

Becoming Like Jesus

SURRENDER

Mark 10:17-31

Layne Lebo

March 13, 2022

We are a week and a half into Lent and Easter is just 5 weeks away. Historically, Lent has been a season for new believers and established Christians to focus on discipleship, growing in our relationship with Jesus. Discipleship is something God has been stirring in Pastor Evan's heart for the past year or so as he and his wife, Lauren, have wrestled with how they personally can grow in Christ and how we as a pastoral staff can help people at McBIC grow as disciples.

Since Evan has been thinking, praying, reading and studying about discipleship, I encouraged him to channel that focus into a sermon series. Discipleship is a huge topic—not one we can realistically exhaust in 6 sermons—but our staff thought Lent was the perfect time to dig deeper into this topic.

Our sermon theme during Lent is "Becoming Like Jesus." Becoming like Jesus is a noble aim—there is no higher calling for us—but a danger for us is that you and I see the phrase, "Becoming Like Jesus," and we determine that by golly we're going to discipline ourselves, work hard and become like Jesus, even if it kills us. And if that's the approach we take to "Becoming Like Jesus," it very well may kill us. I'd like you to repeat this phrase with me. **"I'm incapable of becoming like Jesus in my own strength."** I don't have the ability to become like Jesus and you don't have that ability either. *"Ok, Pastor Layne."* You might be thinking. *"If we're incapable of becoming like Jesus, what are we doing in this series?"* I commend you for that question. It's a great one. Listen to the Apostle Peter's words in 2 Peter chapter 1. I'm going to read some selected verses from verses 3-11...

2 Peter 1:3-11 selected

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;⁶ and to knowledge, self-control...

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

It is God's divine power that makes our transformation possible, but we're told two times to "*make every effort.*"

Our goal to become like Jesus isn't something we strive for and accomplish in our own strength. No, we position ourselves in such a way that God's work of transformation can be accomplished in us. The spiritual practices or disciplines we're exploring in this series—Solitude, Surrender, Sabbath and Mission—help position us in such a way that God's work of helping us become like Jesus is accomplished in us.

How many of us attempted some of the solitude practices suggested in our Lent Devotional Booklet? I hope you did. I like the simplicity of this booklet. It's not overwhelming. It's very simple. Our aim is to provide you with some suggestions that you can practice during Lent and then hopefully incorporate some of them into the routine of your life after Easter.

I'd like to begin having us focus on this morning's practice by telling you a short story found in the Bible in Matthew, Mark and Luke's Gospels. It's the story of the Rich young man.

The Rich Young Man Matthew 19: 16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-23

A wealthy, young man approached Jesus, bowed in front of Him and asked, "*Good teacher, what do I have to do to ensure I will get eternal life.*" After questioning why the young man called him "good," Jesus told him, "*If you want eternal life, keep the commandments.*" "*Which commandments?*" the man asked. Jesus responded, "*You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not lie, and honor your father and mother.*" The man quickly responded, "*I have kept all of these since I was a boy.*" Then Jesus looked at him and loved him. Then Jesus responded, "*You still lack one thing. Go and sell everything you have. Give it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me.*" When the young man heard Jesus' response he walked away sad, because he had great wealth.

The spiritual practice we're exploring today is SURRENDER. I've shared this story with us, because I think it's a great story about surrender—giving up earthly, material things so we can be reminded of spiritual reality and so we can more deeply connect with Jesus. We'll return to the story of Jesus' interaction with the Rich Young Man in a few minutes, but first, let's look at some definitions of surrender...

- *To yield power, control, or possession under compulsion or demand*—surrendering a city in war
- *To give up completely or agree to forgo in favor of another*—surrendering my right to a 2nd helping of dessert so someone else may have it.

- *To give oneself up into the power of another as a prisoner—waving a flag of surrender in war*
- *To give oneself over to something such as an influence—surrendering my self-control to alcohol or drugs*

Jesus said, *“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”* Matthew 10:39 For our purposes, I’ll define Surrender as *“Letting go of what I can’t keep to gain what I can’t lose.”*

The Rich Young Man Matthew 19: 16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-23

Let’s return now to the story of the Rich Young Man. After telling Jesus he had kept all the commandments Jesus mentioned since he was a boy, Jesus said, *“There’s one thing you still must do to gain eternal life. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor.”* And when the young man heard this he walked away sad, because he had great wealth. What’s going on in that story? Does Jesus have something against rich people? Are all of us who want to follow Jesus called to sell everything we have and give it to the poor?

Jesus’ disciples must have had the same response we do, because after the rich man walked away Jesus turned to them and said, *“Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, 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.”* The disciples were astonished and said, *“Who then can be saved?”* To which Jesus responded, *“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* What’s going on here and what are you and I—who by world standards are all wealthy—to do with this?

As we look more closely at this Scripture it’s clear that Jesus knew what the rich young man wanted when he came to him. In Mark and Luke’s accounts the young man approaches Jesus with the greeting, *“Good teacher,”* to which Jesus asks, *“Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.”* This man was focused on doing good—on finding out what he needed to earn eternal life. Jesus calls him out right away by asking the question, *“Who is good?”* and then by asking if he’d kept a select list of the commandments—ones that focus on how we love our neighbors, not on worship and commitment to God. When Jesus asked about the commandments the man was on footing he was comfortable with. He eagerly responded, *“I’ve kept all those commandments since I was a boy.”* And then Jesus looked at him (and Mark’s

account tells us Jesus loved him). When the Bible notes Jesus looking at someone, it's not a casual, distracted glance. When Jesus looks at us He sees us clearly and deeply. Jesus' knowledge of this man revealed that his wealth and possessions had a vice-like grip on his heart. He was consumed by greed. His money and possessions controlled him. Wealth and material possessions were his god that he worshiped. Jesus determined that this man's sickness—his greed—was life-threatening and that it required a radical treatment—his prescription to sell all he had and give it to the poor. We're told that the young man went away sad, because he had great wealth. In other words, he valued his wealth more than Jesus.

Jesus' interaction with the Rich Young Man is unsettling enough, but his comment to his disciples when the young man walked away is even harder to swallow. In Matthew chapter 19 verses 23 & 24 we read this... *"Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, 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."* Matthew 19:23 & 24 When asked by the disciples *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus responded, *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* I'll repeat the questions I asked earlier... What's going on in that story? Does Jesus have something against rich people? Are all of us who want to follow Jesus called to sell everything we have and give it to the poor?

The reality for each of us is that there is a battle for our allegiance—for who or what our worship is directed to. Does our allegiance and worship go exclusively to Jesus or do we have split allegiance? Jesus addressed the allegiance question in Matthew chapter 6 in his Sermon on the Mount when He said,

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"*

*"**No one can serve two masters.** Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 6:19-21 & 24*

I highlighted the phrases, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" and, "No one can serve two masters," because I believe these get at the heart of what Jesus was communicating to the Rich Young Man, to his disciples and to us.

On a practical level you might be asking the question, *"Like the Rich Young Man, I struggle with directing my allegiance and my worship solely to Jesus, what am I supposed to do*

about this?" That's where spiritual practices can assist us. They position us to surrender ourselves more fully to God. When I choose to listen to the Bible in my car during Lent rather than sports talk radio, I'm acknowledging my tendency to become consumed with sports and I'm committing myself to listening to and meditating on God's Word instead. The heart behind "giving things up for Lent" isn't to work harder at religion or to impress God with our sacrifice or to beat ourselves up. Giving things up for Lent is about surrender—letting go of what I can't keep to gain what I can't lose.

In putting the Lent devotional booklets together Pastor Evan and Pastor Cindy broke surrender down into two facets: simplicity and fasting. The book does a good job talking about each of those practices, but I want to share 1 quote about each. In relation to simplicity John Mark Comer says, *"Decluttering or simplifying isn't simply for the sake of doing so or attaining a certain aesthetic. It is to declutter our hearts and minds so that we can focus on what really matters most."* John Mark Comer Seeking to simplify our lives frees us to focus on Jesus. We surrender our love for stuff in exchange for deepening our relationship with Jesus.

And speaking of fasting, Richard Foster notes, *"More than any other discipline, fasting reveals what controls us ... we cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface."* Richard Foster In fasting we surrender our need and love for food, so God can reveal Himself to us in a fresh way.

We've tried to point out through this series that our goal with the spiritual practices isn't simply to impart more knowledge or insight. They're called practices, because they are to be put into practice. My hope is that through what I've shared and through the Arnold's experience the Holy Spirit will be identifying steps for you to take over the course of the next week. And as we close our time together today I'd like to have you put yourself in the sandals of the Rich Young Man. As I slowly read the Rich Young Man's interaction with Jesus from The MESSAGE Paraphrase, I'd like you to allow the Holy Spirit to identify what has a hold on your life. What is God asking you to surrender to Him, so you can be freed to follow Him more faithfully? It could be money, a house, your car(s), a 401K, clothes, shoes, jewelry, television, sports, food, drink, talk radio, exercise, a relationship we're in or many other things.

Another day, a man stopped Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

Jesus said, "Why do you question me about what's good? *God* is the One who is good. If you want to enter the life of God, just do what he tells you."

The man asked, "What in particular?"

Jesus said, "Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as you do yourself."

The young man said, "I've done all that. What's left?"

"If you want to give it all you've got," Jesus replied, "go sell your possessions; give everything to the poor. All your wealth will then be in heaven. Then come follow me."

That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn't bear to let go. Matthew 19:16-22