today, he presumed God’s standard of goodness aligned with his standard of goodness, which is: “as good as the person standing next to me.”

The Heart of the Issue (22)

- I love the compassion of Christ. Rather than exposing his inability to keep God’s commands, he moves to the heart of the matter in v. 22.
- These next five words are heavy words: “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

With these words Jesus exposes his idolatrous heart before God.

- The rich ruler is having that “Oh no he didn’t just say that to me” moment. “Has he seen my 401k? I roll with Caesar’s crew.”
- But Jesus is doing Jesus things...
 - He clarifies the issue: I’m not looking for performers but lovers. You weren’t made to keep rules but to enjoy a relationship with God, which creates a desire to live in a way that honors God.
 - Jesus forces a decision. He brings us to the tipping point of our true allegiance. Prioritize me or your money, but you can’t have it both ways.

T: Verse 23 shows reveals the rich ruler's response to this sudden dilemma...

The Moment of Decision (23-30)

- He was very sad. Some translations say "very grieved." Why? Because he loved his riches more than he loved God.
- Here's the deal: many people today would gladly follow Christ, if not for that one barrier in their way.
- Jesus exposes how the ruler how he broke the first and greatest commandment, the commandment that defines all other commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me." If you don't keep the first, you can't keep the rest.
- For the ruler, his valuables were more valuable than Jesus. Anything that takes the ultimate place of God in our life is an idol that must be removed.

Luke tells us Jesus looked at him and said: "How difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

- Then he goes on to say hyperbolically: "For it is easier for a camel (the largest animal in Palestine) to go thru the eye of a needle... (One of the smallest items people use one a daily basis," creating a known impossibility.
- This shocked the crowd. People thought riches were a sign of God's blessing. If this rich, moral guy can't enter the kingdom, who can?
- But Jesus replies: "What is impossible with men is possible with God." God does the impossible. He opens blind eyes and gives life to dead hearts! (See Luke 19:1-10)

As this whole conversation transpires, over in the background, you have the disciples... and Peter is processing. He looks back on his life and says: "HOLD UP! WHAT ABOUT US, Jesus! This is what we've done! We left it all for you!"

And Jesus responds in vv. 29-30 by saying: "I SEE YOU!"

- The rewards described by Jesus are staggering. . . . [Did you see it?] both for this life and the next!
- Every sacrifice is worth it! We give what we cannot keep to gain what we cannot lose.

To follow Jesus is to make a costly commitment that delivers a greater reward! This story takes us to the heart of what it means to follow Jesus, and as Peter highlights in verse 28, we do it together: "WE have left everything to FOLLOW YOU."

That's our message today...

"We Follow Jesus" Luke 18:18-30

Why do I want to put a heavy emphasis on WE today?

1. This is what it is most essential to our church. Redemption Hill (and any true church) is a GROUP of individuals who come together because they've made Jesus the priority of their lives.
2. Unity is so important right now...
 - COVID: has pushed us away from each other [[church implications - Our online family is not a second class part of our church. We support you, are with you, can't wait to see you...]]
 - Rampant Division in our country where it seems political polarization is the only option.
 - Not to mention, the mission is as urgent as ever. We have to move together.

Let me provide 3 encouragements around this call to follow Jesus together.

1. Unite under his costly call.

The call of Christ is costly.

- Jesus says: "I MUST BE FIRST! NUMERO UNO! Sell all you have!"
 - The leaders of the early church would make statements throughout the Bible like...
 - "Clothe yourselves with Christ." (Romans 13:14, NIV) - FIRST BANNER
 - "To live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21 - All of life is ABOUT HIM)
 - "You died and your life is hidden with Christ." (Colossians 3:3) - SECOND BANNER
 - ****YOU** know it's a hype Sunday when Pastor Tanner breaks out the banners!
- And listen: If you've not yet made Jesus your greatest priority, he is still speaking these words: "One thing you still lack."
 - You may not be loaded. You may not place your greatest attention, affection or allegiance in riches, but what about relationships? what about achievement? what about degrees and promotions? what about your image and reputation? what about safety & comfort?
 - Have you made Jesus your first priority? Have him the keys of your life?
- If not, do so - TODAY! But realize it requires humility...
 - Quick summary of 9-14 (Pharisee and Tax Collector)
 - Quick summary of 15-17 (The kingdom belongs to kids)
 - Just say, "God, I need you! Be merciful to me, a sinner. My life is yours. Save me. Change me. Make me new."
- How we begin following Jesus is how we continue. WHY? There will always be a completion for the place of ultimate priority.
 - By the way, this is not a command for everyone to sell everything they own. It is a revelation that Jesus requires anything that would stand in our way of a complete commitment to him!
 - **What is the one thing holding you back from a complete commitment to Jesus?**
 - Does your calendar, your screen time, your bank statement reveal: "JESUS IS FIRST!"?

What does this mean for our church family?

- Our commitment to Jesus unites us.
 - One person running to the Banner: "Jesus defines me. My identity is in him. He is better!"
 - Another person running: "He is the most important thing about me! I love my friends but I love Jesus more!"
 - And another: "I am passionate about my job, but Jesus is my greatest passion!"
- Listen... Like a bridge that gets stronger with each supporting cable (Think about the Zakim), RHC will be at our best, when the maximum # of people are all in on this call.

T: JESUS unites us! We follow Jesus because WE have answered the costly call. #2.

2. Unite behind his direction.

The shared commitment leads us in a shared direction. WHY? Because Jesus is moving!

The longer I study the Bible, the MORE I'm convinced: Unity is not truly found in hanging out. It's great to hang out. Yes, Jesus brings us together as family, but follow Jesus together means we not only *come together* but we **MOVE TOGETHER**.

Think about it. Patriots fans come together. (Go Pats! Week 2.)The greatest culmination of our coming together as Pats fans is a duck boat parade. That's a good as it gets, and hey! They're great! I hope Belichick and Cam lead us to #7 this season, but

Jesus... brings us together so that we move forward together with him! He gives us a mission that touches every endeavor and every moment of every day.

To follow Jesus is to be what he's about. It is the way of Love. Jesus summarized the two greatest commands.

1. Loving God - Together
2. Loving our Neighbor (Both in here AND out there - BOTH in the family and not yet in the family)
 - Both in here (family... everyday community)
 - We encourage one another on the journey.
 - We bear one another's burdens when life is hard.
 - We pray for one another and support one another.
 - We come together with regularity for all of this and more!AND out there (not yet family... everyday mission)
 - Reaching out to people who don't yet understand God's love.
 - Representing Jesus with more than our words, with our actions!

In many respects, today's sermon builds a bridge to our "SEEK JUSTICE" series next week as we consider "Racism and the Fierce Urgency of Now." Why? Unity is paramount. Not just in the sense of we're sticking together - we love each other, got each other's back - if you're hurting, I'm hurting, if you're rejoicing, I'm rejoicing! BUT also... we're MOVING TOGETHER. We're taking action, we're raising our voices, we're reflecting the justice-filled heart of God TO-GETH-ER

T: A shared commitment (the costly call), shared direction (follow me), and finally...

3. Unite for his great reward.

Did you see the how the costly call carried a great promise?

- Verse 22. "Sell all that you have, and you will have treasure in heaven." Sell it all. Gain it all.
- And when Peter makes the connection - "Hey, JESUS, we did that!" What does Jesus say in verse 29-30. "Truly, I say to you [HEAR THESE WORDS] there is no one [so comprehensive, this is available for you] who has left house or wife or brothers or parents... FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM - MANY TIMES MORE."
- Jesus has a calculator, and he knows how to USE IT!
 - I will multiply your blessing.
 - I will multiply your satisfaction in life.
 - I will give you a sense of purpose every day!

When you look ahead, do you see the glowing footsteps of Christ?

- He is love.
- He is life.
- He is place of peace that cannot be disturbed.
- He is OVERWHELMING, ABUNDANT JOY.

The footsteps of Jesus are glowing with everything good worth chasing after in life. Everything else is a mirage!

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matthew 13:44)

Explain...

Conclusion: RHC Challenge: Earnestly pray Matthew 13:44 over our church family.

1. Earnest... each phrase of Matthew 13:44...
2. Earnest... specific people.. (With specific needs) - Jerry & Shawn (welcome back to Boston) - I see you online and I'm praying for you as you go to work with the joy of Christ. Fa Weezy.. I'm praying for you as you navigate a difficult semester.
3. And with passion.

I want you to know. I've been praying that Matthew 13:44 would come alive in everyone who hears my voice today. If you've yet to follow Jesus, in a sell it all, he is first, he is life's greatest treasure, decide today! If you are following Jesus, keep receiving his reward and keep doing it together!

WE FOLLOW JESUS. HE is leading us. He goes before us. When we answer his costly call, we will experience his greater reward!