

Is That Your Final Answer?

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Introduction

“I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love; I love to tell the story because I know ‘tis true, it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.”

The words of this beloved hymn describe the preeminent task of a preacher of the Gospel—from the text of Holy Scripture preaching Jesus and his love. I cannot think of a more delightful and at the same time more challenging assignment for the evangelist.

When I come to any Gospel, including Mark, I find myself thrilled afresh to encounter Jesus through his inerrant and trustworthy Word. But the proclaimer’s job then is to communicate the words on the page to the hearts of people so that Jesus is made real to the hearers. The ability to preach to others the Gospel from the Gospels is finally to be trusted to the preacher’s adequate preparation and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus comes alive in a fresh and powerful way so that “sinners will be converted” and the saints of God quickened.

The following sermon is an average preacher’s attempt to take seriously the text of Mark and to explicate it to others so that God may use it for the salvation of the lost.¹ After all, it is through the preaching of the Word and its hearing that faith is aroused. If the following pages in some measure encourage you to preach through Mark or another of the three reliable records of Jesus’ glory, love, and truth then my purpose will be achieved. Probably you will be energized by a clear desire to improve on the preaching of the Gospel—so be it. The ultimate issue always is that Christ is preached!

Sermon

In Mark 10:17-22 we read these words:

¹ This sermon was preached on August 8, 2004, at First Baptist Church, Macon, MO, and is transcribed here with minimal editing.

Now as he was going out on the way, one came running and knelt before him and said, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? There is one who is good and that is God. Do you know the commandments? Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother." And he said to him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor and you shall have riches in heaven. And then come, take up the cross and follow me." And on hearing these words, he was sad and went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

It's been called the most successful game show in American television history, and just about everybody has seen the television game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* By the way, do you know the answer to the question, "Who wants to be a millionaire?" Regis Philbin. He only made a quarter of a million dollars a pop off of every show that he hosted in that series. It was and is a very interesting program, and I enjoy watching it occasionally. You know how it works—a contestant wins the opportunity to be in the hot seat. And once they were in the hot seat, they then were challenged to answer fifteen questions. The questions begin from the most simple to the most complex. They are multiple-choice questions.

When I was in school, I always liked true and false questions best because you had a fifty percent chance of getting it right, even if you didn't know the answer. Correct? Everybody knows that, right? Well, next to true and false, I liked multiple-choice the best because you at least had an opportunity of guessing at the answer. Well that's the way this program is: four answers to one question. And you not only have the option of choosing one of the four, but you also have three lifelines in the course of those fifteen questions if you get stumped. You may call a friend to get some help, or you may poll the audience to see what their suggested right answer is, or you can have the computer take away two of the wrong answers. But usually in every contestant's experience there will come a point and place at a question where they struggle. They will sort of mull over the answer and talk it over with Regis a little bit. They will discuss out loud what they think the right answer is and so forth and so on. And then they take a stab in the dark and say it is A, B, C, or D. The punch line and the line for which the show became famous was when Regis leaned forward and he'd ask them this question: "Is that your final answer?"

That is the question I would have liked to ask the rich man. "Is that your final answer? Is that the last response that you will make to Jesus?" We don't have any other record in all of the Bible and all of the Gospels

about this man's response. We have stories of other rich men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea that pop up at the end of Jesus' life. But this man, we don't know his name; we don't know if he went away and just turned his back on Jesus and that was the end of the story, or maybe he changed his mind and came back later. We just don't know. Was that his final answer?

But what is also very interesting about this encounter with this man and Jesus, as it parallels the game show, is that in the game show you know you can get some right answers, but if you give the wrong answer at the end or in the course of your contest, you're due to lose virtually everything. In the young ruler's case, he did lose everything. But I want us to note here that he did get some things absolutely pinpoint straight right and correct. And for that he ought to be commended. So what I want to do is just to look at some of the things he got right and the way he handled this situation. Take note of his right choices, then the bad choice he made at the end.

I. He Went to the Right Person.

First of all, I want us to note that with this very important question, he went to the right person. What does verse 17 say? It says, "Now as he." And who is the "he" there?—Jesus—Jesus "was going out on the way." In Mark's gospel we don't have to fill in the blanks when we ask the question, "Who was the 'he' here?" Mark's gospel answers it for us. Very interestingly, Mark's gospel is called the gospel of action. Jesus comes on the scene as the man of power and authority. In fact, Mark's gospel doesn't record as much of the teaching of Jesus, but it records a whole lot of the actions of Jesus. So, who was the one who was going out of the way? Well, Mark's gospel, if you read the first ten chapters, you'll discover he's the one who could still the waters. He's the one who could make the blind to see. He's the one who would forgive and could forgive sin. He's the one who could walk on the waters, who could multiply the loaves and the fishes. Here was the one who came as the very Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Redeemer of all those who would believe and trust in him. And I reason to myself, certainly this rich man knew something about Jesus or he wouldn't have been in such a hurry to catch up with him. And he, probably among other things, realized and understood, what a great and marvelous and wonderful teacher Jesus was. He had a question. It was an important theological and spiritual question. He doubtlessly understood that Jesus had a wonderful reputation because, among other things, we learn in Mark's gospel that Jesus was such an amazing, astounding teacher that folks would sit for days and listen to him teach. That's why he had to multiply the loaves and fishes and feed them, because they hadn't planned on staying for

days. But when they got in the presence of Jesus they didn't sit for extra minutes. Now, for example, if I go 10 minutes longer than your pastor does, I realize I'm going to get a few watchful watchers out there. You may put up with me for a few extra minutes, but not too many extra. But these people didn't stay for extra minutes; they didn't even stay for extra hours. They stayed for days. They forgot to pack their lunch and their picnic basket, but they didn't care because Jesus was such a fascinating, enthralling communicator that they were willing to sit for days, forgetting about eating, to listen to Jesus teach.

Among other things, we know his listeners weren't Baptists because you wouldn't have gotten a Baptist to go that long without eating, would you? You know the old saying, "Where there are two or three Baptists, there's a potluck dinner around somewhere." But they listened. The Bible says that the common people heard him gladly. He talked in an amazingly attractive and positive way, in a communicative way. But not only was it the way he talked, but it was what he taught. He taught the words of life. At one point in John 6 there were a bunch of naysayers and half-hearted erstwhile disciples who had left him, and Jesus turned from them and turned to his twelve. Jesus asked them, "And are you going to go away too?" And what was their response? "Lord, where are we going to go? You have the words of life." He taught the great things of God and the great truths of God. He didn't monkey around with all the traditional interpretations, the secondary issues, the issues that were irrelevant to the real concerns of real people. He went straight to the heart of people's relationships with God and how they could be established and generated and maintained. He taught with great authority and with great power and with great interest.

It wasn't just the talk of Jesus that attracted the rich man. It was also the walk of Jesus that doubtlessly drew this rich man to Jesus. Because you see, not only did Jesus teach, but he taught with accompanying signs of power. This is extremely clear in the Gospel of John. You can see how his life illustrated his message. You can go to John 6, where we have this story of when he multiplied the loaves and fishes. Then when he finished, he gave a little sermon. He said, "The bread which I give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. And any man who will eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, he will have eternal life." You see the important thing about the miracles of Jesus was that they always taught a truth about who he was. They weren't just signs of power to ooh and awe people or even just to meet human needs, although they did that. They also drew a picture of what Jesus came to do for all people of all time who believe and trust in him. So when he multiplied those loaves and fishes he was illustrating that he was the bread of life who came to

satisfy and fill spiritual hunger and needs of people. He came to provide food for eternal life, his body, his sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

Likewise in John 9, he makes the blind man see. And then later he comments on the fact that he is the light of the world. He just didn't come so that one man could have physical sight—although he had bestowed sight for sure—but he came so that all people who believe in him would have spiritual sight when they put their faith and trust in him. In John 11, he raised Lazarus from the dead. You remember the story. And Lazarus' sisters didn't understand why Jesus didn't come running when he heard Lazarus was sick, sick even unto death. He said, "This is for the glory of God." His purpose was to allow Lazarus to die. So people would understand Christ's greater power and wider purpose. He arrived therefore after Lazarus had been buried three days. Jesus called him forth from the tomb, and said, "I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me he will never die." He said this because of the fact that Jesus himself would conquer sin, death, and the grave through his death and resurrection.

So doubtlessly this rich man heard that not only was Jesus a great and fascinating teacher, but that Jesus taught spiritual truths and spiritual realities such that this man was seeking after; and not only that, he was accompanied by the power of God to illustrate he wasn't just any old teacher; he was the Son of God who came to reveal the truth of God and was the truth of God. So, the rich man started out well. Why?—because he went to the right person with his question.

If you have a question today about spiritual life, if you want eternal life, if you want to know the reality of what it means to know God and have a relationship with him, you need to come to Jesus.

II. He Came in the Right Way.

Secondly, let's note that in verse 17, that when he came to Jesus, he came in the right way. What does verse 17 say? "Now as he was going out on the road," one came strolling along, walking along to him. Is that what it says? No, it says, "One came running to Jesus." Isn't that an amazing thing? He was so impressed that Jesus would have the answer to his question, that when he heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood, whatever he was doing at the time—cutting a business deal, meeting with his accountant, counting his profits—whatever it was this rich man was doing, he decided it wasn't so important to keep him from finding Jesus and getting an answer to his question. So, what did he do? He dropped everything he was doing and he came running to the Master.

In Jesus' day, for a rich man to run took a bit of an effort. You know that in our day you don't usually see businessmen in suits somewhere in the city running very often, do you? If you do, you usually figure out

either (1) there is an emergency or (2) there's someone giving away some free football tickets—because that businessman has his priorities right. He's going. He's in a hurry. But in Jesus' day a rich man would have had a coat and then a cloak over it, a long gown, so to speak, and a long robe on top of it that would have served as a universal covering. And that is the way they wore them in those hot dusty areas of the Middle East. And so for a rich man to run meant that he would have had to have gathered up that coat and cloak like a lady would a skirt and run like that, or he would have tied them in a knot in order to free up his legs so that he wouldn't trip over his own clothes to run to Jesus.

His sense of urgency impresses me. It impresses me that this man realized that spiritual things have an important place in life. And he realized no matter how much money he had—we don't know how much he had, but the Bible says he had great possessions—no matter how much wealth he possessed, he realized for him to live his life here and now and to die and go into eternity and be separated from God was pretty dumb. So what he wanted to know is, "Master, good Teacher," not "How can I make more profit here and now?" but "Good Teacher, when I die, how can I know and what must I do that I may have eternal life?"

That was pretty smart of him don't you think? How about you? Are spiritual things a priority of yours? Is finding out whether or not you will get to heaven a question worth investigating? As you sit in this church with an open Bible in you hands, are you interested in what a person has to do to have eternal life? Have you found out what Jesus had to say about this most crucial of all issues? Are spiritual issues a priority of yours? They were to this rich man. So when he heard Jesus was in town, he came running.

But listen, there was something else in verse 17. He came running and what did he do when he got there? He knelt before him. Now kneeling is not something we do in the 21st century in our Western culture. Neither was it something that people necessarily did everyday in Palestine at the time of Jesus. It was only done to someone for whom you had the utmost respect, or to someone to whom you had to show deference, or to someone whom you realized had authority over you, or to someone of whom you were going to ask a great favor. Kneeling was a sign of subservience and submission and obedience. So when this man got to Jesus, what did he do? He knelt before him. Now let me ask you a question. Do you think it is possible that—having heard everything what he did about Jesus and his work and his ministry—the Holy Spirit may have spoken to this man and said to him, "This is the Messiah; this is Immanuel, God with us; this is *el gibbor*, the mighty God of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke; this is the one of whom the prophets spoke would come manifesting the glory of the Lord?" And so when this man

came to Jesus he may have had that impression and had that insight delivered to him and manifested to him by the Holy Spirit that this Jesus was God in the flesh. So he did what was necessary and worthy of God in the flesh; he knelt in his presence.

Everybody who trusts Jesus bows the heart and life to Jesus. If you confess Jesus as Lord, the Bible says you will be saved. But here is a great truth: If you don't acknowledge Christ as Lord in this life, one day you will before God. Philippians 2 tells us, "On that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord." Do you know why all people are going to do that? Because Jesus is Lord! That's the reality of eternity. All the religious leaders—Mahatma Ghandi, Mohammad, Buddha, every one of them—will kneel in the presence of Jesus and confess him as Lord of all. Some people will do this to their condemnation; if they didn't do it here and now, because faith is necessary for salvation and you are asked to do it in this life to be saved. Some of us will do so to our salvation because in this life we trusted Jesus as our Savior and Lord. This man was smart. He did the right thing. He not only knelt in his presence, but he called him good. Jesus called his hand on his having done so. "Well, why you calling me good?" There is only one who's good and that is God." The rich man didn't correct him. And it may well be that he understood that Jesus was the one with all power and authority because not only did he come running, not only did he kneel, not only did he call him good, but he asked him a question only God could answer with any authority.

So what else is interesting in how he came to Jesus there in verse 17? We might ask the question, "Where did all this happen?" What does it say? Verse 17: "Now as he was . . ." Where?—out on the road. In other words, this event did not occur in a synagogue some place. This did not happen in his home or place of business. This wasn't done off in a private setting and situation like someone's garden, those rectangular homes with a garden in the middle where no one else is present. This was not done off on the side out of public view. This event took place out in public. This rich man, who obviously had authority and influence in his community, came to Jesus in public. Regardless of whether or not everybody was there to see what was going on, eventually everyone, including his family and friends and spouse, would hear about it in a few moments of him doing it. He knelt out there in public on the road. If they had a daily newspaper, let me tell you, this would have been headline news: "Jesus Comes to Town, Rich Man Kneels in His Presence and Asks a Question only God Can Answer." That would have been on the front pages. It tells us something—doesn't it?—about what it means to be a Christian, that we are to be open in our confession of Christ. Jesus said, "If you will confess me before men, I will confess you before my

Father who is in heaven. But if you deny me before men, I will deny you. Of him, the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in all of his glory and with his holy angels.”

So the point of all this is, if we are going to believe in Jesus, if we’re going to trust him, if we’re going to follow him as Lord and Master; we must do it publicly; we must do so openly; we must do it unashamedly. And that is why the church says if you’re going to be part of this fellowship, if you’ve trusted Jesus, if you’ve come to believe and put your faith in him the first thing that has to happen is . . . what? Baptism—because that is the public statement. It’s official New Testament style of one’s faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

III. He Asked the Right Question.

So, this man came to the right person. He came in the right way to the right person. And, thirdly, when he got there he asked the right question: “What shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Let’s just pretend that we don’t know the answer to this question and that we don’t have the Bible to answer it for us. And let’s imagine that you have an opportunity to ask God one question and get a straight answer. What question would you ask? This would be my question: “Lord, after I spend 50, 60, 70, 80, how many years on this earth, is there heaven and what do I have to do to get there?” “What shall I do that I may have eternal life?” That’s life’s most important question. Notably, there are 1,650 major religions in America today. There are many more around the world, tens of thousands of them. Giving an answer to the question is for the most part why they exist.

The answers they give, while diversified, can really be divided into two groups. The first group says, “Here’s our answer to the question: Join us, keep our rituals, our rights, our standards and maybe, maybe you’ll merit eternal life.” That’s what Islam says. Islam says that you can practice their religion all your life but that you can’t know for sure that you will have eternal life because if you die and go to meet Allah and if he is having a bad day, you may not get into paradise, no matter how devout you have been. It’s up to Allah. It’s up to his will. However, Islam also says there is one way you can know for sure and that is if you die in Jihad. If you die fighting for Allah and his purposes, whatever those might be, if you do that, then you will immediately go to paradise.

So why is it that 19 young men would kill the crews of four aircrafts and then kill themselves on September 11, 2001? Why would they do that? Because the religion they believe in told them that’s the way you get to heaven. That’s the way you can be sure. That event illustrates to us the importance of having the right answer to that question. Getting the right answer determines whether or not we will get to heaven, but it will also determine how big of an impact for good or for ill we will make in

this life. Those terrorists had the wrong answer and their impact was horrendous and tragic. So on this one side there are all those religions that tell you to keep their rituals and rites and so forth, and then you might make it to heaven, maybe.

Then there is the other option, which is the biblical option that says, "Hey look. Salvation is not your doing; it is God's. Jesus Christ died for your sins. It's not a matter of works or you becoming a Baptist or anything like that." Some people say to me, "Well, you Baptists are so narrow. You believe only Baptists are going to get to heaven." And I say, "Well, we are more narrow than that. We don't believe all the Baptists are going to make it." Why? Because getting to heaven is not an issue of which church you belong to. It's an issue of whether you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that you are not trusting your works or being a Baptist or trying to be a good person. I hope nobody here is doing that. Salvation is an issue of whether we realize that we are unworthy of salvation; that we can't save ourselves; that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. When we therefore put our faith and trust in him, we receive the gift of everlasting life. That's the biblical answer.

IV. He Got the Right Answer.

This man went to the right person, he went in the right way to that person, he asked the right question, and, fourthly, when he got there he received the correct answer. Look at what the word of God says. Jesus said to him, "You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother." Now, I know what you are thinking: "Well you just told us that salvation is by grace, by trusting and putting our faith in Jesus." But when Jesus answered this question, he starts talking about the Ten Commandments. Here is a very important point. Before you ever will trust Jesus for your salvation, you have to realize you can't save yourself. You have to realize that you have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Notably, however, there was actually a sect of the Jews that thought perfection was possible and that they could achieve perfection. Maybe this man belonged to it. He believed that he was acceptable and up to standard. He said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." Maybe what he wanted from Jesus was a little pat on the back. The rich man had acknowledged the deity of Christ, but he wanted Jesus to say, "Sir, you are doing quite alright. By the way, all the rest of you folks observing what was occurring, you do what this man is doing and you are going to get to heaven." That's not what Jesus said. He took the rich man to what we call the second table of the Ten Commandments. The first four of the commandments relate to our relationship with God. The last six deal with

our relationship with each other. Jesus took him there first because this man needed to realize that he was a sinner and that he had fallen short of God's glory. He needed to realize that he needed the mercy of Christ.

Do you think that folks in America today need to hear that and realize this truth? Some 80 plus percent of Americans believe that there is a place called hell, but only about 8% believe that they are worthy or deserving to go there. That's the biggest problem we have in America. Most folks don't realize that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God. They need God's grace just like this rich young man did. Maybe the rich man expected Jesus just to pat him on the back. He said in essence, "Lord, I've done all this; give me something else to do." Perhaps he wanted to make everybody else look bad. You see, his problem was not unrighteousness. His problem was self-righteousness. He thought he was lining up to God's standards and was going to get to heaven. The problem with much of America—with many of the unrighteous out there—is the issue of self-righteousness. Most people don't realize they need God's grace and forgiveness.

It's very interesting how Jesus dealt with the rich man under these circumstances. Jesus actually lists a commandment here that isn't one of the Ten Commandments: "Do not defraud." That's not in the Ten Commandments. Well, it's not there directly in the most literal way, but it is in another sense. Jesus actually takes two commandments: "Do not steal" and "do not lie" and combines them into one commandment. Now, most of us probably believe that Jesus was God and that he wrote the Ten Commandments. Correct? They are his commandments. So we are going to allow him a little editorial privilege here. What he did therefore was to contextualize the Ten Commandments. What was Jesus' purpose in doing this? To speak to the rich man's conscience. This rich man had no desire or interest in violent crime. He wasn't going to rob someone in a brutal fashion. He wasn't going to break into a home. He wasn't going to hold someone up with a knife. Perhaps his shortfall was white collar crime. He didn't mind cutting the corners on a business deal. He didn't mind short changing somebody in a transaction. He didn't mind feathering his nest at the expense of people's ignorance. He used the laws and the fine points against them and he thought that was good because it wasn't violent crime. That's what fraudulent behavior is. So, what Jesus was trying to do was to open his eyes to help him see the truth about himself.

Here's a truth, however. Not only can rich people be fraudulent, but so can poor people. We can rob our employers of a good day's work. We can lie to them. We can commit petty theft and all that sort of thing. So fraud is not just something rich people do. Fraud is something that poor folk can do. The whole point is that all have sinned and come short of the

glory of God. So, Jesus wanted him to see that. Jesus took him a step further. Why? The man said, "I have done all these things." All right, you have kept the second table of the Ten Commandments. Let's go back to the first table.

What is the first commandment? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Now sir," reading into the scene, "you've come here and you've knelt in my presence. You called me good. You've asked me a question only God can answer. You've done all this. Now let's just see if you are going to obey command number one. Go, sell all that you have. Give it to the poor." Personally, I think that if Jesus had stopped there he would have had closure. This rich man would have been stupid not to have sold everything that he had and given it to the poor. Why?—because he consequently would have received a home in heaven. Let me tell you something, if that is what is necessary to get salvation, you and I need to do it. We'd be stupid not to do so. I don't know how much combined wealth we might have in this room, but it is not a whole lot. If we gave it all away so we could get heaven, we ought to do it. We ought to dismiss church right now. Call our bankers and real estate agents and everybody else and liquidate everything we have. Cash it in and give it all to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Amen? And sit back and take it easy, because we are on our way to heaven. You know what? Up in heaven we are told they fill potholes with gold. In Missouri we don't fill potholes with anything. But up there they fill them with gold. You know, the point about it is it would be worth it. To live eternally in a place like that, if it meant becoming impoverished right now.

And another thing is that once you have sold it all, what happens tomorrow? You can start all over, can't you? You just liquidate, doing what Jesus asked, you liquidate everything, give it all away, and tomorrow you start back getting it all back. Donald Trump pulled that one off. Colonel Sanders got rich on KFC after living on Social Security. He used to say that God called him to preach and he chickened out. You could start all over tomorrow, but that is not what Jesus said nor is it what he wanted. He said, "Sir, after you have given it all to the poor, that's not the end; it is the beginning, come, take up the cross and follow me." This is where the rich man had his problem. "Wait a minute, Lord, are you telling me not only that I have got to give away everything that I have, but then I've got to follow you? I've got to take up my cross? I'm to become your disciple?" That's exactly the point. You see the Bible says that he had great possessions. That is why he left. But here is the truth and this is the point at which the text is driving. Not only did he have great possessions, but more importantly, his possessions had him.

The Bible also says that Jesus, looking at him, loved him. Jesus wanted this man to be among his disciples. Jesus wanted this man to

belong to him, to be a follower of his. You see the real object here is not that Jesus wanted his money. Jesus said, "By the way, after you have sold it, give it to the poor. Don't bring it to me. I don't need your money. Give it away. Do something good with it." Jesus wanted him. And as long as that man served and idolized his possessions, he wouldn't belong to Jesus. So, Jesus said, "You get rid of it all. You come and be my disciple."

That's the whole point of salvation for us today. Salvation means that Jesus comes first in our lives. We know him as Lord, we trust his death on the cross, his resurrection, and we say, "Lord Jesus, I'm going to be your disciple and be your follower. Whatever you want me to do I'll do in obedience to you out of my love and regard for you."

V. He Made the Wrong Decision.

This man went to the right person. He went in the right way to that person. He asked the right question. He got the right answer. But in the end he made the wrong decision. The Bible said that he was sad on hearing these words and went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. This rich man decided that instead of doing what Jesus wanted him to do and becoming his disciple and paying the price that that decision would involve, he would instead live for himself the rest of his life. Did that make him happy? Did that give him a heart full of joy? Did that give him the security and insurance of a home in heaven? Absolutely not. Sadness would characterize the rest of his life. Oh, there may have been points of happiness and this, that, and the other. But in the end he'd never really have the joy of the Lord. He would never enjoy having the assurance of a home in heaven. He'd never enjoy the presence of Christ and his grace and love.

In this same book not far before this passage, Jesus said, "If anyone will seek their life, they will lose it." Do you want to live for yourself? Do you want to do your thing? Do you want to go your own way? Guess what the end result is? You're going to lose your life and the meaning of it. You will never have eternal life either. But, Jesus said, "If anyone will lose their life for my sake they will find it." If you will trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will know eternal life and lasting peace.

Two quick parables: one of which popped up in *Time* magazine a number of years ago. I clipped it out and I said, "You know this thing is going to be a great sermon illustration one day." And it is for this one. Milestones, obituaries, *Time* magazine. Died, Donny Moore, age 35, hard luck baseball pitcher, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. After shooting and seriously wounding his wife Tonya following an argument in Anaheim, California, his thirteen-year career impeded by injuries, Moore was released last month by the Kansas City Royals farm

team. Teammates said the reliever had never recovered emotionally from losing to the Boston Red Sox in game five of the 1986 American League playoffs. Moore was within one strike of taking the California Angels to the World Series when Boston outfielder Dave Henderson smacked a homerun to save the Red Sox from elimination eventually sending the team on to win the League Championship.

Now we can say, "Well, that's stupid." Here's a man who at age 35, said life was over. So he shoots his wife, attempting to kill her. Then he kills himself. Why does he do that? Because the pros tell him you can't throw a leather-covered five-ounce sphere 60 feet like we want you to. We don't want you any more. You're finished. So, life's over for him. Why?—because apparently for Donny Moore, life was comprised of how well he could throw that baseball. Now my question to you is what is your life comprised of? What is the meaning of your life? If you could write it in a sentence or two, what would you say that you exist for? Being a good neighbor, being a good husband, being a good parent, having a nice family, trying to be a positive contributor to the community, being a relative success in business, being a good provider, whatever, being a happy person? We could go down the line. Whatever it might be. Leaving the world in a better place, however you do that. But the point is if those are your answers, all that will one day be taken away from you. You're going to lose it all. It can't go on forever. "If you seek your life, you will lose it."

Parable number two: Jim Elliott, a young man in his 20s, graduates from Wheaton College, goes to the jungles of Ecuador, has a young wife and a young baby. His impression is he needs to take the Gospel to the Auca Indians. He goes there. He shares the Gospel. They martyr him and his two colleagues. At the end of the story others come behind him, including his own wife, Elizabeth Elliott. They reached the Aucas. The Aucas are Christianized, evangelized. They are now a mission-sending people. Was his life a failure? Absolutely not. And the point is, while it may have looked like he had lost his life, he actually found it and found eternal life and brought life to a whole nation of people. A few days before he was killed—as he was thinking about these words, "If you seek your life, you will lose it. If you lose your life for my sake . . ."—this is what Jim Elliott wrote about that verse. He said, "A man is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

These words encapsulate the essence of salvation. We surrender ourselves to Jesus, Savior and Lord. He in turn gives us himself, his grace, his salvation, so that we might have eternal life.

We cannot keep our lives. One day they will return in accountable fashion to our maker. Today, however, you may freely, happily, willingly give yourself to Jesus, the Lord of life.