

A. Foundational Elements

1. Sermon Title: The Safest Surrender
2. Text: Luke 18:18-30
3. Subject: Salvation
4. ETS: Jesus explained to the ruler that eternal life comes through surrender.
5. ESS: Jesus calls you to surrender your life to him.
6. OSS: Hearers will realize the rightful place of God in their life, and commit to surrender to his next step for them.

B. Formal Elements

Introduction

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word surrender? Do you have a negative connotation of that word? You might think about surrendering in war. Maybe, you think about surrendering in a game when you are behind by so many points. In this sense, surrender relates to giving up control of your military plans to win the war or giving up your right to continue playing to win the game. By contrast, do some of you have a positive connotation of surrender? You might think about surrendering as you take the leap off of the platform when you go ziplining. Maybe, you think about surrendering as you take one last bounce off the diving board before plunging into the pool. In this sense, surrender relates to giving up control to the forces of gravity and the safety of your equipment or pool. You might have a negative idea of surrender or maybe you have a positive idea of surrender, but this morning I want to talk about the safest surrender you could ever make.
2. Background to the Series: This morning we will continue the “Outsiders” series. During this series, we are discussing God’s passion for those outside the family of God. We have heard about God’s heart to leave the ninety-nine to save the one. We have discussed God’s love toward a woman who was seen as the worst of sinners by the Pharisees. We have discussed God’s power to deliver a man possessed by many demons. Today, we will look at God’s authority as we discuss his call to surrender your life to him.
3. Background to the Sermon: We are looking at the story of Jesus interacting with the rich ruler. Turn with me to Luke 18. We will find verse eighteen where the story begins and read all the way through verse thirty. This story comes after two other stories in the ministry of Jesus related to entering the Kingdom of God. The first story discussed justification before God with a Pharisee and Tax Collector. The second story discussed humility in coming to God as children are brought to Jesus. The third story, our story for today, discusses the surrender needed when entering the Kingdom of God. In other words, today we will be talking about the surrender needed for salvation.

Body

I. **A Righteous Ruler (v. 18-21)**

EXP: As the story opens, Luke introduced us to a main character. This character is a man who is described as a ruler. Luke did not mention the type of ruler he was. Earlier in the gospel of Luke, we see mentions of a ruler of a synagogue, a ruler of a civil court, and a ruler of the pharisees. Here, Luke does not care to mention what type of ruler this man is. He only wants us to know this is a man that has some authority, some power.

Later in the story, we also see that this man is well off. The Bible says in verse 23 that this ruler is extremely rich. This is why some translators suggest the title the rich ruler, or the rich young ruler.

ILL: The picture coming to my mind of this character is the ideal American. We know this man isn't an American, because in the first century America did not exist. However, he holds the same attributes that most would consider the American Dream. The man is in a position of power and authority. He must in some way be successful because he is still in that position. In addition, the ruler is extremely wealthy. The man was probably dressed nicely. The man was probably respected. The man that Luke has presented to us looks a lot like the man we might see on the cover of Forbes Magazine for the edition 30 rising business stars under 30 years of age. This man epitomizes the ideal American.

Furthermore, We find out that this man has come to Jesus to ask about eternal life. But he is not just asking about the topic in general, this man is interested in how to enter the Kingdom of God. This is no casual interest. The ruler is determined to find out how someone might enter the Kingdom of God. He really wanted to know how *he* might inherit eternal life. The Bible says he asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

APP: This man could not have chosen a better person to ask this question. Listen to me, if you want to know how to have a relationship with God, if you want to know how to enter the Kingdom of God, if you want to know how to receive eternal life, you ought to ask Jesus. If you are unsure today about if you have eternal life, can I tell you that there is no other place or person to go to besides Jesus. You can go to a pastor, a church leader, a parent, or a friend, but if they tell you anything besides what Jesus tells us in the Word of God you are not getting the truth about the Kingdom of God.

EXP: This man asked Jesus, and Jesus responded with some commandments of God from the Old Testament Law. Jesus said, "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother." Do these commandments sound familiar? I would think that they might. These are five of the ten commandments God gave to his people in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

The man must have been pleased by what Jesus said, because he responded that he had indeed kept those commandments since he was a youth. The man continued to display the American ideal. He is successful. He is wealthy. And now, we hear that he is a morally good person.

ILL: Have you ever seen a kid go to their parents with their chores already done. The little girl might come to her mom on a Saturday afternoon and ask what they are going to do today. The mom responds well sweetie today is the weekend, so we are going to do our chores today. You know that your chores are to clean your room, fold and put away your clothes, and help your little brother do the same. Her excitement starts to widen her eyes, as she realizes she has done everything she will be asked to do. She exclaims back to her mom almost too quickly for her tongue to keep up, "I have done all that this morning. What will we get to do the rest of the day?" This little girl is relieved and overjoyed that she has done what she needed to do and now play time is here. Typically, the mom will be pleased by the obedience and proactiveness of her daughter. However, she will also probably go check to make sure those chores were done correctly. She will make sure the room is actually clean, the laundry is actually folded nicely and put in the right places, and her little brother isn't building a fort with his own dirty laundry while a sign has been taped to his door that says, "Tell me if you need help," signed older sis.

EXP: It seems that Jesus, here, is doing some checking just like the mother. You see, the Bible says in John 2:25 that Jesus, “knew what was in man.” Before the ruler comes to Jesus, Jesus already knows what is in the heart of this man. Jesus, then, is not checking for himself, but checking for the benefit of this ruler.

Look with me at the commandments Jesus listed from the Law. Jesus listed five commandments all from the second tablet of the Law. These are the commandments that deal with loving your neighbor as yourself. Within this list there are six commandments. However, Jesus only listed five. Can you find the one that is missing? Jesus did not include the commandment not to covet. Isn't that interesting? The only command, regarding love for others, that Jesus did not mention to this wealthy man is the commandment not to desire wealth, possessions, or stuff for your fulfillment, security, and satisfaction.

In addition to leaving out this commandment from the second table, Jesus left out the entire first table of the Ten Commandments. This section included the four commandments that deal with love for God. It seems that Jesus is trying to reveal something to this man. What might that be?

Well, I think it comes to us at the beginning of the interaction. Jesus is so intentional. Look with me at verse 18. The Bible says, “And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” Jesus sees that this man has a man-centered view of goodness. The ruler honestly believes that he has fulfilled the commandments, and he also believes that teachers should receive the title of good. But, Jesus thought otherwise. Jesus said, when it comes to goodness, when it comes to being in line with the commandments, when it comes to being blameless without blemish, that status is limited to one being and he is God.

TS: Might we continue to see what Jesus said about how this ruler might be accepted by the only good being in existence.

II. A Salvific Surrender (v. 22-27)

EXP: Jesus pinpoints this man's idolatry in his response. Remember, Jesus responded to the man's comment that he on his own has a goodness that fulfills the Law. Jesus did not argue with his comment of obedience to the five commandments listed, though I believe he could have. Instead, Jesus pinpointed the man's issue. He said, “One thing you still lack.” Notice, here, that Jesus prescribed one thing, yet he listed two activities. Jesus called the man to sell all he had and then come follow him. I submit to you this morning that Jesus was calling this man to turn from the idol of money and turn to the master of immortality. Jesus was calling for this man to repent and believe in order to surrender his life and be saved.

This is the only way one can enter the Kingdom of God. An individual must repent and believe. Repentance is to turn from your idols any and all of the things which you are trusting as your God. Any and all of the things that you see as bringing your satisfaction, your fulfillment, your security, your joy. When you wake up in the morning and say to yourself if I just got that today then I would be happy. That thing has become your God, your idol. You must repent, or turn, from that item, person, desire.

You must turn, but not turn from one idol to another. You are to turn to the one true God. You are to believe that God is who he said he is and does what he says he does. This is consummated for us in the cross. Where God gifts his goodness to anyone who might believe. You see, the issue that keeps us from the Kingdom of

God is our sin, or that we are not good on our own. Yet, God sends Jesus who is good. He who knew no sin, died for our sin, so that we might have his goodness. He takes our punishment so that we have the opportunity to have a relationship with God. He demonstrates this great act of love for us and offers salvation to you as a free gift, and asks for you to trust him.

ILL: This is the one command Jesus shared in the passage. Repentance and belief are two sides of the same coin. Repentance emphasizes turning from, and belief emphasizes turning to, however the action happens all together. Heads and tails are on the same coin.

EXP: This command sounds very similar to what Jesus said just two chapters back. In Luke 16, Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). Jesus is calling for this man to place God in the rightful place in his life. God is Lord of Lords. God is the King of Kings. God is God. He will not be satisfied with occupying any other position in your life besides the supreme priority. God will be worshiped as God. Therefore, you must surrender to him. No other idol will be allowed to take his place.

ARG: Some folks are opposed to the Christian faith, because they think that the church just wants all your money. They are afraid that when they come into a worship gathering they will hear the pastor say the same thing Jesus said, “Sell all you have so we can give it to the poor.” Can I let you in on a little secret? God and therefore the followers of God want so much more than just ten percent of your money. God wants all of you. He wants all your money, all your relationships, all of yourself to be devoted to his will.

ILL: And, praise God that he does. Can you imagine a husband who only wants portions of his wife? Sweetie, I want your money, but I’d rather not have your debt. Honey, I want your good days, but I’d rather not have your bad. Love, I want your healthy days, but I’d rather not have your sick days. We might look at that person and say, “Look, man, you better take a closer look at those vows before the wedding day.” In contrast to this loser, God wants all of you. He sends his own son to make you his own. So that you might have the privilege of entrusting all of yourself to him. He will be your God, and you will be his people.

EXP: The ruler hears the decision and walks away sad. The Bible does not leave us guessing as to why. Luke recorded, “But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.” The man judged his money as more valuable than God.

Then, Jesus expounded on the situation using a hyperbole. He said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus said it is easier for the largest animal in all of Israel, a camel, to go through the smallest opening, a needle eye, than for a rich man to enter God’s Kingdom.

The disciples began to think that Jesus was placing certain restrictions on those who could be saved. They asked, “Then who can be saved?” In other words, they wonder if the rich are automatically excluded from being saved. They thought well there must be some that are able to be saved and some that aren’t, and rich people fall outside the limits.

Jesus though helped correct their confusion. He said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” The rich man can be saved but only by the miraculous power of God.

APP: Listen here, this is not exclusively true for the rich people. This statement describes salvation for anyone. Entering the Kingdom of God is impossible for any man. Yet, God offers his miraculous power to forgive our sins in Jesus's work on the cross. The Bible says, "The gospel, Jesus's work, is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe" (Romans 1:16). When you repent and believe you are surrendering your personal efforts to achieve salvation and trusting God's power to save you through the work of his son.

If you are not a Christian this morning, or if you are unsure, this is God's Word to you today. God is offering to you a free relationship with himself, because Jesus lived the life you could not live, died the death you deserved, and raised from the grave. Jesus offers his goodness to you to enter the Kingdom of God.

If you are a Christian, then I ask you to consider what gospel you are sharing with people outside the family of God. Are you asking them to trust in something that is not the power of God unto salvation? Are you eliminating portions of God's call to turn from their idols and surrender themselves to Jesus as Lord? Or, are you trusting that the message of the gospel is the only truth, the only message in which the power of God is offered to free people from idolatry, punishment, and hell? Oh, Christian, share the same gospel message that saved you, do not attempt to share any other message besides surrender to the truth of the gospel.

TS: The story concludes with the concern of the disciples. Read with me the scene I have titled, "A Worthy Reward."

III. A Worthy Reward (v. 28-30)

EXP: At the end of our story today, we see Peter state a declaration of concern. He called attention to what the disciples have left, what the disciples have surrendered to follow Jesus saying, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." It seems that Peter, after hearing this conversation with the ruler, is worried about whether the disciples have experienced the miracle of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

APP: Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever overheard something that provoked some concern?

EXP: Jesus brought reassurance to Peter, and along with it the truth of a reward. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life." Jesus noted that for all who have surrendered to God as the supreme person and priority in their life have experienced this miracle.

Look at the the order of significance Jesus noted. He said that God is more significant than your current family. He is more significant than your past family. He is more significant than your home. God is more significant than everything. And, God should be worshipped as such.

When this surrender has occurred in your life, Jesus said you enter into great reward in this life and the life to come. This is so profound. Jesus asserted that entrance into the kingdom of God occurs as a promised reality but also a present reality. He said that living in the Kingdom of God provides reward now and in the age to come. The truth is that the Kingdom of God is present now for all those who live in surrender to Jesus. In this life there is greater value than anything that you might be grasping as an idol.

ILL: When I was a boy, the best place to have a birthday party was at a Laser Tag facility. It seemed like no other place existed when I was growing up. You could pretty much assume, “Well, Jimmy’s birthday is coming up next week, I guess I am playing laser tag this week.”

I don’t understand it. I am not a fan of laser tag. However, I did like the arcade games in the lobby of the facility. I loved shooting basketball and trying to beat the high score. I could have played that for hours.

There were some kids like me, who loved playing the arcade games, but they really weren’t in it for the game. They might have liked the games, but they were more interested in what they could get with the tickets they received from the games. They would go up to the prize counter at the start of the party and pick out what they wanted. Sara might say, “Oh, look at that super cool snow globe with an elephant inside. That is what I want.” Right under that snow globe would be a little sticker that said something ridiculous like 1,500 tickets. So, Sara would go out and get those 1,500 tickets. And, look, some kids were going full strategy mode to get those tickets. They would say, “Zach, basketball only gets you five or ten tickets at most. I am going to Ski Ball or Jackpot, where you can win hundreds of tickets every game.” They would play and play and play. Then, go find mom or dad for more money. Then, they would play and play and play.

By the end of the party, Sara would go up to the counter plop that little receipt from the ticket counter on the table and receive her stunning snow globe. I will say it came at the cost of just 1,500 tickets to Sara, but it probably also came at the cost of tens, maybe even hundreds of dollars from her parents. Sara is completely oblivious to the fact that she could have had so much more value in the money she got from her parents than the value she got in that snow globe. I mean she could have bought ten snow globes for the amount of money she used to play those games.

APP: Sometimes, we are just like Sara. We trade the treasures of the Kingdom of God for the empty promises of sin and idols. Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.” The greatest treasure you could ever have on this earth is life with Jesus in the Kingdom of God. Do not miss that. Do not miss that here on earth where the Kingdom of God is offered to all who live surrendered to Jesus and do not miss that in the life to come where eternal life hangs in the balance.

Conclusion

APP: God speaks to us through his word, and he calls us to respond. How is God calling you to respond today? Is God calling you to turn from your idols and trust him for the first time today? Is God calling you to repent and believe in Jesus alone for salvation?

Maybe, God is calling you to commit to sharing the only message that has the power of God unto salvation. Perhaps, you have been hesitant to share the gospel with a coworker or a friend, because of the surrender it entails. God might be calling you to trust in the same message that saved you to save others.

Maybe, God is pointing to something in your life that you are considering more valuable than Jesus. God might be calling you to make a commitment to leave that sin behind or pursue that step of faith that submits your life to him anew.

When it comes to ziplining or jumping off the diving board, your surrender depends on the safety of man-made equipment. By contrast, when you surrender to the Lord, Jesus, you are giving up control to God. Yahweh God has all the power to protect you, he has all the wisdom to guide you, and he promises to always be with you through whatever you might encounter. Our God promises in your surrender to him to always have your best intentions in mind because he is seeking his ultimate glory forever.

I don't know what God is calling you to do today, but I know it will include a call to the safest surrender. The step might be difficult or uncomfortable, but I know if you are following Jesus it will be the best next step you could ever take.

PRAY