

## Give it all away...

Matthew 14:13-21 (MSG):

*One day one of the local officials asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to deserve eternal life?"*

*Jesus said, "Why are you calling me good? No one is good—only God. You know the commandments, don't you? No illicit sex, no killing, no stealing, no lying, honor your father and mother."*

*He said, "I've kept them all for as long as I can remember."*

*When Jesus heard that, he said, "Then there's only one thing left to do: Sell everything you own and give it away to the poor. You will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

*This was the last thing the official expected to hear. He was very rich and became terribly sad. He was holding on tight to a lot of things and not about to let them go.*

*Seeing his reaction, Jesus said, "Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who have it all to enter God's kingdom? I'd say it's easier to thread a camel through a needle's eye than get a rich person into God's kingdom."*

*"Then who has any chance at all?" the others asked.*

*"No chance at all," Jesus said, "if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it."*

*Peter tried to regain some initiative: "We left everything we owned and followed you, didn't we?"*

*"Yes," said Jesus, "and you won't regret it. No one who has sacrificed home, spouse, brothers and sisters, parents, children—whatever—will lose out. It will all come back multiplied many times over in your lifetime. And then the bonus of eternal life!"*

One of the principles Jesus repeats over and over: *if you hold on to everything you want here and now, you will not have anything left for the Kingdom of Heaven...*

This is one of the most difficult stories we read of Jesus to accept for most people. Jesus says three things to the rich man in this story: 1) sell everything you have. 2) give it all away to the poor. 3) THEN come and follow Me. As well, Jesus did not say to bring everything to Him to give away, He told this man, YOU sell what you have, and then YOU give the money away to the poor. Each one of these things present serious problems to Christians today. We hold on jealously to what we own, to sell what we have and actually give money directly to the poor is unheard of in this culture, even in churches. Most churches today would actually see this as very bad stewardship, after all, who knows what the poor will spend the money on! But this is what Jesus said for this man to do BEFORE following Him.

What are we to make of this? Even most literalists today would say that Jesus did not “literally” mean for this man to do these things. Yet, I can see no explanation other than Jesus meant exactly what he said. This is a true challenge that Jesus lays down before us, not just regarding our attitudes toward our possessions, but also, our attitude toward the poor.

*You're blessed when you've lost it all.  
God's kingdom is there for the finding.  
You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.  
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.  
You're blessed when the tears flow freely.  
Joy comes with the morning. (Luke 6:20-21 MSG)*

What have you given up to follow Jesus? Have you lost friends? Has your family turned their back on you? Jesus says that the more we lose to follow Him, the more we gain, and the closer we are to the Kingdom of God. On the flip side though, if we are not willing to give anything up, we cannot truly follow Him.

*In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. (Luke 14:33 NIV)*

The implications are quite clear, if almost impossible, without God's help, to achieve: You must, willingly, become one of the poor in order to find the Kingdom of Heaven.

*God, Creator and Sustainer of my being, grant me the strength to become one of the poor, so I can follow the path of Jesus to find the riches of Your Kingdom. Amen.*