

Luke 18:18-30

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 November 2014

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] And to Luke 18, Luke chapter 18, and we're looking at verses 18 to 30 today, verse 18 to 30.!

I really hate the way in Ealing that charity shops and betting shops are the great boom business, aren't they? If there's a vacancy in a shop front, it seems to me that betting shops get in there. On the little row of shops around the corner from the house where we live, there are two betting shops. There's no bakers, but there's two betting shops, and they do a great business. But as much as I loathe betting shops, this week I went in one.

I went into William Hill in preparation for this sermon, just to see what it was like. It's pretty normal, isn't it? People say, oh, going into a betting shop is like going into a church, isn't it?

It's a completely foreign environment. It's total nonsense. It's fun of normal people betting away. And what interested me was that William Hill, the minimum bet was one pound. It's the minimum bet you're allowed to put on at a betting shop in Ealing.

[1 : 21] And so that's what I want us to do this morning. We're not actually going to bet, but I want us to do a little bit of betting, a little bit of gambling. Alright? We're going to Luke 18, we're going to limit ourselves to one pound each. And we're going to put our money on the favourite in every passage, alright?

So let's start in verse 2 of chapter 18. In a certain city there was a judge. There was a judge, it says that he's got no fear of God, and he's got no fear of man.

He's a pretty tough guy. And there's also a widow, verse 3. There was a widow who has got nothing going for her. And so I suggest to you that we put our pound on the judge to win that contest, don't you?

Who's going to win? The man who neither fears God nor fears man, who's a very powerful man, or the widow who's got nothing going for her. Let's put our pound on the judge to win. Let's go down to verse 9.

And there's a Pharisee. A Pharisee who is a law-abiding and a decent man. And a tax collector who is both a traitor and a cheat.

[2 : 30] Who would you expect to be accepted by God? Well, let's put our money on the favourite. Let's put our money on the Pharisee. Now, come down to verse 19.

I'm the rich young ruler. He's a fine, upstanding person. He's a sure bet, isn't he? To enter the kingdom of heaven. So we'll put our one pound on the ruler.

And if you come down with me to chapter 19, verse 1. We meet Zacchaeus, who is another tax collector. And who's got nothing going for him at all. Well, let's not waste our pound.

Let's not put our money on him. Alright? To get into the kingdom of heaven. Now, when you stand back and look at your day's betting. You realise you've lost your money every time. You've lost your money every time.

Those like the judge who've got everything going for them. And the Pharisees and the rulers. They go away empty-handed. But those who've got nothing going for them.

[3 : 28] The outsider. Like the widow. Like the tax collector. Like Zacchaeus. Like the blind beggar. And the widow. They all have their needs met.

And you scratch your head. And you say, well, I've put my money on the favourite. And I've lost my money every time. Now, what is going on? What is going on? What is chapter 18 teaching you about?

What is it telling you? It is telling you about grace. That God relates to us. Not because we deserve it. God does not relate to you because he owes you.

God relates to you contrary to your deserving. Grace is God treating well those who deserve his judgement. And all of us deserve his judgement.

What a wonderful thing that God relates to those who know that they've got nothing going for them. And that is us. Now, come with me to verse 18 of chapter 18.

[4 : 28] Here is this rich ruler. And he's got a wonderful question, hasn't he? It is a big question. One hundred years from now, Will I still be in existence?

He asks. Will my existence be typified by life? What must I do to inherit eternal life? Verse 18. How can I inherit eternal life?

And that is the best question. And he comes to the best person to answer that question. The one who's come to seek and to save the lost. And who's got a good CV. So look at verse 20.

This man has got a great CV. He's kept, doesn't he? Verse 20. The sixth. The seventh. The eighth. And the ninth commandment. And he says to Jesus, I've got the commandments under control.

They are all under control. And Jesus asks him a strange question in verse 19. He says to see verse 19, Why do you call me good? Why do you call me good?

[5 : 27] He said to Jesus, Good teacher. Why do you call me good? Identity. Identity is vital. Jesus is saying, Do you call me good because I'm a good teacher?

I'm good at teaching. Is that what you mean? That I'm a teacher who's a good man. Is that what you mean? Or more exactly, There is only one who is good and that is God. Do you mean by calling me good teacher, That you are recognising me as God?

Identity is vital. Let's just flip over. Flip over to Luke chapter 23. Flip over to Luke chapter 23 in verse 43. And you have this thief on the cross.

You have this thief on the cross Who has probably not done any of the commandments. Look what he says to him. In chapter 23 verse 43. Jesus says to him, Truly I say to you today, You will be with me in paradise.

Verse 42. The thief says, Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus replies, Truly I say to you, You will be with me in paradise. On what basis Will the thief on the cross, Who has probably not done any of those commandments, How will he be with Jesus in paradise?

[6 : 49] Surely on the basis of what he says in verse 42. Isn't it? Remember me, Jesus, When you come into your kingdom. Jesus, I recognise that you are a king, And you have a kingdom, Which you are going to enter.

Remember me when you come into your kingdom. Identity is vital. And the thief on the cross, Who has got nothing going for him, Who has certainly got no track record, Yet he cuts through everything that is happening, To see that Jesus, Jesus is God's king.

You wouldn't put your money on the thief on the cross, Would you? You wouldn't put your money on him. And yet, Jesus says to him, Today, You will be with me in paradise.

So come back with me to Luke 18, And the rich young ruler. Jesus says, Why do you call me good? Do you recognise me as king? Do you? And Jesus is going to find out an answer to that question, In another way.

And he puts to this man, Five of the ten commandments. Can you see that verse 20? Do not commit adultery. Do not murder.

[7 : 57] Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honour your father, And mother. Five of the ten commandments. He admits the first four, About God.

And he admits the last one, About coveting. Do not covet. So, You might remember, You should remember in Luke's gospel, Things keep coming up again. So you've heard the question, Of verse 18 before, Haven't you?

What must I do to inherit eternal life? Do you remember the good Samaritan? The lawyer comes up to Jesus, And says, What must I do, To inherit eternal life?

And, The lawyer wanted to know, Didn't he? In the parable of the good Samaritan, Who is my neighbour? Who is my neighbour? Do you remember Jesus told that parable, To kind of define who his neighbour was.

But in Luke 18, In contrast to the good Samaritan, Where the lawyer says, Who is my neighbour? It's interesting, Is it? In Luke 18, The rich young ruler says, I've got that covered.

[9 : 02] I've got my neighbour covered. I've never committed adultery, With a neighbour. I've never murdered a neighbour. I've never stolen anything from a neighbour.

I've never slandered a neighbour. I've respected my mum and dad. You see, The man in Luke 18, Is a thoroughly respectable man. Yes, I've kept all those things, Since I was a youth.

He's got the neighbour bits covered. The thief in Luke 23, He broke every single one of them, But he is going to paradise today, Because he recognised that Jesus is king.

This man has kept every one of them, But does he recognise that Jesus is king? Well, Listen to what happens. Listen to how he responds to the king's edict, Verse 22.

It is rather confrontational, Is it? Verse 22. When Jesus heard this, That I kept all these commandments from my youth, One thing you still lack, Sell all that you have, Distribute to the poor, And you will have treasure in heaven, And come and follow me.

[10:00] You see, For this neighbour, The issue was not, Who is my neighbour? But for this lawyer, For this man, For this rich young ruler, The issue is, Who is God.

If eternal life is loving God, And loving your neighbour, Well the man in the Good Samaritan passage, He's desperate, Isn't he, To limit the number of neighbours he has. This man though, Wants to know about the jurisdiction of God.

And what Jesus is saying to him, Is this, You need to get rid of the God competition, Young man. Sell all that you have, And give it away to the poor, Verse 23. Verse 23. And it tells us, Doesn't it, Verse 23, That when he heard this, He was, Extremely sad, Very sad, Because he was very rich.

So here is this man, How can I inherit eternal life? How can I have eternal life? You have one person in Luke 10, With the Good Samaritan, Who wants, To limit his neighbours.

But in Luke 18, There's a contrast, He wants to limit, God. He wants to limit, The jurisdiction of God, And his reign. And this rich young ruler, Is saying, There's got to be an off limits area, God.

[11:19] And the off limits area, For me is wealth. I don't want you, God, Intruding on my wealth. Jesus, You can be king, Of course you can be king, But not king here. I was on a camp last summer, And I had, I sat with a young man, Who was considering the Christian faith, And he said this to me, He said, I want Jesus to be king, But I want my sexual freedom.

I want Jesus to be my king, But I want my sexual freedom. That's exactly the same as Luke 18. He wants Jesus to be king, But he doesn't want him to be king of the wealth.

It's hard, isn't it? It's saying to you today, Wealth cannot be Lord, And Jesus be Lord. Sexual indulgence rules, Or Jesus rules, And this man was very sad, Because he wanted eternal life, But he also wanted his wealth.

And he had to realise, That Jesus was Lord, And that is the number one priority. It's a theological word, It's vitally important, That we need to understand it here, And it's the word repent.

Repentance is that you come to see, That everything, Everything takes one step back, And you enthrone Jesus, As your number one. Repentance means, That you're turning your back, On the God competition, And you are following Jesus.

[12:47] So look at verse 24, Jesus seeing, That the young man had become sad, Said how difficult it is, For those of wealth, To enter the kingdom of God, 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.

How hard it is for a rich man, To have all these competing gods, It is impossible, It is as impossible, As a camel getting through the eye of a needle, It is hard, It is impossible, You see wealth, Is an excellent counterfeit God, False God, Wealth promises me, Security, Wealth says, I will relieve your anxiety, If you just have enough money, You won't be anxious about anything, Wealth says, I will help you, Fulfill your dreams, You go to the news agents, And the headline on the lottery at the moment, Is that isn't it, Where dreams are made, In the local post office, Where dreams are made, Because wealth does that, Wealth pretends to be God, And then it becomes something, That is destructive, Someone has said this, You can either carry,

Your God, Which means it is no God at all, Because it is less than you, Or your God carries you, You can either carry, Your God, Which means it is no God at all, Because it is less than you, Or your God carries you, And when I think about my wealth, I carry my wealth, I protect my wealth, I invest my wealth, I can love my wealth, But it does not reciprocate, Your wealth will not love you back, If you carry your God, It is less than you, It is an idol, The God, The God, Who carries you, Is God, And in verse 26, Those who heard it said, Well we're all in trouble aren't we, Look at verse 26, We're all wealthy, Who then can be saved,

Notice what Jesus says, Verse 27, It is a wonderful verse, But he said, What is impossible with man, Is possible with God, I used to read that, On the morning of every exam, What is impossible with man, Is possible with God, It is not about exams, I'm sorry about those of you, Who do your

GCSEs this week, If you've done no revision, Don't think verse 27, Is going to get you out, Alright, Look at verse 27, What is impossible with man, Is possible with God, Eternal life, Is God's gift, To give, Is God's gift to give, And eternal life, God gives freely, And generously, To all of those, Who will bow the knee, To King Jesus, Who like the man, We'll meet next week, Like Bartimaeus, Who like the man, We'll meet in chapter 19, Zacchaeus, The very wealthy, Tax collector, Look at his experience, Jesus comes and stays with him, And in verse 8, Of chapter 19, Zacchaeus stood up, And said to the Lord, Behold Lord, Half of my goods, I give to the poor, And if I have deported, Anyone of anything, I restore it, Fourfold, And we think, Surely that's not, Financially sound, Is it Zacchaeus, If I've stolen anything, I'll restore it, Fourfold, But Jesus is Lord, And Zacchaeus, Is teaching his wealth, A lesson, He's breaking, The powerful grip, That wealth can have, And so Jesus says, Doesn't he, Verse 9 of chapter 9, Said to him, Today salvation, Has come to this house, Since he is the son of Abraham, For the son of man, Came to seek, And to save, The lost, Wealth, Is a good thing, Your hobby, Is a good thing, Your family, Is a good thing, Getting good exam results, Is a good thing,

[17:05] But when each of those things, Encroach, And say, I am Lord, I will determine, How you live your life, They've got to be resisted, With all your might, Because each one of them, Needs to be laid, At the feet of King Jesus, For his disposal, And so Peter says, In chapter 18, In verse 28, He says, We've given up everything for you, We've left our capital behind, We've left our fishing business behind, We've left our fields, We've left our tax collecting booths, We've left our parents to follow you, Don't you realise Jesus, We've given up everything for you, And Jesus verse 21, Do you notice what he doesn't say?

He doesn't say, For goodness sake Peter, You've taken this religious thing too far, He doesn't say, You've taken this discipleship business, Far too extreme, You've got too much religion, No he says, Nobody has done that, No one has done that, No one has done that, Will lose out, And I want to say to you friends this morning, It is only easy, To do what Peter says, If you think it's easy, It's because you haven't done it, It's only easy, If you haven't done it, No one will fail, To generously be compensated, Because God is a very creative compensator, In this life, And in the life to come, Will receive eternal life, Which is what this man was asking, So let me ask you, At the start of a busy week,

On a Sunday morning, Do you have eternal life, Have you bowed the knee, To King Jesus, Have you laid yourself, And everything, At the feet of King Jesus, Like Mary did, Do you remember that, In chapter 11, Chapter 11, Mary and Martha, One thing is necessary, Jesus said, One thing is necessary, And she sits at the feet of Jesus, And she listens to him, Have you lost control, Of your life to him, Why you say it's yours Lord, Do it as you will, It's a great relief, To do that, It's a great relief, To do that, To lose control, Of your life, To the one, Who is worthy of control, You go to the dentist chair tomorrow,

The dentist, You're sitting in the dentist chair tomorrow, And you're having root canal surgery, And the dentist says to you, You know, I studied this at university, But I've never done one before, It's my first time, And your eyes widen, Don't they, Like they only can, In the dentist chair, You're the GP, And you look at his wall, And he's got all his certificates there, And you think, It's great, I can have confidence, You could get on the plane tomorrow morning, And you see the pilots walking in, You know, And they've got their uniform on, And they've got their stripes, And they look so well qualified, You've got confidence in them, Because they're well qualified, And then you look at your life, Who is in control, If it is me, That is in control of my life, I am not well qualified, I am not well qualified, To be in control, I don't have perfect knowledge,

I don't have power, So that I can do anything I want, I want the one, Who is in control of my life, To be the one, Who is uniquely qualified, To be in control, Of life, The uniquely God, Lord Jesus, Who uniquely rose, From the dead, I don't know anybody else, Who did that, Who defeated, All his enemies, And our last enemy, Which is death, He defeated, He has the authority, He has the credentials, To be in control, And what a relief it is, Isn't it, To just be able, To hand over everything to him, Take my wealth, It's all yours Lord, You gave it to me, Thank you for it, But I want to lay it at your feet, I want obedience, And recognition, Of your Lordship, To come first, Last Friday, Claire was out, And for her birthday,

[21:55] With some of the women, In the church, I had a great night, I did what I always do, When I get a night to myself, I got take away, From the Turkish, And cans of coke, And watched The Godfather, It's probably my favourite film, I don't know if you've watched it, If you haven't watched it,

It is a great, Great film, But the problem with watching The Godfather, Is you get entranced by it, And so Claire arrives home, And I'm pretending to be Don Corleone, And you find yourself going to the shop, The following day, And you're speaking in the accent, Of Michael Corleone, And somebody has to say to you, Don't they, Get real, Get real, You're not Don Corleone, Get in touch with reality, Get in touch with reality, It's like it, Isn't it when you go to a martial arts film, I'm out thinking you're like Bruce Lee, When you go out of these doors, This morning, You'll be going back home, Tomorrow morning you'll get up, You'll probably wait for the bus, You'll get on the tube, You'll be in work, And you will be tempted to think,

Ah this is reality, This is reality, Or you go on holiday in the summer, And you go to the beach, You know that first time, That first evening, When you get to the beach, And you paddle in the water, And you say, Ah this is the life, This is reality, Well let me tell you what reality is, Reality is, You and I are here for a very, Very short time, Life is, Brief, And eternity, Is a very long time, Get real, Get real, Understand that this morning, And have the one, Who understands eternity, And the one who is qualified, To rule you, In the light of eternity, And lead you into eternity, And have him take over right now, Get real, It is an eternal issue, What a hateful thing, It would have been for me, Last summer, On that camp, When I sat down with that young man, And he said, I want Jesus as Lord, But I want my sexual freedom,

What a hateful, Vicious thing it would have been, To say, Yeah that's okay, You can keep your sexual freedom, I'm Jesus as Lord as well, That young man would have cursed me, For all eternity, After all there are ten commandments, Fifty percent mark, Well it's a pass mark isn't it, As long as you've got five out of ten, None of us are perfect are we, How hateful a thing, It is to say to people, Yeah you can keep your wealth, You can keep all those things, In the place of God, Yeah and you can have Jesus on the side, That you can be glad, When you should be sad, I want to warn you today, Don't turn away from this building sad, When you could go home glad, There's a saying, I've said it, You've heard it before, Jesus is not Lord of all, Unless he is, He is not Lord at all, Unless he is Lord of all, He is not Lord at all,

Unless he is Lord of all, He was raised, Anybody else who know that? He defeated his greatest enemy, Anybody else who knows that? And he says to this fine ruler, He says to them, Deal with your gods, Why do you call me good?

Or we'll find another way, Do you truly recognise who I am, Like that thief on the cross? Remember me as you come, As king, Deal with your gods, Lay them at his feet, Get rid of them, Come and follow me, And it's such a relief, When the only one who is qualified, To rule my life, Takes over, And rules my life, It's such a great relief, To bring all that you have, And all your gods, And you lay them at the Lord Jesus' feet, And say, Jesus you are king, You are Lord, You are God, Take away, Take control, But tragically, The rich young ruler, Was sad, And went away, Because he didn't want to do it, That's fine,