

TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE

Luke 18:18-30

Key Verse: 18:22

"When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"

Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk 8:36,37) Lord, we agree! We know that our lives are the most precious to each person. We can exchange our cars or bicycles. But we cannot exchange our lives. How nice it is to possess the whole world. But when we die, the whole world would be useless. Here we must notice that Jesus used the words, "life" and "soul," equally. Spiritually speaking, life is soul and soul is life. Our physical lives came from the dust of the ground, and they go back to the dust of the ground. But our souls are God's life which he entrusted to us for one span of life. In today's passage, a ruler comes to Jesus to ask how to inherit eternal life. This ruler must be a noble man, because he was already a ruler. But he wanted to inherit eternal life. Let's hear what Jesus' answer to him was.

First, a certain ruler needed eternal life (18-21).

Look at verse 18. "A certain ruler asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" He lived in a very hard world. But, pummeling himself, he studied diligently. Also, from age twelve he lived a life of discipline. Finally he came up to the position of being a ruler. As Nicodemus disguised himself and came to Jesus once at night, so this ruler came to Jesus to ask how to inherit eternal life. There are many people who want fame and wealth. Yet the ruler's coming to Jesus tells us that fame and wealth could not satisfy his empty soul. He came to Jesus and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Look at verse 19. "'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one

is good--except God alone." Here Jesus tested him whether he knew the concept of good. In past and present, people do not know what good is. Some people thought that power is good. Some people thought that courage is good. Some people thought that conquest is good. Among them, Socrates defined good the best. He said, "Noble moral life is good." Thus he became the ancestor of philosophy. When we study the Bible, there is no one good except God. Only God is good. When Jesus asked, "Why do you call me good?" Jesus wanted to know if he really believed that only God is good. When we study the Bible prayerfully, we come to know that only God is good. Psalm 135:3 says, "Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good" (135:3). Psalm 136:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good" (136:1). "God is good" is really a wonderful definition of God.

Jesus asks about a more fundamental problem of this ruler. Look at verse 20. "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" He answered, "All these I have kept since I was a boy" (21). His answer, "All these I have kept since I was a boy," shows that he was a man of illusion, for no one can keep all these commandments. Jesus did not ask him about the first four commandments concerning the love of God. But Jesus asked him about the commandments concerning the love of his neighbors only. Since he did not keep the law of God from his heart, he could not experience eternal life in his soul. Out of his desperation, he could not but come to Jesus to ask how to inherit eternal life.

Second, you still lack one thing (22).

Look at verse 22. "When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" In this verse, we learn that this ruler did everything to fulfill his selfish ambition. And superficially he obeyed the law of God, but his inner heart was selfish; he did not know about the love of his neighbor. So Jesus said, "You still lack one thing." When Jesus said, "Sell everything and give to the poor," it does not necessarily mean, in order to inherit eternal life he has to become a person as poor as a crow. It meant that he must have the law of God with which he can love his neighbor. John 15:13,14 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for

his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." This ruler studied the law of God. But he could not catch the spirit of the law of God. So he could not learn that he must love God, and next he must love his neighbor.

As the ruler had tried hard to obtain his social position and money, he must have tried hard to pass the tests to become a ruler. But when the ruler studied the law of God, he did not master the spirit of the law of God. When he lived in the world as a selfish man, he did not have treasure in heaven. When Jesus commands us, "Love your neighbor," it means, by doing so, we may have treasure in heaven. We, the children of God, are treasure hunters. Matthew 13:44-46 says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." Here, "treasure" refers to eternal life. Those who have the assurance of having eternal life are peaceful and joyful and generous and altruistic. They grow in the image of God. Those who have eternal life are those who think that this world is not permanent but very temporal, while eternal life is everlasting.

Howard Hughes (1905-1976) managed his father's inheritance well. When he was 17, he took over his father's business. When he was between 30 and 50 years old, he developed his movie business and aviation business very successfully and became one of the richest men in the world. But suddenly, from the age of 50, he began to worry about his death by all kinds of bacteria attack. From that time on, he began to live a life of seclusion. He didn't cut his hair. He didn't cut his fingernails or toenails. He was afraid of eating anything because of bacteria phobia.

His problem was that he did not know that God supplies every necessary medicine in our body to prevent harmful bacteria so that our physical bodies are maintained. When Hughes became one of the richest men in the world, the devil came in through his bacteria phobia. He had such big money, but he could not eat, because his fear of death overpowered him. As a result, he died of malnutrition. It's irony that a rich man died of malnutrition. His problem was not bacteria phobia. His real problem was that he had no treasure in heaven, eternal life. On the other hand, those who have eternal life in their

souls can trust and obey the word of God and live very joyfully.

There is a man who gave his heart to God when he was 18 years old. Under Japanese occupation, he could not do much. He took care of several orphans. One of them was suffering from T.B. Reverend Han contracted T.B. from her. Finally, his left lung had to be removed. In addition, he received much persecution from family members. But he took care of the orphans for 13 years. His life of following Jesus had been very difficult, because with one lung he had to deliver messages for 40 years, three times every Sunday. The world Christian leaders decided to give the Templeton Award to Mother Theresa, Billy Graham and Reverend Han.

Here we learn that we must have treasure in heaven. We must have eternal life. In the last part of verse 22, Jesus said, "Then come, follow me." Even if we have treasure in heaven, we must know why we must follow Jesus at the last part of the 20th century. In the course of doing the work of God, we become weary and burdened and feel no rest. But there is true rest in Jesus. Matthew 11:29,30 says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Here, those who have treasure in heaven must take his yoke upon them and follow Jesus. Then they will find rest in their souls. There is true rest only in Jesus. Physical rest is not true rest. God gives us true rest in our souls.

Third, the ruler went away sad (23-27)

Look at verse 23. "When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth." Truth is very expensive. Falsity is cheating and being cheated (2Ti 3:13). When Jesus uncovered this man's falsity, he had to be wise enough to make a decision of faith, being worthy to have eternal life. But he gave in to money and abandoned the truth. Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" (24) Jesus grieved over him. Fallen man's mentality is to grab something and try to live forever in this world.

Modern time is the money-oriented time. The general social consensus is that there is no principle. There is no national direction. There is no humble prayer to God. They want money. They want money in the morning, and even

in their dream. They know that they must have eternal life. But they are sad when they have to overcome their greediness and follow Jesus. Jesus understood this man very well and said in verse 25, "Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." This is the story to the ruler. This is also the story to all of us. We know that we must have treasure in heaven. We know that we have eternal life through Jesus Christ. But most people do not have the power to make a decision to follow Jesus. Many people attend churches quite regularly, thinking that if they go to church, they have eternal life. But they can have eternal life only when they follow Jesus. In other words, we must be Jesus' disciples. When Jesus called Matthew as one of his disciples, he said, "Follow me." Following Jesus is to become the disciple of Jesus. In this part, Jesus clearly tells the rich ruler that he must have treasure in heaven and he must have eternal life. In order to have eternal life, he must love Jesus more than the world. In order to follow Jesus, he must throw away common sense and keep even one word of God in his heart.

Look at verse 26. "Those who heard this asked, 'Who then can be saved?'" This verse implies that the disciples also had a strong attachment to this world like the rich ruler. But Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." When we see the people of the world, we wonder, "Who can follow Jesus in this wicked generation?" But there are many who love to follow Jesus at the cost of their lives.

Fourth, they will receive eternal life (28-30).

But God has his purpose of world salvation throughout history and surely God wants to save all of them through his servants, missing no one. To God, salvation work is possible.

Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" (28) We cannot deny that Peter lost a lot. But Jesus did not say, "You don't have to lose anymore." Instead, he said in verses 29-30, "'I tell you the truth,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.'" John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." When we read this verse carefully, in order to

give us eternal life, God gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, we need clear commitment to follow Jesus. Here Jesus urges us to make a decision of faith. We know that there is the moon, and there is the sun. And there are Alpha and Omega. Things of the world constantly change. No one can expect to keep his family as it is and live in this world forever. But the world is pressing on toward the glorious day. We must make the decision of faith and pile up treasure in heaven.

Truly rich people are those who have eternal life. Truly rich people are those who have treasure in heaven. Truly joyful people are those who have eternal life. The rich ruler had fame and wealth. But he felt empty. He could not boldly decide to follow Jesus because of his selfishness. He was a rich man. But he was indeed a poor man, as poor as a crow.

Today we studied how to inherit life. We learned many beautiful lessons. Our lives are not our own, but God gave us the privilege to enjoy God's life in us. As we know, there are two kinds of life. One is physical life. Physical life came from the dust of the ground and goes back to the dust of the ground. God's life in us is eternal life. Therefore, we must have eternal life. May God help us open our spiritual eyes and begin to have treasure in heaven. May God help us so that we have eternal life in Jesus Christ.