

More than Turning Over a New Leaf

Luke 18: 18-23

This morning we find ourselves in the midst of a New Year and one of the topics on many minds is New Year's resolutions. Some of you may have made some sort of resolution seeking to improve your life in one area or another. No doubt many are trying to improve their finances, get in shape or lose weight. Many have decided to try and abandon a habit in an effort to improve their health, their home, or a relationship.

Statistics show that 97% of resolutions won't be kept, with only 8% actually optimistic of achieving their goals. Studies show that 50% have abandoned their goals by the end of January and up to 90% by the end of March. So why do so many resolutions end in failure? Well many view them as simply "turning over a new leaf" in life, depending solely upon their ability.

Our text reveals a man who was seeking something in his life; he was looking for peace in his heart. Just as many do today, he was looking in all the wrong places. A content and satisfying life is only found in Jesus. If you want a happy, prosperous New Year, it can be found in the Lord. Whatever you may need today, Jesus is the answer. I want to preach on the thought: [More than Turning over a New Leaf](#).

I. The Description of the Man – In his life I see a reflection of so many people in our day. Let's consider his life. Notice:

A. He was Blessed (18; 23) – [And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? \[23\] And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.](#) We find that he was a [ruler](#), a man of prestige and prominence in the synagogue. He had worked his way up the ladder and achieved a position that many coveted. Matthew's gospel tells us that he was a [young man](#). Here we also find that he was a [rich man](#).

- By the standards of this world he had it all. He was young, successful, wealthy, and recognized as a man of position in society. He had all that a man could possibly desire, as far as worldly means, and yet he was lacking.
- There is a tremendous lesson here for us. You can have wealth, health, success, and even a place of authority and still find yourself empty on the inside. Just because a man is blessed with earthly goods is no sign that he is happy in his heart.

B. He was Busy (20-21) – Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. [21] And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. There was no doubt that this man lived a respectable life. Jesus spoke of the commandments, and he had been faithful to the law of God. As ruler of the synagogue he was continually in the house of the Lord. His life was filled with doing good deeds and living an upright life before men and yet there was something missing.

- Now don't misunderstand me, we ought to live a good life before others. We ought to have a heart of compassion. We need to be in the house of God every time we have an opportunity, but these things cannot satisfy the longing in your soul. You could come to church every time the doors are open. You could spend every free moment of life doing good deeds for others and still live a miserable life. Simply being busy with good things will not provide the peace that Jesus gives. It cannot save your soul from hell.

C. He was Burdened (18b) – Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Here the man reveals the desire of his heart. He lived a life of prominence, but that didn't bring satisfaction. He was concerned about his eternity. He wanted to know what was required to obtain eternal life.

- I can imagine a day in the life of this young man. He likely woke each morning feeling well in body; he was young and had the energy for whatever the day would bring. As he made his way to the synagogue those whom he passed knew who he was. As he arrived there he assumed his place of authority. Those who came were looking to him for guidance and instruction. He likely enjoyed the best meals that money could buy and went to sleep at night confident in the financial gain he had acquired.

- But yet beneath that entire facade and success was a man who was troubled in his heart. All that he had achieved had left him empty inside.

- You may be here today and have it all as far as the world can see and yet be troubled within. Have you considered your eternal future? A prosperous new year and future will be obtained through a personal relationship with Christ. Prosperity may satisfy temporarily, but you will never be content.

I. The Description of the Man

II. The Dilemma of the Man – As we look at this man we find that he faced a dilemma in his life. Something needed to change; something needed to happen in order to find what had eluded one who seemed to have it all.

A. His Confusion – He hadn't yet grasped what he need in his life. He was confused concerning several things.

1. Concerning the Savior (19) – And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. He addressed Jesus as Good Master and Jesus responded with a perplexing question. Jesus was in no way implying that He wasn't who He claimed to be. He wasn't denying His deity; He was challenging the young man to determine who Jesus was to him. The man had actually referred to Jesus as simply a great Teacher. He hadn't seen Jesus as the Messiah. In order to inherit eternal life he needed to see Jesus as the Savior of men.

- The same holds true for each of us. We can never be saved until we see Jesus for who He is! If you need salvation, you must see Jesus as the One who can save. If you need direction, you must see Him as the Counselor. If you are lonely, you must see Him as a close Friend.
- We will never achieve fullness spiritually until we see Jesus for who He is and give Him the place of preeminence in our lives. He is the only way, Jn.14:6. He is much more than a good teacher; He is a great Savior! He was also confused:

2. Concerning Salvation (19-21) – As Jesus declared there none is good, save one, that is, God, He wanted the man to search his heart and see himself in need of the Lord. He had lived a good moral life, kept the commandments and even held a position in the synagogue, but that wasn't enough to secure his salvation.

- You can live as good a life as you please and still die lost without Christ and go to hell. You must first see yourself lost before you can be saved. It isn't about how good you are, how well you support your family, or treat your wife. It isn't about paying tithes or Sunday school attendance. All have sinned and some short of the glory of God; all need His saving grace!
- This young man was counting on all the good he had done to earn him a place in heaven. What he failed to realize is salvation isn't something we do, it is already done! Jesus provided the sacrifice for our sin. It is impossible for us to work our way to heaven. Salvation is obtained through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you remember what the Philippian jailer said to Paul: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Many are confused today regarding salvation. Simple faith is all that is required and it is the only way!

B. His Confrontation (22) – Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. After Jesus dealt with his confusion He confronted

Him because He was yet lacking. The Holy Spirit will confront us about areas in our lives that need attention. Jesus called upon the man to do two things.

1. Forsake Himself – The man was instructed to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. Jesus simply pointed out the problem and expected him to deal with it. Jesus wasn't offended that the man had acquired wealth; the money wasn't the problem. The problem was the man's love for his money. He loved what he had obtained more than anything else. He wanted to be right with God, but his possessions stood in the way.

- We cannot put anything ahead of God. What is it that you are holding on to that has hindered you from being what God desires of you? Many would get right with God but they can't seem to give up their pleasures, their jobs, or their pride. Wouldn't it be sad to die lost simply because you were intent on satisfying your flesh, making another dollar, or because you were too proud to admit that you needed God?

2. Follow Jesus – This young man had lived a life that had brought success. I'm sure there were those who would've loved to have his position. He had lived life following power, prestige, position, and possessions. His world revolved around the life that he had built for himself. Jesus said that he was to give all that up and **follow Him**. Jesus wanted to be first; he wanted to be the priority in his life.

- I don't know what it is that you are chasing in life, but Jesus must be the priority. You will never find the peace that you desire or a relationship with the Lord if you are unwilling to follow the Lord. He is a jealous God and demands that we follow Him.

- Many today are unwilling to give the Lord what He expects. Think about this; how many times have we heard of the rich and famous being in misery with all their abundance? I don't have a lot, but I have Jesus. I am happy in my soul. Jesus can do that for you if you'll only follow Him!

I. The Description of the Man

II. The Dilemma of the Man

III. The Decision of the Man (23) – **And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.** After his conversation with Jesus, the rich young ruler made a decision. There will be those who are called upon to make the same choice today. Notice he made:

A. A Personal Choice – The man was sorrowful because he was very rich. He wanted to have eternal life; he wanted that one thing that would bring peace to his soul, but he wanted his riches more. He made a personal decision to reject the Lord's offer so that he might keep his possessions.

- There isn't a one of us who can avoid having to make this choice. It is up to the individual to choose or reject Him. I would ask you today, what is it that is keeping you from coming to Christ? Is that worth going to hell over? Is that brief time of personal pleasure worth an eternity of torment? **Mk. 8:36-37 – For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

B. An Eternal Choice – As far as I know the Bible is silent in regard to this young man after this encounter with the Lord. He walked away from Jesus still holding on to his possessions, but lost in sin.

- It is very likely that he died without Christ. The life that once held so much promise would eventually come to an end and all of the power, prestige, and riches would not matter. No doubt there was a time when his health began to fail leaving him no longer able to maintain his position in the synagogue. He may have had plenty of money later in life, but it couldn't buy more years or purchase his redemption.

What about you today? What are you waiting on? If you walk out those doors without Christ you are in a dangerous situation. If you never have another opportunity to accept the Lord's offer of salvation, you will die lost and spend eternity in hell.

Don't let that happen. Jesus wants to save you today. Won't you forsake whatever it is that stands between you and Christ and come to Him? Why not make this the best year of the rest of your life rather than simply trying to turn over a new leaf?