



## No Thank You, Jesus

by Rev. Jerry L. McGlone

### Mark 10:17-22

*And as [Jesus] was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.' " And [the man] said to [Jesus], "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying [the man's] countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.*

Here's a story about a good man who turned Jesus down. Don't forget that part of the story, he was a good man. He was such a good man that Jesus invited him to be one of his disciples. He was such a good man, that he wanted to be better. He wanted to be a disciple, but something held him back. Something got in his way. Something tripped him up.

He was a good man, the scripture story says so. He did everything he thought he was supposed to do. He kept all the commandments. He honored his parents. He worshipped God. He was trustworthy and true. He did all of that, and still he knew there had to be something else. He still felt an emptiness inside. He knew he needed something more.

That's why he went to see Jesus.

He went searching for that one thing that he lacked.

He went hoping to find that one thing he needed.

He went with a longing in his heart and sincerity in his soul.

He went, and Jesus saw right off that he was a good man; but Jesus also saw that there was

- one thing holding that young man back,
- one thing keeping his heart captive,
- one thing shutting him out of heaven.

“Just do this one thing,” Jesus said, “and come, follow me.”

But that was the one thing the young man would not do.

He would not liquidate his wealth.

He would not give it all to charity.

He would not give up every thing he owned.

He would not do it. As he turned and walked away, he said, “No thank you.”

“No thank you, Jesus,” he murmured as he lowered his head and averted his eyes.

“No thank you, Jesus,” he muttered as he turned to look the other way

“No thank you, Jesus,” he mumbled, “I’ll do anything for you, anything but that!”

“No thank you, Jesus,” was all he could say, because he wasn’t willing to do the one thing it would take to become a disciple of Christ.

How sad. There was only one thing standing between him and the kingdom of God. Are you like him?

Is there something standing in your way? Is there something locking you out, something keeping you standing there on the wrong side of the door to the kingdom? Is there something in your life that keeps you from fully following Jesus Christ?

I know from personal experience that sometimes something gets in the way. And out of my own experience, I’ve come up with four things that sometimes keep me from being a true disciple of Christ. Any one of the four might be familiar to you.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus says, but you answer, “No thank you, Jesus. I want to be your disciples but not yet...”

And here’s the first excuse: you say, “Let me have just one more time of doing what I want; then I’ll come and follow you.” All you want is just one more time.

Let me have just one more fling, Lord, then I’ll quit. Then, I’ll be faithful and true.

Let me have just one more drink, Lord, then I’ll quit. Then, I’ll go on the wagon for good.

Let me have just one more serving of French Fries, Lord, then I'll quit. Then I'll lose some weight.

You know what it's like. There's always one more thing you want to do before you change. You want one more new car, one more bigger house, one more wiser investment, one more full barn, one more evening of selfishness. Then, after you've had your fun, after you've spent your energy, after you've sowed those wild oats; then you'll come searching for Jesus.

What you're actually saying is: "Just give me one more time to have it my way, Jesus; then I'll be yours."

You know it's true. There's always something else you want to do, some other priority, some other habit, some other distraction that comes first. Jesus always seems to end up number two on your list.

"Come, follow me," Jesus says. You answer, "No thank you, Jesus. I want to be your disciple, but not yet..."

Along comes your second excuse. You say, "Sorry, Jesus, I can't be your disciple until I get my life in order."

Once you finish that project and you get your life back to normal, then you'll have time for Jesus. Your life's so cluttered and busy, you have to get it straightened out first.

When you get even and money's not so tight,

- when the soccer season is over,
- when the business runs smoothly,
- when you get over your hurt feelings,
- when you start getting your way,
- when you get some spare time,
- when you get your health back,
- when the children grow up,
- when you retire...

There's always something else that has to get done first, something else that demands attention and time, something else that stands in the way. As far as you're concerned, you're the only one who can do it right. You've got to be in charge, in control, have everything under command. And after you take care of that one thing, then you'll have time for Jesus.

Poor Jesus, he keeps coming in second, and there's never quite enough time for him.

"Come, follow me," Jesus says. You answer, "No thank you, Jesus. I really want to follow you, but I can't right now..."

Excuse number three might be the one that's got you beat. You say, "I can't be your disciple now because you let this horrible thing happen to me."

"Why me, Lord; why did you let this happen to me?" When the doctor gives you a bad report,

- when the boss hands you the pink slip,
  - when your child misbehaves,
  - when your car stalls out on the thruway,
  - when your best friend talks bad about you,
  - when someone you love walks out of your life...
- "Why me," you ask.

"Why did you let this horrible thing happen to me?" You want to know. You get stuck there. You can't move on. You can't snap out of it. You can't get over it.

Some bad thing happened, and you never move beyond it. You stay right there. You stay mired in yesterday's mud, thinking about that bad thing and wondering why God and Jesus let it happen to you.

You dwell in self pity. You always keep looking backward in time. You live in yesterday's hurt and and suffer yesterday's frustration.

One of the problems with that kind of thinking is as long as you keep dwelling on that bad thing - and wondering why - you won't ever be able to hear the good news about Jesus.

"Come, follow me," Jesus says. You answer, "No thank you, Jesus. I'll gladly be your follower some day, but not today..."

The fourth excuse may come as a surprise, but most people feel this way sometimes. You say, "I'll be your follower, Jesus, just as soon as everybody else recognizes how good I am."

You know you've had those feelings. People don't understand how smart you are. They don't appreciate how pretty you are. They don't do what you tell them to do. They refuse to follow your good advice. They don't tell you how special you are. And until they do, you're not going to bend over backward to do anything else for them!

Too many people get stuck on excuse number four. They keep thinking they deserve to be treated better. They say they deserve more happiness, more praise, more respect. And until they get more, they won't give any to anybody else.

Watch out. You don't want to fall into that trap. If you think you deserve to get something better than what you give - you will never have the

inclination or disposition to look at Jesus. Because if Jesus tells you anything, he tells you to keep giving - whether you get anything back or not.

What do you think you deserve out of life? Do you deserve to be pampered? Do you deserve to be selfish? Do you deserve to be taken care of first?

I don't know about you, but when it comes to eternity, I don't want to get what I deserve. I want a whole lot more than what I deserve.

I want the divine forgiveness that only comes through God's freely given grace.

I want Jesus to love me.

I want God to wrap His everlasting arms around me.

I want to feel safe and secure.

I want to know I've got a heavenly home waiting.

I want so much more than I deserve.

How about you?

"Come, follow me," Jesus says. Too many people answer, "No thank you, Jesus." They're not ready to follow him, not yet. They want to keep him around. They know they'll need him sooner or later. They know there will come a time when Jesus has to go to the top of the list. But that time hasn't come, not yet.

They're not willing to give everything to Jesus. They'll give him a little bit -

- a little bit of time, a nod of the head, a wink of the eye,
- a little bit of money, a few bucks thrown in the offering plate,
- a few of their thoughts, a whispered prayer every now and then,
- a half-hearted devotion,
- a few left-over thoughts...

- but they're not ready to give him everything,

- not yet!

Does any of that describe you? You're a good person; you really are. But, is there one part that you're holding back, one part you want to keep for yourself, one part you won't let go? Is there something you won't give to Jesus, not yet?

That young man ran up to Jesus. He knelt at Jesus' feet. He asked a very important question. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He learned a lesson that day. He learned there was one thing blocking his way, one thing that would keep him out of heaven, only one thing.

But, he couldn't let loose of that one thing.

Apart from that, he was a good man. Jesus saw that. The scriptures tell us that. He was almost good enough to be a disciple of Christ, but he wasn't good enough. Only one thing held him back.

How about you? You're a good person. Jesus would say that he loves you. Are you ready to follow him right now? Or, is there one thing holding you back? Is there one thing you're clinging to? Is there one thing more important than eternity?

What could it be?

Could it be your money?

Could it be your wish to have a few more years enjoying your favorite vice?

Could it be that you want to get all of your life under control?

Could it be that you're stuck thinking about some bad thing that happened to you and the bitterness and anger toward God keep you stuck dwelling on yesterday?

Could it be an inflated idea of what you deserve out of life?

There might be that one thing that's holding you back.

Don't be like that young man who said, "No thank you," to Jesus. Don't avert your eyes and walk away. Turn your life over to Jesus. Turn loose, and follow Jesus, today.

Maybe you need to do it by being more generous with your money.

Maybe you need to do it by breaking some bad habit, by exercising some self control, by saying good-bye to some old behaviors.

Maybe you need to do it by trusting God to take care of your tomorrows, by turning over some of your burdens to a friend, by letting loose of your need to control.

Maybe you need to do it by forgiving some old hurts, by binding up some old wounds, by letting go of some old pains.

Maybe you need to do it by thinking of others first, by putting your personal needs second, by looking for ways to make this community a better place in which to live.

Maybe you need to do it right now! Don't hold anything back.

"Come, follow me," Jesus says.

Take him up on his invitation. Say, "Thank you, Jesus, I'm all yours."