

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Two ‘Precious Moments’ Moments”

Chapter 18:15-34

Introduction

There is a connection between the blessing of the infants and the rich young ruler:

1. First take a look at the infants. Jewish parents often brought their babies to a rabbi to be blessed. Their precedent for it was in chapter forty-eight of the Book of Genesis. The patriarch Jacob stretched forth his hands, laid them on the two sons of Joseph – his own grandsons – and pronounced a blessing over them.
2. Now take a look at the rich young ruler. When you brought your baby to be blessed, *you were hoping he would become a rich young ruler*. Every outward appearance indicated that God was blessing him. His life was the ideal that every infant-blessing looked forward to. He would have made any Jewish parent proud.

In the end, you really don't want your baby to grow up to be like him – someone who walks away from the Lord.

Jesus was remarkable in capturing moments and making them 'precious moments' within which He could teach the simplest, yet most profound, spiritual truths. These are two of those 'precious moments' moments.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Keep Acting Like A Child Who Depends On Its Father, and #2 Quit Acting Like A Child Who Makes Demands On Its Father.

- #1 Keep Acting Like A Child
Who Depends On Its Father
(v15-17)

When you have an infant in your arms, everyone wants to see him or her. That is, **everyone except the ushers!** Jesus' disciples were acting like ushers in a Church service – not wanting the Lord to be distracted by the many infants that were being brought out to be blessed by Him.

Luke 18:15 Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.

I mentioned the ushers. Are we wrong to have procedures in place to restrict infants and young children from the Sanctuary on Sunday morning?

Not at all. In this story, Jesus was walking along, outdoors. He was surrounded by the hustle and bustle of life. People were coming and going. It wasn't at all comparable to a Church service. A more accurate comparison would be if the ushers, after the service was over, kept people with babies from coming up to say "*Hi!*" to the pastor as he stands at the door. It is completely out of context to apply this story to a Church policy that is seeking to minimize distractions.

Our goal, and our challenge, is to provide the very best accommodations for everyone. We never turn people away; we only ask that they respect others and, if they have infants or small children and don't want to utilize our Children's Ministry, that they sit in certain designated areas.

Jesus' disciples were blowing it in their context.

Luke 18:16 But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, "**Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.**"

Jesus called a staff meeting! He established a procedure. He let His disciples know that it was OK for parents with infants to approach Him to receive His blessing upon their kids.

We need to have certain procedures in place. They should be as minimal as possible; but they are necessary. Ultimately, we rely upon the leading of the Holy Spirit – either to set our procedures, or to guide us when there are none.

Little children seems to refer to infants. At least some of them were young enough to be carried. There was something about infants that Jesus could use to teach us something about our own spiritual lives.

Luke 18:17 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

Volumes have been written on this simple statement. One of the keys to unlocking it is the word **receives**. Think about a baby: It **receives everything** from its parents. All of its needs are in the control of the parents. All the essential resources are the gift of the parents – food, clothing, shelter. You would say that the infant is totally **dependant** on its parents.

It seems to me that the truth Jesus was seeking to communicate was (and is) that you are to be as spiritually dependant upon your heavenly Father as an infant is physically dependant upon its earthly parents.

The spiritual counterpart to this is stated by the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:19, when he says, **my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

You are to keep acting like a child who depends upon your Father. Even though you are growing and maturing in the Christian life; even when you are no longer a spiritual baby; you should maintain a childlike trust that your heavenly Father **shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

Every time you see a baby, let it remind you that you have in heaven a Father who cares for you to a greater extent than any earthly parents care for their children. Your circumstances may not change; but your perspective upon them will, as you believe you are receiving everything that your Father deems necessary.

#2 Quit Acting Like A Child
Who Makes Demands On Its Father
(v18-34)

Reading this story in three different Gospels you determine this man was **rich**, **young**, and a **ruler** of some sort. He had it all; and, as I mentioned already, his parents would have considered him an infant whose blessing had come true later in life.

Luke 18:18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

A more accurate translation of this would be, **What, having done, shall I inherit?** He thought he had accomplished much in this life. He had been rewarded materially. Now he was wondering what rewards he would **inherit** in eternity.

From the very first words out of his mouth you learn that all he thought about was material things – whether on earth, or in heaven.

The **rich young ruler** was making a demand upon Jesus. He was demanding a future inheritance, based on his good works. He was, in fact, acting like a spoiled child who makes demands on its parents.

Jesus began to answer the rich young ruler by focusing his attention on the word **good**.

Luke 18:19 So Jesus said to him, “**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.**”

Jews reserved the use of the word **good** for God. Jesus was challenging the rich young ruler to reflect upon what he had just said. Did he really believe Jesus was **good** – that Jesus was God? If he did... Why didn't he do what Jesus told him?

Most of the people in our country claim to be Christians. Do they really believe Jesus is God? If they do... Why don't they do what Jesus tells them?

The **rich young ruler** misunderstood the deity of Jesus Christ. Next we'll learn is that he misunderstood the purpose of God's Law.

Luke 18:20 You know the commandments: *‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’*”

Luke 18:21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

You remember that the Ten Commandments were written on two stone tablets:

1. On one tablet were four commandments having to do with your relationship with God: You are to put no other Gods before Him... Make no images of God... Not take His name in vain... And keep His sabbath. When the rich young ruler called Jesus good, without really meaning it, he was taking the Lord’s name in vain. At the end of this story, when he refuses to give away his possessions, you see that he had put money as a god before God. So he was breaking the Law of God while he was claiming to have kept it from his youth.
2. On the other tablet were six commandments having to do with your relationships with your fellow men. Jesus specifically mentioned five of the remaining six commandments; He stopped short of mentioning **thou shalt not covet**. The rich young ruler thought he had kept the Law because, outwardly, he had not broken the five Jesus mentioned.

He had misunderstood the purpose of God’s Law. It wasn’t given by God so that you would keep it and earn eternal life; it was given to show you that you cannot keep it. You may be able to keep some of it, outwardly; but you cannot keep any of it inwardly.

Luke 18:22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Luke 18:23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Does this mean we should do the same? No, not at all. Jesus was putting His spiritual finger on the real problem in this man’s heart. The **rich young ruler** was guilty of covetousness. Jesus had not mentioned covetousness in His list of commandments – but He pointed it out now.

The Gospel of Mark makes it clear that the rich young ruler refused Jesus and went away. He had addressed Jesus as **good** – as God; but when God asked Him to obey and follow, he refused. He

declared that he had kept God's Law; but he was filled with covetousness. Elsewhere in the Bible you're told that covetousness is idolatry. You see that illustrated here: The **rich young ruler** so coveted material things that they had become his god. He would not give them up to follow God.

Jesus used the encounter to teach His disciples:

Luke 18:24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

Why is it hard for the rich? For at least two reasons:

1. One, because you have a tendency to believe that wealth is the sign God is blessing you. *It is not!* In fact, wealth can be spiritually dangerous.
2. Two, it is hard for the wealthy because they come to depend upon their wealth rather than depend upon God. It's hard to remember you are a helpless infant when you have acquired so many things.

Luke 18:25 For 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."

Jesus meant a real **camel**, and a real sewing **needle**. It is a humorous exaggeration. He could not warn you about depending on wealth with any stronger illustration.

Luke 18:26 And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus' disciples were Jews who had been raised believing that wealth and prosperity was the sign of blessing. Everything they had been led to believe was being challenged. To put it into our context: They believed the rich young ruler had grown up and achieved the blessing that was pronounced over him as an infant.

Luke 18:27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

It is **impossible** to be saved by keeping God's Law. It is **impossible** to be saved by any works of righteousness you might be able to

perform. Salvation is **impossible** – *except by God's free gift of grace*. God has made your salvation **possible** by sending Jesus Christ.

Luke 18:28 Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You."

Peter had been thinking about the rich young ruler. He had refused to give up everything to follow Jesus. Peter and the others had, in fact, given up everything. It's possible to know Peter's intentions in making this statement by reading Jesus' response in our remaining verses. It seems as though he was wondering what he could expect for his sacrifice, both now and in heaven.

It's a common thought among Christians. We all want to know that our sacrifices are meaningful. Especially as we see others prospering – we are challenged to wonder if it's all worth it.

First, Peter and the other disciples could expect to be rewarded for their sacrifice:

Luke 18:29 So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

Luke 18:30 who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

The sacrifices you make to follow Jesus Christ can affect the dearest relationships you have on this earth, and all of your earthly possessions. Sure, it's not much compared to eternal life and what awaits you; but it's real.

Even now, God is compensating you. You have a huge extended family. Every other believer is dear to you, and vice-versa. Though we do not live *communally*, we live in a *community*, and we care for one another. And we haven't even begun to talk about what awaits us in heaven!

But there is also much suffering to endure as a disciple. Jesus next spoke of His own impending suffering as an example of the pain a disciple can expect in this life.

Luke 18:31 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

Luke 18:32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.

Luke 18:33 They will scourge *Him* and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

Jesus was going to the Cross. He was going to die, on the Cross, according to the multitudes of Bible passages and prophecies which pointed first to His death by crucifixion, and then to His resurrection.

Spoken here, to His disciples in the context of this story, these words were a comfort to them. Leaving **all** to follow Him meant following Him all the way. If Jesus went to the Cross and died, so too would they need to daily pick-up their crosses and die to themselves – and maybe die as martyrs.

Jesus would **rise again!** He would be alive forevermore – a risen Savior Who would ascend to heaven, then return. In the mean time His followers would live in the power of His resurrection. They would not be left to fend for themselves. Later Jesus would promise to send them the Holy Spirit – to be in them, and to come upon them.

Luke 18:34 But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

It seems sad that they did not **understand**. But it says this was **hidden** from them. God hid this understanding from them, at this time. Later they would return to these words and be comforted.

They were thus in a position where they must totally trust and depend upon Jesus. In other words, **they were like infants who must trust and depend upon the care of their parents.**

Does an infant really need to understand how you are caring for it? Does it wonder about the nutritional content of its food? Or the frequency of its diaper changes? Don't you think that – ideally – the parents have their baby's best interests in mind, and care for it accordingly?

Earthly parents are not always good; but God **is good!** You can depend upon Him.

You might be wondering, Doesn't an infant make demands on its parents, by crying (for example)? Yes, it does. But unlike earthly parents, your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask Him! Thus you really don't need to make any demands. **Demands** are the behavior of spoiled children; **dependence** is the attitude of secure children.

If you are a Christian... Even as you grow and mature, maintain the dependence of a baby toward your heavenly Father.

You may think you are a Christian; *almost everyone does!* Think about what you've learned:

1. If you think you are a Christian, then you believe that Jesus is God. If you believe He is God... Are you obeying Him? Have you left **all** to follow Him?
2. Look at yourself in the mirror of God's Law. Do you believe you are keeping God's Law? Not just the five commandments that many moral people are able to keep outwardly. The Law exposes your heart. It shows you that you are a law-breaker in the deepest part of your soul.
3. Are you going to go away, without making a commitment to Jesus? Or will you forsake **all** and follow Him?