

Luke 18.18-20

The Word for year 2021 at St. Matthew is "Follow". The Parable of the Camel and Needle, is about the cost of following Jesus and eternal life.

The Parable of the Camel and Needle, looked at through Middle Eastern eyes, reveals a style of writing in which the first half of Luke 18:18-20 is repeated in reverse order in the second half. A Parable in the middle of the passage sets up main teaching that is stated in the next verse. It takes a bit of work to follow, and goes like this...

- In verse 18 a ruler declares to Jesus that he wants to earn eternal life in the future. Verse 30 ends with Jesus declaring that eternal life is received as a gift now, and in the age to come.
- Jesus leads the ruler to affirm his Middle Eastern obligation to not leave family or the family property. [20,21]. In the second half Jesus shares with the disciples that obedience to the Kingdom of God means leaving family and property [29].
- The ruler finds it impossible to leave family and property, and turns away from following Jesus. [22,23]. In the second half Peter and the disciples declare they have left their homes and followed Jesus. [29]
- In the middle is a parable about Eternal Life: Jesus, speaking to the disciples says: ²⁴...*"How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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."*
- The intended teaching on Eternal Life is in the following verse:
 - ***"What is impossible with man is possible with God."***
 - The reader/listener is invited to ponder this teaching.

The lesson of the account is this: God reserves for Himself the right to grant entrance into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

1. The call to "Follow Me" requires a level of obedience beyond my ability to achieve.
 - *"Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."*
 - *"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."*
 - *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."*
2. The call to "Follow Me" is a gift of Grace
 - *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.* [Romans 5.18]
 - *For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.* [Romans 5.19]
 - *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!* [Philippians 2.8]
3. In the call to "Follow Me" God gives what He asks for...repentance and faith through Grace.
 - The first act of God's Grace confronts my sinfulness.

- Hearing the call “Follow Me” the Ruler, could not get past the first of act of God’s grace [his unworthiness before God] and ran away from the Gospel. [Mark 10.22]
 - *When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”* Luke 5.8
 - Second acts of God’s grace grants restores me to life in the Kingdom of God.
 - Hearing the call “Follow Me” the disciples received the gift to follow Jesus “
 - Jesus called Peter and Andrew, James and John: **“Follow Me. I will make you fish for men!”** *At once they left their nets and followed Him.* [Matthew 4,18-22]
 - *Jesus saw Matthew sitting in a tax collectors booth and said to him: “Follow me,” and Matthew got up and followed him.* [Matthew 9.9]
4. The call to “Follow Me” involves both leaving and receiving. Here are Jesus’ words about leaving and receiving from Matthew, Mark and Luke
- Luke 18. ²⁹ *And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”*
 - Matthew 19. ²⁹ *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*
 - Mark 10.29-30 ²⁹ *Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.*
5. “Follow Me” - leaving and receiving in everyday life.
- *And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* [Luke 9.23]
 - Luther on Baptism for daily living: “It means that the old sinful Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drown and die with all sin and evil lusts; and that a new man daily arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.”
 - Confessing and leaving [dying to] those areas of life where we fall short of Jesus call: “Follow Me.”
 - *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* [Matthew 6.33]
 - Growing in the grace [rising] of making God first in all things...relationships, possessions, professions, and friendships...everything.
 - Becoming more like Jesus in our thinking, speaking, and living.
 - Praying for, and seeking out the ONE we know who is running away from God’s grace who is waiting to hear Jesus’ call: Follow Me.

Grace and Peace from God our Father, and the Lords Jesus Christ.