

Pastor Don Nelson

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“LOSING SECURITY TO FIND SECURITY”

Matthew 26:36-46

○ A rich young ruler (probably a leader in a local synagogue) comes to the Messiah and asks, {Lk 18:18}

“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

It is a question of security. He is looking for spiritual safety and inner confidence.

In response, Christ Jesus tells him to obey God’s commandments. When the man assures him that he has {Lk 18:21} **“kept”** them all **“since [he] was a boy,”** the Lord adds: {Lk 18:22-23} **“You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”**

Upon hearing this, the man becomes {Lk 18:23-25} **“very sad,” because he [is] a man of great wealth.”** Jesus is sad, too. He declares: **“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, 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.”**

Why? It comes down to control.

The odds are that this man uses wealth as a means to control (or at least influence) his circumstances and future, and thereby make himself secure. Don’t we all?

As we observed some weeks ago, money cannot buy a home; yet it can buy a house. So long as they are well-constructed of solid materials, four walls and a ceiling go a long way in keeping out Mother Nature and Old Man Winter and the Big Bad Wolf.

Likewise, money cannot buy health; yet it can buy medicine and professional health *care*. The affluent are better equipped to avoid or successfully overcome everything from starvation to childhood diseases to obstetrical mortality to cancer.

Naturally, there are limits. Muammar Gadhafi might have embezzled as much as \$200 billion (that is *billion* with a “b”), but in the end, it was not enough to save him from the rage of his people. Nevertheless, money can diminish risk and give us more control over circumstances than we would otherwise have. Utilized effectively, it can increase safety and confidence.

The man who asks **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** uses money and belongings to control his circumstances and future. His objective is to achieve physical and financial security here and now, in addition to eternal spiritual security. The demand that he **“sell everything...give to the poor”** will make him more vulnerable to a variety of threats. Is it any wonder that we never hear from him again?!

This is hardly a unique event. The Lord continually challenges people to jettison their instruments of control and follow him: often it is money and property; sometimes it is social status or authority; now and then it is violence; frequently it is legalistic religion.

In most cases, saying “Yes” will expose them to great temporal danger in the kingdom of the world. To follow Jesus is to step out of one’s earthly security zone.

On the other hand, saying “Yes” will also prepare them for reconciliation with God the Father, indwelling by God the Spirit, and citizenship in God’s Kingdom. It will unite them with the Creator who proclaims, {Ps 75:3} **“When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm”**; with the Redeemer who has come {Jn 10:10, NLT} **“that [we] may have life, and have it abundantly”** **“in all its fullness,”** and who will rule as {Rev 19:16} **“King of kings and Lord of lords”** and with the Comforter, the {1 Th 5:23} **“God of peace”** who preserves his people until **“the coming of the LORD Jesus Christ.”**

Releasing control and setting aside social, financial, and physical security now in order to follow Jesus will bring them under God’s control and guarantee absolute security of body, mind and spirit in eternity.

✠ The call to Christian discipleship is, by definition, an invitation to sacrifice control and worldly security in order to find true safety and confidence.

Notice that Jesus never leads from the rear. The Messiah does not demand anything he himself is not doing. He who told the rich ruler to **“Sell everything [he has] and give to the poor”** also said, {Lk 9:38} **“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but [I have] no place to lay his head”** – the reason being that he has left his home and carpentry business and hit the road for the sake of the Kingdom.

But Jesus does not stop at poverty and homelessness. He gives total control to his Father and surrenders all hope of security in the here and now.

- Please turn with me to Matthew 26:36-46.

It is Thursday night. Christ Jesus has just shared the Last Supper with the 12. Judas slips out to meet his co-conspirators. Jesus and the others go to Gethsemane, a garden located just east of Jerusalem.

When they arrive Jesus tells eight of the apostles to **“Sit here while I go over there and pray,”** but he takes Peter, James and John a little farther into the garden.

- The Lord begins (verse 37) **“to be sorrowful and troubled.”** The word translated **“troubled”** has the sense of **“anxious”** or **“distressed.”**
- Then in verse 38 he groans, **“My soul is overwhelmed,”** is περιλυπος [perilupos] **“with sorrow.”** Περιλυπος means **“extremely afflicted,”** **“profoundly sorrowful”**.

Περιλυπος is rarely used in Scripture. It appears only a handful of times. One of them is in Luke 18:23, where it describes the rich young ruler’s response to the Lord’s challenge. As he grieved when confronted with the cost of discipleship, so now the Christ grieves when confronted with the cost of obedience to his Father. Only with him it is more intense, for he adds the phrase: **“unto death,”** **“to the point of death.”**

Sorrow, distress, trouble, and the sensation of being overwhelmed are all symptoms of insecurity. Jesus is in danger. He feels deeply apprehensive and asks Peter, James and John to **“keep watch with”** him. He needs the encouragement of their presence.

- Verse 39: **“Going a [few feet] farther, he [falls] with his face to the ground and [prays], ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”**

- Verse 42: after a brief and disappointing interaction with the three **“He [goes] away a second time and [prays], ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’”** Luke adds that, {Lk 22:44} **“being in anguish, he [prays] more earnestly, and his sweat [is] like drops of blood falling to the ground.”**

- In verses 43-44 the Messiah **“[comes] back”** and **“again [finds] them sleeping... So he [leaves] them and [goes] away once more and [prays] the third time, saying the same thing.”**

Early in his ministry Jesus announced, I {Jn 5:19, NIV; 5:30, NRSV} **“can only do what [I see my Father] doing, because whatever the Father does [I] also [do]. I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”** Until this moment he has always obeyed without any hesitation.

But today, obedience means renouncing his miraculous powers and declining to muster the angels under his command.

Obedience means standing defenseless before forces of evil that are bent on destroying him.

Obedience means submitting to betrayal, denial, abandonment, rejection, ridicule, injustice, public nakedness, physical torture, crucifixion, and alienation from the Godhead.

Obedience means setting aside all control and entering a state of absolute objective insecurity. Jesus is in a titanic struggle, the most dangerous and gut-wrenching battle of his life. He pleads three times, with every fiber of his being, to be spared this hardship.

✍ But each time he also says, **“Yet not as I will, but as you will. May your will be done.”** As he speaks these words and hands control over to God, the Holy Spirit transforms his anxiety into confidence, his anguish into peace. He fortifies the Son with unshakeable inward security even as the outward danger draws closer.

And so in verses 45-46 Jesus **“[returns] to the disciples and says... ‘Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!’”** Not **“Rise, let us”** run away, but **“Rise, let us go”** to meet Judas!

With that he guarantees the Kingdom’s success, makes possible our reconciliation with God, and secures his lordship. It is precisely because he **“humbled himself and became obedient” “even” “to death on a cross”** that **“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:8-11).

This is not only about Jesus. It is also about us.

Philippians 2:5 states: **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”** That attitude is made real and proven only in action. As the Messiah continually invited his original audience to jettison their instruments of control and surrender earthly security to follow him, so he calls us to do the same.

As counter-intuitive as it sounds, this is the way to eternal safety and confidence. Jesus says, {Lk 9:24-25, NRSV / TNIV} **“those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self?”**

Do you remember the events of Genesis 3?

The Garden of Eden is the epicenter of insecurity; but the Garden of Gethsemane is the focal point of security.

In Eden, we sinned and then suffered insecurity for the first time. In Gethsemane Jesus suffered insecurity for the first time, yet he did not sin.

In Eden, we put the Creation in danger by our disobedience to God. In Gethsemane, Jesus began to rescue the Creation by putting himself in danger in obedience to God.

In Eden, we seized control in a selfish effort to secure our future, bringing fear and despair on all humanity. In Gethsemane, Jesus relinquished control in a selfless effort to secure our future, bringing confidence and hope to the world.

The problem of insecurity begins in the Garden of Eden. The solution begins in the Garden of Gethsemane.