

# What We Keep,we Lose

by W.F. Anderson

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of listening to God's perspective and thinking the way He thinks, and highlights the dangers of looking at things from a human point of view.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:4, Mark 10:43-45

**Topics:** "Christian Humility", "Servant Leadership"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of humility and service in the Christian life. He uses examples from the Bible, such as Jesus using himself as an example of a servant and using a child to teach the lesson of humility. The preacher also highlights the contrast between a mindset of seeking personal gain versus a mindset of giving and serving others. He emphasizes that service should be voluntary and not forced, drawing from the example of Jesus willingly serving others during his time on earth.

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## Transcript

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist. But some say Elijah, others one of the prophets.

And he saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and by the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and that after three days rise again.

And he spoke that saying openly. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever would save his life shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous

and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. One of the problems the disciples of our Lord faced during the three and a half years that he was with them, was their constant attempt to correct him. It's a great thing that he's the Messiah, you know, but there are a few things that they could teach him.

And they spent three and a half frustrated years trying to bring him around to their way of thinking. They were not about correcting him. This is one of the occasions.

They were not about telling him they didn't believe him. Peter did it when they were on their way to Gethsemane. And Jesus said, You're all going to leave me tonight.

Peter says, They may, but I won't. Jesus said, Peter, you're going to deny me three times before the cock crows in the morning. Oh, not I. I'll die.

I'll go to prison. I'll never deny you. What were they, what was he saying to the Lord? No, Lord, you're wrong.

What you have just said is not true. And more than once, they tried to bring the Lord around to their way of thinking, to get him on the right track. Because in certain areas they knew what the right track was, and they wanted to get him onto the right track.

I find it rather easy for us Christians to do the same thing. We spend a lot of time in prayer trying to bring God around to our way of thinking. We know what's best.

And we've got to get God on this right track where he'll do what we know is best for him to do. And we're going to be just as frustrated as those disciples were, as often as we try to straighten God out and get him on the right track. Because that's what they tried to do with the Lord.

Because they had in their minds what the Messiah should do, they really didn't listen to what he was saying. And when we were talking about it the other night, this is one of those occasions in which they heard what he said, but they didn't listen to it. And this is not the only time that happened.

They were so filled with their own ideas, they could not really hear what he was saying. Three times in Mark's Gospel, chapters 8, 9, and 10, the Lord clearly spells out that he is going to die. Three times they misunderstand him.

They don't hear him. They're busy doing their own thing. And his words fall on deaf ears and hard hearts.

So that when he actually died, they were shocked, completely unprepared for it, because they didn't listen when they heard. We'll look at this passage in chapter 8 in a moment, but you'll find another one in chapter 9. And they're on their way to Capernaum. Our Lord is really moving down toward Judea and his crucifixion.

But they're on their way to Capernaum. And on the way to Capernaum, he is telling them again that he's going to Jerusalem to die. They're not listening, really.

And when they get into the house, he wants to know what they're talking about. And you find the disciples discussing which of them is going to be the greatest. On the other occasion, when he tells them he's going to die, James and John want the chief seat.

One on the right hand, the other on the left, when he comes to the kingdom. And here he is discussing the most momentous event of his own human history. The event on which the salvation of man turns the center point of all God's dealing with a fallen world.

And they are fighting over which of them is going to be the greatest and who is going to sit on the right hand and on the left hand in the kingdom. And they are unable to hear what he is saying, because they are so filled with their own ideas and really filled with themselves. And then very gently he has to teach them the lessons they need to learn.

In chapter 9 in the house, he takes a child and he teaches them the lesson of humility. Whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives him that sent me.

You want to be great. You want to do great exploits. You want your name heralded far and wide in the kingdom.

No. What I'm looking for is the kind of person who can receive a little child for my sake. A person who is able to do that is a great person.

One of the reasons we don't live that way is because we are so concerned with our own names and our own size. And little children can contribute to neither. And we are thinking of ourselves and not them.

On more than one occasion our Lord took children up in his arms and blessed them. And he teaches his disciples in the 9th chapter the lesson of simplicity and humility. And we would save ourselves a great deal of trouble if we would learn that lesson.

Simplicity and humility. In chapter 10 when they again want to be rulers in the kingdom, the Lord teaches them, well you know in the Gentile world, the great people rule over them. But it shall not be so among you.

Whoever would be great among you, let him be servant of all. And he teaches them the lesson of humility. And he uses himself as the example.

In chapter 9 he uses a child as the example. In chapter 10 he uses himself. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life along to so many.

And what we were talking about in that Bible study in James chapter 1 this morning, is it all depends how you look at life. You see life as an opportunity to get, or you see life as an opportunity to give. And if you see life as an opportunity to get, you shrivel up into a small human being who is always miserable.

And if you see life as an opportunity to give, you grow and expand and become great and life is a joy. And what our Lord was trying to teach his disciples is, the meaning of life is in service. Serving others.

And you cannot divorce the service of God from the service of man. There is no way in God's thinking to be a Pharisee who brings his sacrifice to the temple and draws his robes around him lest he come into contact with some sinner. God rejects the service to him that does not also embrace our fellow man.

And our Lord is teaching his disciples, you want real greatness. You've got to stop thinking the way your society thinks. And you have to start thinking the way I think.

Do you see that? We grow up in a society that has its own standards. We are bombarded by those standards. Schools, people we work with, we are taught what it means to be great.

How do you achieve success? And what our Lord is telling us is, you've got to get that out of your head and think the way I think. See greatness the way I see it, not the way your society sees it. Our Lord uses that idea when he's trying to impress this on his disciples in another occasion.

Which is greater? The one who sits at table or the one who waits on the table? Well, obviously in any society if you had a servant to wait on your table, you would be greater than the servant. That's obvious. You employ this slave or servant, you in society standards are greater than the servant.

Which is greater? He that sits at table or he that serves? I, he said, am among you as he, said what? Sits at table? He that serves. Society would say, if you were to look in the window of a Palestinian home, or stand in the doorway, and of course their homes were always open, when you got up in the morning you opened your door, and that meant you, your house was open. People could walk in off the street, and if you were having a big banquet, lots of friends in, they would come in and stand around the room and see what the menu was, and listen to the conversation.

Anytime you were in privacy, you shut your door. If you were to stand inside a Palestinian home, and they're having a feast, and you see all these guests reclining, and the host there at the head position, and you see the servants coming in, putting the food on the table, taking the dishes away, you had seen them anoint the guests when they came in, take their shoes off, wash their feet, and you looked at that. Which is the greater? The host sitting at the head, or reclining at the head of that table, or the servant who had washed their feet, the servant who had served the dishes? Which is the greater? Anybody knows that.

It's the host sitting reclining at the head of the table. That's the greater man. If you were to look into the upper room in John chapter 13, if you could look through the window into the upper room, and you saw 11 men or 12 men reclining around that table, and you saw a man with the towel around his waist, and with the basin of water, and you saw him down there at the feet of these men, washing their feet, and you were to look at that, which is the greater? Obviously those who are reclining at table, this man's a slave, he's inferior to them.

Jesus said, I am among you as he that serveth, and his greatness is shown as he washed their feet. Now it's hard for us to make that switch in our thinking, but it's essential that we do it. We are part of our mad scramble for position.

What we need is to be part of the spiritual scramble to serve. There aren't any crowds there. You have the whole place to yourself.

But this is what our Lord said, I am among you as he that serveth. It's the servant that's the great one, in the thinking of God. God always, maybe always is too strong a term, but God reverses our way of thinking so often.

Because our way of thinking is wrong, and we make ourselves miserable and useless to God by following the way of thinking of our society instead of God's thinking. Now let me say something. I didn't mean to stay in chapter 10.

We will get back to chapter 8. Let me say something else about service. Service must be voluntary, not forced, health of flavor. Service must be voluntary, not forced.

When our Lord came to earth and became a servant, as Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 2, that was a voluntary step on his part. Nobody forced him to do it. And when living here on earth, he served the needs of people.

That was voluntary on his part. Nobody commanded him. And when people did try to command him, he refused, perfectly willing to perform a miracle to help someone.

But when the Pharisees said, show us a sign from heaven, he absolutely refused. You're not going to command his service. He will voluntarily serve.

But that does not give us the right to command him. Now let's bring that over into our Christian service. Any kind of service must be voluntary.

Where it is demanded, it becomes demeaning. There was nothing demeaning to our Lord in kneeling down and washing the disciples' feet. He voluntarily did it.

There was nothing demeaning in it. But if Peter had come along and grabbed the Lord by the collar and said, now you get that basin, get down there and wash our feet. There's no way he could have done that.

That would have been demeaning. When we demand that people serve us, we demean people. When we allow them to serve, we ennoble them.

You feel that, don't you? Oh, yes. My daughter was washing my car one day. She did it just out of the goodness of her heart.

I looked out and there she was washing my car. And I walked out there to look at the job she had done. The outside was just spotless.

And then I said to her, don't forget the inside. And she took that sponge and threw it down and said, I was going to wash the inside, but I won't touch it now. Why not? I had demanded of her what she voluntarily wanted to do.

And I had taken all the joy out of it. Our service to each other must be voluntary, not demanded. And you have the great privilege of voluntarily serving God's people, and thus serving God.

Now, our Lord is saying that is the way to true greatness, to serve God's people. So, if we are going to serve God's people, we must serve where the real needs are. The servant doesn't decide what kind of service he is going to perform, willy-nilly to the needs of his master.

Nor can I, nor can you. Service must be intelligent service. It must see where the needs are and move to meet those needs.

Which means I must be thinking. I must, what were we saying the other night? I must look when I see. I must discern what the needs are.

Some of them are quite obvious, some are not so obvious. But I must discern what the needs are. Some of them are obvious, but nobody sees them.

As in the upper room, the need was obvious. They hadn't had their feet washed. Oriental courtesy.

Necessity. The water and the basin were there. The towel was there.

But nobody really saw the need. Except the Lord, of course. Because their egos were all wrapped up here, and his wasn't.

And so he was free to serve. So he could say, I am among you as he that serves. And the most astonishing thing, in the days of the kingdom, he said, his disciples are going to sit down at table and he is going to serve them.

Now, if that sounds out of keeping with our Lord as king, it's only because we don't understand God's principles. We still have our ideas of greatness, and we don't see that that in itself is the evidence of his greatness. That even in the day of his glory, he will serve his disciples.

We just have our thinking turned around and get it straightened out. It's no wonder that the disciples misunderstood him. Didn't hear him.

Who wants to hear stuff like that? I'm looking for the robes and the crown and the rule. I want people under me. I want to give order.

That's what the disciples were thinking. I want to see people move when I speak. And as long as we are thinking and feeling that way, we are not going to be able to hear what he is saying.

But that's what they were thinking. Of course, I want one seat on the right hand, one on the left. Arguing about which of them is the greatest.

What are they thinking about? Rule, control, power. And they were perfectly willing to straighten him out when they thought he was wrong on the whole subject. And here it is in chapter 8. Now in chapter 8, this is the climax, one of the turning point of the book, as I indicated to you the other day.

And our Lord has spent two and a half years bringing his disciples to this point where they realize who he is. Now one of the ways in which he has done that is to force them to think. And earlier in chapter 8, when they were crossing the sea of Galilee, our Lord warns his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Herodians.

And they misunderstood him, as they so often did. They misunderstood him and they thought, oh he's rebuking us because we only have one loaf of bread in the boat. He wasn't talking about physical bread at all, and having one loaf of bread was no problem to him.

He had fed 4,000, he had fed 5,000, that was no problem to him. No, he was talking about the teaching of the Pharisees and the Herodians. But at that moment when they misunderstood him again, I was almost going to say you could hear the exasperation in his voice, are your hearts also hardened? Having ears don't you hear? Having eyes don't you see? And then he throws nine pointed questions at them that forces them to think back through what they have seen.

Now this time in your mind he is saying, as you relive those events, look! Don't you see the significance of them? And he gets their minds turning. And after that has happened, then on the way to Caesarea Philippi, who do men say that I am? And now with all that behind them, thinking about what he has done, seeing what he has done, seeing the significance of it, they're ready to make the confession he is the Christ. That's the way he has brought them there.

But now remember, the word Christ is already filled with meaning for them when they use it. To them the Messiah was going to be a great ruling Messiah who would deliver Israel from her enemies, set up a glorious kingdom, and who do you think are going to be the regents in this kingdom? These twelve men, naturally. So when they confess that he is the Christ, that word Christ to them already has meaning.

And they see him in terms of their idea of what the Christ is. That's why he says to them, don't tell anybody. If they were to go out and preach their idea of the Christ, they would be wrong.

And they would lead people astray. No, he says, that is not what the Christ is going to do. What the Christ is going to do is go to Jerusalem and die.

And bang, there goes their bubble and all their daydreams. Die! No, no, no. Man, we were just about to sit down on that throne and he yanked it out from under us.

Don't you do that. And that's what Peter's talking about. He rebukes him.

No, you can't do that, is virtually what Peter said. And then Jesus said, you're an adversary to me. Get behind me.

You're standing in my way. Now the key to that, in my judgment, is the word that Jesus said to Peter in that 8th chapter. Let's close with verse 33, Thou savest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Phillips has a paraphrase of that, that has the idea that you are thinking the way men think, and not the way God thinks. You are looking at things from man's point of view, I believe that's his language. That captures the idea, though it is not an exact translation, that captures exactly the idea.

You are an adversary to me when you look at things from man's point of view, and not from God's point of view. And the fact that they looked at things from man's point of view shows up each time he talks about dying. They are looking at things from a human point of view, not from a divine point of view.

And from a human point of view, he's wrong. And they have to learn to look at things from God's point of view. Now, if they had looked at things from God's point of view, if their minds had been differently oriented, Peter would never have refused the Lord.

When the Lord talked about going to die, if Peter's thinking had been in line with God's thinking, he would have fallen at the feet of Jesus and worshipped him. Thank you, Lord. Thank you.

That's our whole salvation. But he wasn't thinking the way God thinks. The key to living for God is to think the way God thinks.

To me, that's what Paul means in Romans 12. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Now, that's not something God simply sticks into my head.

That isn't what Paul means. I am not transformed by an emotional experience. I am transformed by the gradual change in my thinking.

And that thinking is formed by the Word of God. The kind of thing we've just been talking about tonight. What is important to our society? What makes the man great in our society? That was drilled into our heads from day one.

And that's the way I think. I come into any church, any organization, who are the great people in here? The people who give order. Where did I get that idea? From my society.

And as long as I have that idea in my head, that's the way I'm going to act. And what am I going to do as a Christian? I'm going to try to be somebody who gives orders, because that's the way I think. And I have to start getting into my thinking that greatness is service.

And it takes a long time to get that other idea out of my head and get this one into my head. But if I ever get that other one into my head, the way I act is going to be different. If Peter had been thinking according to the teachings of the Old Testament about what the Messiah had to do, he would never have reduced the Lord.

His action would have been different. So, I'm not concerned about great spiritual experience. I mean, if God gives them to you, great.

But our lives are going to be transformed only as our whole thinking process is changed. As our value structure becomes more and more biblical, our actions will become more and more biblical. And we will be adversaries to the work of God as long as we refuse to think biblical.

Now, what it means to think biblically is beyond anything I can take up tonight, but let me suggest a book called *The Christian Mind* by Harry Blamires, B-L-A-M-I-R-E-S. It's published in this country, I forget by whom now. *The Christian Mind*, thinking Christianly about everything.

*The Christian Mind*. And that's what we need. We are not thinking Christianly about anything.

We are thinking worldly about everything, including the church. And we need to learn to think Christianly. So, our Lord goes on to tell Peter something.

And all of us. Briefly, he reverses our way of thinking, that if we're going to follow him, we have to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and be his followers. Deny ourselves.

What was Peter thinking about when he reviewed the Lord? Himself. What were those disciples thinking about when they were arguing who was the greatest while our Lord was talking about his coming death? Themselves. What were those two disciples thinking about when they came to the Lord and asked for the chief seats, one on the right hand and one on the left? Themselves.

What our Lord is saying is you've got to stop that. You've got to stop that. You have to deny yourself.

Now, that's not just to deny yourself something. Self-denial of things is important. But to me, that isn't what the Lord is saying.

I've got to stop putting me first. I've got to start saying no to myself. I've got to start thinking the way God thinks.

Not what I want. Not what pleases me. Not what I like.

I've got to start looking at life the way he looked at life. Take up the cross. I think that was literal.

I don't mean they carried a literal cross. I think what our Lord was saying is to follow me, and he said this to his disciples more than once. When he sent them out in Matthew chapter 10, when he was getting them

ready to go out on their first preaching mission, and he gave them instructions that went way beyond their mission, right down to the end of the age, he warned them that to follow him might cost them their lives.

And he warned them that when that choice came, they better choose to die. And I think that's what he's saying to you. You take up the cross.

That is, you are so committed to him that if there's a choice between losing him or dying, you choose to die. Because your loyalty to Jesus Christ is such that when it comes to that, you don't let people kill you before you deny Jesus Christ. You take up the cross, and you follow me, and he tells us why.

You can lose your life, or you can save it. So let's take up another one of those things. Whatever you keep for yourself, you lose.

Whatever you give away for him, you keep. Our Lord says you want to save your life, you want to keep it? Okay, you can lose it. You lose your life for myself in the gospel, you keep it.

Now, that is not the way my society teaches you to keep it. That's the way he teaches it. The only thing you keep is what you give away for him.

Everything else you're going to lose, and that includes your life. That's what he's saying to you. So if you're going to follow him, now that's, again, that's not the way I teach.

My society is telling you to keep the faith, I want you to keep it. You get more and more and more and more, and he is teaching you to give, and give, and give, and give. Do I believe him, or am I like the disciples? I'm trying to correct him and get him around to our American way of thinking.

You're not going to bug me. You're not going to get him around to our American way of thinking. But he'll do everything he can to get us around to his way of thinking.

Whatever you keep, you lose. Whatever you give away for his sake, you keep. Our father, in the name of him who seemingly threw away his life at 33 and a half years of age, we come to you tonight and pray that in the same spirit we may give ourselves without question to him, who will help us to be true disciples of our Lord Jesus, having our thinking molded by him, having our lifestyle formed by him.

Keep us in the dome of his healing, blocked by our own selfishness, so that we really don't hear what he is saying here. Let our lives be challenged and changed by his words and his ideas. Help us willingly to be servants, to give away, to help.

We discover as we stand before him that everything we have given and everything we have prayed for him, we have kept it for us. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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