

---

# Knowing Jesus

## **The Requirement of Christ**

**Luke 18:15-30**

---

**3/31/2019**

**Main Idea: Following Christ means having a childlike faith and trusting Him to provide all that we will need.**

**Lesson Objective: Give to Christ what is keeping us from truly following Him.**

---

## Introduction

*As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

In college Ken Davis was asked to prepare a lesson to teach his speech class. They were to be graded on their creativity and ability to drive home a point in a memorable way. The title of his talk was, "The Law of the Pendulum." He spent 20 minutes carefully teaching the physical principle that governs a swinging pendulum. The law of the pendulum is: A pendulum can never return to a point higher than the point from which it was released. Because of friction and gravity, when the pendulum returns, it will fall short of its original release point. Each time it swings it makes less and less of an arc, until finally it is at rest. This point of rest is called the state of equilibrium, where all forces acting on the pendulum are equal.

Ken attached a 3-foot string to a child's toy top and secured it to the top of the blackboard with a thumbtack. He pulled the top to one side and made a mark on the blackboard where he let it go. Each time it swung back he made a new mark. It took less than a minute for the top to complete its swinging and come to rest. When he finished the demonstration, the markings on the blackboard proved his thesis.

He then asked how many people in the room BELIEVED the law of the pendulum was true. All of his classmates raised their hands, so did the teacher. The teacher walked to the front of the room thinking the class was over. In reality it had just begun. Hanging from the steel ceiling beams in the middle of the room was a large, crude but functional pendulum (250 pounds of metal weights tied to four strands of 500-pound test parachute cord). Ken invited the

---

instructor to climb up on a table and sit in a chair with the back of his head against a cement wall. Then he brought the 250 pounds of metal up to the instructor's nose. Holding the huge pendulum just a fraction of an inch from his face, Ken once again explained the law of the pendulum that the instructor had applauded only moments before, "If the law of the pendulum is true, then when I release this mass of metal, it will swing across the room and return short of the release point. Your nose will be in no danger."

After that final restatement of this law, he looked him in the eye and asked, "Sir, do you believe this law is true?" There was a long pause. Huge beads of sweat formed on the instructor's upper lip, and then weakly he nodded and whispered, "Yes." Ken released the pendulum. It made a swishing sound as it arced across the room. At the far end of its swing, it paused momentarily and started back. No one could have ever believed that the instructor could move so fast as he dived off of the table!

Deftly stepping around the still-swinging pendulum, Ken asked the class, "Does our instructor believe in the law of the pendulum?" The students unanimously answered, "NO!"

Sometimes releasing control over our life will feel like a swinging pendulum. As the Law of the Pendulum tested the "faith" of that professor, so life will test your faith in Christ. Do you you *really* believe in His great love for you and His faithfulness to see you through life's greatest challenges?<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> HOW TO SPEAK TO YOUTH ... AND KEEP THEM AWAKE AT THE SAME TIME by Ken Davis, pp 104-106.

---

## Childlike Faith

### Luke 18:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>17</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”* [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.](#)

There are few, if any, parents that encourage their child to whine, pout, grab, or refuse to share, but most children do. These are childish qualities that parents pray their child will outgrow. There usually is no reward or gift for such behavior. In contrast, look at a child’s attitude when he or she receives a gift. Children receive gifts without trying to earn them. They receive with anticipation, joy, and gratitude. They receive gifts without believing they did anything to deserve it. Jesus said, “The kingdom belongs to such as these.”

Our passage for today comes after a comparison of the attitudes of a Pharisee and tax collector during their time of prayer (18:9-14). The Pharisee’s self-righteous attitude prohibited repentance and forgiveness. Next, we see little children being brought to Jesus, but the disciples tried to stop it. Both the tax collector and the little children came with humility as they approached God. Once again, Jesus pointed out that God is not impressed by our religious actions, but by our humble childlike attitude.

Children weren’t thought of highly in first-century Palestine—maybe not as lowly as tax collectors, but certainly not as highly as Pharisees. Children were considered insignificant. They had no rights, no voice, and few champions. Yet

---

Jesus was their champion—he eagerly invited the children to Him because they had the right attitude to receive His blessings. The first century was also a time plagued by infant illness and death. Parents brought infants and children for Jesus to heal. After all, Rabbis were known to lay hands on children and bless them. Mothers were eager for Jesus to put His hands on them and pray for them (Matt. 19:13). They rightly believed that such an experience would be a special blessing for their children.

The disciples, who were tired and tense with the prospect of going to Jerusalem, apparently thought Jesus was too busy and too important to “mess with kids.” Trying to “protect” Jesus, they rebuked the parents by telling them to keep the children away (18:15). The disciples made themselves the clearinghouse to Jesus. Too many adults needed His attention. There were already more than enough children.

Jesus was not impressed with His disciples’ attitude and behavior on this occasion when people “were bringing infants.” The term infants is distinct from the word translated “little child” in Luke 9:48. It could be rendered “babies”, those nursing or not yet walking (1 Pet. 2:2). According to Mark’s Gospel, “Jesus ... was indignant” over the way His disciples handled the situation (10:14) and put a stop to their actions. This was yet another instance where the disciples failed to recognize that there are no outcasts or unimportant people in the kingdom. Instead, Jesus held out his arms and invited the children to come to Him (18:16). The verb also could be translated “called” or “beckoned.” His words of welcome reveal His attitude both about the kingdom and about children. This marks the difference of God’s ways from men’s ways. God deals always with the little ones, the unknown ones, and the powerless ones.

---

The words “let the children come to Me” demonstrate how different Jesus’s approach was from the typical mindset of that time (18:16). Jesus was welcoming the children in a literal sense. “Don’t stop them.” People who hinder ministry to children or think it is unimportant are in direct violation of the will of God. The world, and unfortunately the church at times, seeks people of power, influence, and wealth, but God seeks children and those with childlike faith.

The kingdom belongs not to these (as in “all children”), but to “such as these.” The kingdom is not automatic for anyone. Only children and adults who display the childlike characteristics of trust, love, innocence, humility, lack of power and lack of pretense can enter the kingdom and stand before their Father with clean hands and pure hearts. God builds his kingdom on childlike characteristics. He wants children whom He can make into disciples. Jesus went one step further by responding that little children coming to Him demonstrated the kind of childlike faith that is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (18:17). Note that childlikeness is not just one possible way among others to be part of Christ’s kingdom. Being like a child is the only way to kingdom living.

**What’s the difference between being childish and being childlike?**

**Why are childlike qualities important for God’s kingdom?**

**How do we keep the childlike aspect that Jesus desires of us while not remaining spiritual infants in the process?**

**Who are some outcasts in our culture that we subconsciously consider unworthy of the kingdom of God? How would you describe a childish faith, and how is that different than a childlike faith?**

**What are some ways a church may unintentionally restrict access to Jesus today? How can we prevent this from happening?**

---

## Total Surrender

### Luke 18:18-23

*18 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’ ” 21 And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “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.” 23 But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)*

Along came a Jewish civil administrator who interrupted Jesus with a question. The question centers on the divisive point between the two leading groups of Jews, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Sadducees, using only the first five books of the Old Testament, found in these books no reference to resurrection, so they denied that resurrection of the dead was possible. Pharisees, following all three parts of the Jewish canon—Law, Prophets, and Writings—saw definite proof of resurrection in Daniel 12:2 and many other references, particularly in the Psalms and Isaiah. Was this administrator trying to get Jesus to take sides, or was he searching for certain hope in his own life? Luke does not give us his motivation, just the question. This man called Jesus “**good teacher.**” This represents a common politeness of speech and recognition to some degree of Jesus’ role as an intelligent, caring teacher.

Jesus caught the man’s attention by challenging his description of Jesus as good. Only one person can be truly good. That is God. Thus, unknowingly, the administrator had linked Jesus to God. Jesus caught the link and brought it

---

out into the open. He repeated traditional Jewish theology in confessing that God alone is good. In so doing, Jesus did not affirm or deny His own claim to deity. Luke expected his readers, however, to see the link that Jesus made and to affirm the obvious—that Jesus, being good, was also God.

Jesus turned to the source of authority that all Jews accepted—the Law, the Torah of Moses. He quoted part of the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The man with the question had some experience with the Mosaic Law. He had rigorously obeyed all the commandments since youth. We must not quibble with his answer at this point and try to point out that all have sinned. That is not under discussion here. Here the issue is obedience and eternal life. This Jew apparently thought on the criteria of his religion that he deserved eternal life, but internally he felt something was missing.

Jesus had the answer. He returned to the theme that He had addressed so often—wealth and dedication. Do you trust possessions more than you trust God?, He asked the man. Are you trying to put your trust in both possessions and God at the same time? Can you live without your possessions but cannot live without your God? Sell your possessions and find out (see 6:45; 12:13-21, 33; 16:13). These words cut to the quick. Jesus had found the man's weak spot. He had great riches and evidently trusted in them to make life meaningful and hopeful. Grief and mourning set in. There was no way he could give up his money, even for God's kingdom.

We live in a culture of consumption. We want more of everything—more French fries, more cars, more space—more, more, more. This greed in our hearts shows us that we are looking to things to provide us with the security, comfort, and joy that can really only be found in God. As we confront our greed,

---

we see that when we focus on what we do have rather than what we do not have, we become more and more aware that we are already rich in Christ.

It's not wrong to accumulate wealth or have a desire to make more money. What is wrong, though, is wanting more money only for our own comfort, security, and happiness. The man in Jesus's story wanted a comfortable and easy life full of luxury. This runs contrary to Jesus's teaching on self-sacrificial service (see Mark 10:45) and care for the poor (see Matt. 5:3; 25:37-40).

The rich man's actions were foolish because he was only thinking of himself and wasn't considering how to use his wealth for kingdom purposes. The Bible commends saving for the future as long as we do so with a desire to honor the Lord and bless our neighbors. This text challenges us to consider whether our resources (money, possessions, and time) are dedicated to advancing Christ's kingdom.

**What similarities do you see between the man in this story and the consumer culture in which we live?**

**What specific changes do you need to make in your lifestyle in order to battle greed by becoming more generous with your time, money, and other resources?**

**If grace is giving up what you have for the sake of someone else, how might we show grace to others in the way we use our money? Our possessions?**

---

## Kingdom Dweller

### Luke 18:24-30

*<sup>24</sup> Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> For 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.” <sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” <sup>27</sup> But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” <sup>28</sup> And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” <sup>29</sup> And he said to them, “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, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.” [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)*

Jesus spoke in the form of lamentation, much as a deep sigh would be used at a funeral to express grief at personal loss. The sad truth is that the rich have a hard time giving up their trust in their possessions. They cannot take the long-term look and realize that one day they will lose control over wealth. Then they will be robbed of eternal treasure, too. No wonder Jesus issued His sad lament: How hard for the rich to enter the kingdom. They have never experienced the need to trust someone or some thing outside their own intelligence and wealth.

Jesus turned to hyperbole to make a point. He described the utterly impossible. The lure of wealth overpowers the lure of the kingdom, not just in this rich Jewish administrator’s life, but in the lives of virtually all rich people and many who are not quite so rich. Thus, the first step to the kingdom is not to

---

solve the problem of putting a camel through a needle's eye. The first step is to get rid of the burden of riches so a person has nothing to trust but Jesus.

The audience was amazed. If the blessed rich cannot be saved, they declared, who can? They saw that Jesus had described an impossible situation. God does the impossible was Jesus's quick answer. Don't try to figure out the hows and whys. Just let God do it. Trust Him with your life more than you trust your riches. Place your riches in His control. Watch God work the impossible.

Blunt and to the point, Peter piped up, "We left all and followed You. Does that qualify us for the kingdom?" Jesus told Peter not to worry. Those who had given up life's closest relationships, greatest responsibilities, and strongest commitments to follow Jesus had a reward coming. Luke is imprecise in describing the reward, but he puts it in two stages. In this age, the committed, self-denying follower will receive many times as much as he has given up. Is this strictly parallel to the preceding verse, so that the reward is in terms of family? The family of believers will be more important, more numerous, and more meaningful than a follower's family of origin. Or is this much more indefinite so that Jesus was calling for faith even as He promised rewards? God has a reward for you, but you do not need to know exactly what that reward is. You just need to trust God. The second part of the disciples' reward is eternal life, a quality of life beginning here on earth with Jesus as Lord and extending through resurrection to the eternal kingdom.

Those who have an abundance of material wealth often are blind to their spiritual needs. To place that wealth under the lordship of Christ proves a higher price than many wealthy people are willing to pay. Jesus used the illustration of something that was impossible from a human perspective—a camel going through the eye of a needle—to emphasize that wealthy people had extreme

---

difficulty in choosing to follow Him. To come to Christ, one must recognize one's personal need and then be willing to trust one's life to Christ.

Following Jesus provides no protection against suffering, but the reward includes eternal life. The rich ruler sought this but walked away from it. The greatest gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. Jesus gave all He had for our sake. How could we hold anything back from Him?

**Why would riches hinder a person from entering the kingdom? What possible losses did Jesus mention that one might experience by following Him? What are the rewards of choosing Jesus?**

**Describe what Jesus is doing with His disciples in this passage. What does He want them to understand?**

**Where does Jesus rank in your list of priorities? How do you know?**

**What does your love and devotion to Jesus require you to "Go, sell"?**

**How can our church family support you as you strive to be obedient?**