

Connecting with Others Like Jesus Did

Session 5

July 5, 2026

*Speaking Truth*

**The Point:** When we invite others to follow Jesus, not everyone will say yes.

**Session Passages:** Luke 18:18-30

**Luke 18:18-23**

**Connection to the Point:** Jesus invited a ruler to leave his possessions and follow Him.

**Ruler** (v. 18). Each of the Synoptic Gospels includes an account of this incident. In Matthew's version (Matt. 19:16-30), he refers to this ruler as a young man. Mark (Mark 10:17-31) referred to him as a man. Luke called him a ruler. By inference, in all three stories, we learn that this man had much wealth. There is no reference to the exact type of ruler he was. He might have been a ruling official in a local synagogue or a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious governing body of Judaism.

**Good teacher** (v. 18). The man appears to have asked his question with sincerity, as evidenced by his calling Jesus a good teacher. His use of the adjective "good" would place Jesus above other teachers. Note, however, that the ruler called Jesus a "teacher." In Luke's Gospel, "teacher" was not a term the disciples used to address Jesus. "Teacher" was the term that those who were not Jesus's disciples used when speaking to Jesus.

**Inherit eternal life** (v. 18). The man was asking how he could obtain eternal life. Interestingly, based on the sincerity of the question, it appears that this ruler was acknowledging his mortality. He recognized that something was missing from his life, and he hoped that Jesus could supply the answer. For Jews, eternal life referred to the hope of life after death. Eternal life, as taught by Jesus, is characterized by being a citizen of the kingdom of God. Eternal life was not simply an eternal existence but the highest quality of life possible in God's presence.

**Call me good . . . God alone** (v. 19). Apparently, Jesus saw a superficiality in the ruler's description of Jesus being good. Jesus wanted this man to understand that only God is good. Therefore, this ruler should only have called Jesus "good" if he was willing to confess that Jesus is God the Son. This truth may have been a subtle lesson that Jesus was trying to convey. No doubt this ruler took pride in his goodness (v. 21). Jesus pointed him to the ultimate standard of goodness—God alone is good.

**Commandments** (v. 20). Matthew's Gospel points to Jesus telling the man to keep the commandments. Luke does not mention this instruction, but the reference to the commandments implies that Jesus was setting the requirements for inheriting eternal life. Jesus recited five of the Ten Commandments and picked them from the second portion of the commandments, which contains six commandments that deal with relationships with others, the horizontal relationships of life. A person's obedience or disobedience to these five commandments would be readily apparent to those observing. Jesus did not mention the first four commandments that dealt with the vertical relationship with God.

**Kept all these from my youth** (v. 21). This was a self-righteous statement. Outwardly, the ruler appeared to have kept these commandments in his relationships with others. But the inner attitude was different. Jesus had spoken earlier in His teaching about hatred being murder and lust being adultery (Matt. 5:21-30). This man professed to be righteous. Why, then, was he empty inside and still looking for the key to inherit eternal life?

There was no admission of guilt or need for God in his statement. He certainly did not understand that God originally gave the law to point to humanity's need for rescue.

**You still lack one thing . . . Sell . . . distribute** (v. 22). Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter. Outwardly, the ruler had kept the commandments that dealt with relationships with others. Jesus, however, saw a greater sin. The ruler had prioritized his possessions and wealth over God. His money had become his idol. We see evidence that it was an idol because of the man's sadness (v. 23) as he walked away from Jesus, the true source of eternal life. The ruler asked what he could do to gain eternal life. When Jesus gave him something to do—to sell all his possessions and distribute everything to the poor and then follow Jesus—the ruler refused to do it. His refusal was a glaring demonstration of a self-centered heart who refused to love God completely and show love to others in fulfillment of the greatest commandments (Luke 10:25-28).

Selling all one's possessions is not a universal requirement for Jesus's followers. For example, Zacchaeus was commended for giving away fifty percent of his riches (Luke 19:8-9) whereas Barnabas sold a field and gave the proceeds to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37). Jesus was telling the ruler that his priority was riches.

**Treasure in heaven** (v. 22). This phrase is synonymous with the eternal life the ruler was seeking. It speaks of an eternal destiny for those who surrender to Jesus as Lord.

**He became extremely sad . . . very rich** (v. 23). This is the first mention in Luke's Gospel of the ruler's riches. From his reaction to Jesus's command, it is evident that his riches was more important to him than the pursuit of eternal life. His sadness was not accompanied by repentance. Instead, it was sadness from finding out that the way to eternal life was too costly for him.

## **Luke 18:24-27**

**Connection to the Point:** Riches can be an impediment to receiving God's grace.

**How hard it is** (v. 24). The Gospel of Mark (10:21) indicates that Jesus felt love toward this young ruler. Perhaps Jesus saw potential in the man if he had chosen to follow Him. Tragically, the young man was too attached to his wealth. Perhaps with sadness in His voice, Jesus exclaimed how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus's statement was contrary to the prevailing Jewish first-century attitude. Jews saw wealth as a sign of God's favor. Yet, Jesus stated that riches is a barrier to God's favor. Jesus was illustrating the conflict that arises between earthly riches and a commitment to God as the preeminent aspect of a person's life.

**Enter the kingdom of God** (v. 24). The key to entering the kingdom of God or inheriting eternal life is a humble confession of the need for God and His forgiveness. It comes with the renouncement of any effort on our part and a confession of absolute dependence on God alone for salvation. The difficulty arises because those with riches tend to rely on their riches to navigate life. The idol of prosperity holds those in its grasp with great tenacity.

**Easier . . . camel . . . eye of a needle** (v. 25). Jesus reinforced His statement about the impossibility of the rich becoming a part of God's kingdom by setting up a comical hyperbole. The picture of a camel attempting to thread its way through the eye of a sewing needle is ridiculous and an impossibility. A rich person buying their way into the kingdom is equally as impossible. A few Bible commentaries in the past have referred to a gate leading into Jerusalem called the Needle's Eye, through which a camel might pass on their knees. The point of the reference is that the only way to God is on our knees. There is no historical or archaeological evidence of such a gate in Jerusalem. Thus, the idea of such a gate might make a good sermon point, but current biblical archaeology does not support it. Jesus is just pointing to the impossibility of entering the kingdom of God due to dependence on riches.

**Those who heard** (v. 26) this saying from Jesus were shocked. Luke does not specifically mention who made up this audience, but it included the disciples, others who followed Jesus, and likely curious bystanders. These witnesses had listened with interest to this discussion between the ruler and Jesus. They may have even been secretly in support of the ruler because he seemed like the perfect candidate for the kingdom of God. When Jesus turned him away because of his love of riches and spoke of the great difficulty the rich would have in entering the kingdom of God, they were shocked.

**Then who can be saved?** (v. 26). The question from the crowd echoes the general belief in Judaism that riches were a sign of God's blessings and favor. Implicit in this thought is the idea that it should be easier for the rich to enter the kingdom because they are already experiencing God's favor. Jesus's statement about the great difficulty of the rich inheriting the kingdom of God flew in the face of the conventional wisdom of that day. What the crowd was saying was this: "If the rich cannot earn salvation, is there any hope for the rest of us?"

**Possible with God** (v. 27). Jesus was quick to point out that things that are impossible from a human standpoint are always possible with God. Entering the kingdom of God—that is, receiving the gift of eternal life—is always a result of God's grace and mercy. Human beings can do nothing to merit such a salvation. It is always impossible from the human side of the equation, but it is always possible in God's grace.

## Luke 18:28-30

**Connection to the Point:** Those who choose to follow Jesus receive benefits now and for eternity.

**Peter said** (v. 28). Peter spoke up on behalf of the disciples. Peter had emerged as the unofficial leader of the group of disciples. Perhaps motivated by his astonishment at Jesus's pronouncement concerning the impossibility of the rich entering the kingdom, Peter wanted to know if there was any possibility for those who owned little to be included in the kingdom.

**Left what we had. . . and followed** (v. 28). Peter pointed out that the disciples had abandoned what they had to follow Jesus. The Greek word for "left" (*aphiēmi*) means to abandon or leave behind. The disciples had left what belongings they had, which likely included homes, possessions, occupations, and even family. This statement brings to mind the calling of Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4:20: "Immediately left their nets and followed him." Matthew recorded a similar statement of James and John (Matt. 4:22), who left their boats and their father. While some interpret Peter's words to be quite materialistic, Jesus didn't rebuke him. Instead, He promised a reward for those who follow Him.

**Truly I tell you** (v. 29). In Greek, "truly" is the word *amen*. This expression is spoken by Jesus over seventy times in the Gospels. Amen was an expression used in Judaism to affirm the truth of a statement. Jews often used the word at the end of a statement to verify the statement's truthfulness. Jesus, however, placed it at the beginning of His statements to give strong confirmation that what He was about to say was valid and essential for those listening. It was Jesus's way of saying, "Listen up!"

**No one who has left . . . because of the kingdom of God** (v. 29). Peter asked Jesus for the benefit of the Twelve. Jesus's answer was more general and included all those who sacrifice to follow Him. The sacrifice Jesus spoke of was not limited to leaving possessions and family behind. Instead, it included any sacrifice that occurred while following Jesus. Jesus emphasized the sacrifice of relationships (wife, brothers, sisters, parents, children) over material possessions (house). Jesus used the phrase "because of the kingdom of God" to accentuate that committing to Jesus Christ requires daily obedience to His leading. To those who follow Him and pay a price, Jesus granted a marvelous promise.

**Receive many times more** (v. 30). What Jesus wanted His followers to know was that being a part of God's kingdom was a greater blessing than earthly possessions and relationships. Receiving in Jesus's kingdom does not refer to worldly goods or riches but to eternal rewards. Financial prosperity is temporary, while participation in the kingdom of God is eternal. The reward of being part of God's kingdom comes as a gift from God; it is not something that is earned or merited. Believers who experience a lack of prosperity should not deduce that their lack of material riches indicates the Lord has overlooked them.

**At this time** (v. 30). The reward promised by Jesus is not primarily material, but spiritual blessings, such as inner peace, joy, purpose, and daily victories. The blessings come about because of sacrifice. That sacrifice is not just leaving possessions and family behind, but it could also include suffering for the sake of Christ. Jesus was assuring Peter and the other disciples that their sacrifices would not go unrewarded in eternity. In the following verses, Jesus returns to the theme of crucifixion and death.

**Eternal life** (v. 30). By ending with the reference to eternal life, this passage has come full circle from the initial question of the ruler, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" While the disciples who follow Jesus might forfeit house and family in this life, the Lord promises them an eternal house (John 14:2-3) and family (Eph. 3:15).

**Age to come** (v. 30). The Bible speaks of this time and of the age to come. Both phrases are linked to the second coming of Christ. This time, then, would be the period between creation and the second coming of Jesus Christ. The age to come will commence with Jesus Christ's coming again and extend into all eternity. This time will be the period when eternal rewards and eternal punishment occur. Jesus said that those who follow as His disciples will be greatly rewarded in the age to come (1Pet. 1:3-9; 2 Tim. 4:8). Those who reject following Jesus will be condemned to eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46).