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***Surrender: Nothing Short of Everything***  
***Luke 18:18-35, 19:1-10***

In October 2002 a very wealthy man named Jay Gould lost his wife to lung cancer. Afterwards he tried to fill the emptiness with golf and vacations, but a void remained.

And then a sermon about giving to the poor completely changed Gould's life. "The priest was right in front of me and looked like he was talking right to me," Gould said.

So Jay made certain his seven grown children were cared for, then left his luxurious home in the Denver suburbs for a modest room in a monastery, complete with a picture of his wife and kids hanging on the wall. He serves the homeless with the Franciscan Friends of the Poor.

Gould explains, "So many times in the gospel, it says 'Take care of the poor, take care of the poor.' And that's what I do, and every day I do that, I feel fulfilled."

It's one of those stories that I marvel at,  
but deep down inside it's one that feels pretty far away, doesn't it?  
I mean none of us has felt God calling us to give up everything and  
serve the poor.

What Jay Gould experienced was extremely unusual—  
wasn't it? Surely God is not asking me to give up everything?

I think that most of the time surrendering our lives to God is far ***less dramatic***.

For most of us surrender happens in lots of little choices  
that add up over a lifetime.

What we don't realize is that along the way we are either becoming  
like the rich young ruler who walked away from Jesus,  
or Zaccheus who surrendered it all to have new life through Christ.

In the end we either surrender who we are and what we have,  
or ultimately we walk away from God.

The story of the rich ruler is found in Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18—  
from the three stories we know that he was a rich, young ruler  
who followed God's laws to a tee.

In other words, he was just the kind of young man you want your daughter to bring home for a date, just the kind of young man the church would love to have in its pews.

But something was *missing*.

He was hungry for something more meaningful than the riches, the power,  
and the prestige.

He comes asking Jesus what he must do to have eternal life.

Clearly unsatisfied with his own life, he asks how he can find a better one.

*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*

Jesus stops him right away. *Who are you calling good?* Only God is good—  
now let's see if God is the one you really follow.

Jesus begins to list the ten commandments,

and the modest young guy says I've obeyed them all.

And with that Jesus peers into his heart, he sees what really matters to this man, and he says the words that will change his life forever...

*there is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me*

It was too high a price.

The rich young ruler was ruled by his riches.

He couldn't imagine letting go of his power, prestige or possessions,  
so he walked away, empty inside.

The young man was desperate for something more—desperate for God.

But he was unwilling to surrender that one thing that stood  
between him and God .

## **ZACCHEUS**

The next man we meet also had money and power,

but he was probably the most hated man in all of Jericho.

He had made some very bad choices along the way,

and he too was desperate for something meaningful in his life—  
he too was desperate for God.

Zaccheus was the *chief tax collector* in Jericho—

one of the busiest cities of the time, a common traveling route where tax collectors working for Rome could collect tolls on not only your animal, your belongings, but even your cart—or every wheel on your cart!

It was a racket, and everyone knew that the chief tax collector was making his fortune by ripping off the common folk.

We can only guess that he took the job for the money,  
 because taking it meant being excluded from the Temple and  
 hated by almost everyone around him.  
 Like the rich young ruler, his power and possessions had a hold on his heart.  
 He wouldn't keep doing it if it wasn't so profitable.  
 But unlike the rich young ruler, Zaccheus is a bit more humble.  
 He doesn't try to pretend to be anything other than who he is.  
 A chief tax collector. A thief.  
 Looking for something more to life.  
 Climbing a tree to see this man Jesus.

And when Zaccheus meets Jesus, he decides that following this man is more  
 important than all the riches in the world!  
 When Jesus calls him out of that tree, and comes to his home,  
 his heart is changed.  
 He is willing to surrender all his power and possessions—in fact he  
 voluntarily gives half of his wealth to the poor,  
 and offers to pay back anyone who has been cheated by him at an interest rate of  
 400%! I don't know what was said between the two, but Jesus surely showed his love,  
 and Zaccheus obviously responded with gratitude and grace.

Jesus announces the dramatic renovation of Zaccheus' heart and life—  
*today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.*  
*And the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.*

Zaccheus shows us what new life with Jesus can look like--  
 A life where we let go of something that was holding us back,  
 Where we give away that which was so important

It's the way Arthur Ashe put it,  
*he said we make a living by what we do, but we make a life by giving.*

Zaccheus shows us what happens in a heart that lets go  
 A heart that has been transformed by the love and grace of God.  
 A heart full of joy and thanks

For both men meeting Jesus was a ***defining moment*** in their lives.  
 It was a turning point, a moment when they looked inside their hearts  
 and decided what was more important.

Both men were attached to what they owned, and all the power that came with it.  
And the odds of changing were against them according to Jesus.

He said 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.

But Jesus also said ***everything was possible*** with God.

And then he met Zaccheus, just to prove this point.

Both men were attached to what they owned.

And in the end one made the right choice.

Only one surrendered that which stood between him and God.

One proved that all things are possible...

if we're willing to surrender our lives to God.

Today God has ***two questions*** for us—

***First, what is it that stands between you and God?***

For most of us it's our possessions—what we own.

This is the most common stumbling block for most people.

It's the reason Jesus talked about money and possessions so much,  
because he knows the power it holds in our lives.

Are we willing to give up our stuff to follow Christ?

But the story is ***not just about money***.

For some of us our stumbling block is ***pride***.

For others it's a bad attitude, or ***prejudice***.

It might be something we do in ***secret***,

or the way we can't let go of an old ***hurt***.

***What is it that has a hold on your heart?***

***Do you care for anything more than you care for God?***

Whatever it is Jesus is asking us to give it up. ***To let it go.***

To ***surrender***, so we can find in the words of Timothy,  
*the life that really is life.*

It doesn't matter what it is, or how tight our grip,

because with God all things are possible,

including our freedom from the demons that haunt us,  
and the things that hold us hostage.

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Once we know what's holding us back,  
we come to God's second question:

***Are you willing to surrender the one thing standing between you and God?***

Are you willing to just walk away from it?

Are you willing to let go, and let it die?

Are you willing to give up the thing you don't think  
you can stand to live without?

***It sounds impossible. It feels impossible.***

Easier said than done you say, and rightly so.

Sure I'll just give up that addiction,

sure I'll just walk away from a nice home, cars, boat, and more...

Sure, I'll give up my secret vices, no problem, right?

It sounds impossible. It feels impossible.

How can I let go of something that takes up  
so much of my time and energy?

How can I give up something that seems to keep me going?

That appears to bring me satisfaction....

But in reality is holding me hostage?

***It sounds impossible. It feels impossible.***

***But with God all things are possible.***

Did you hear that? With God all things are possible.

We can surrender our lives, our possessions, our pride,

And whatever it is that makes us stumble,

Whatever it is that has become more important than God.

So if you're doing something you ought not to be doing

If you're possessed by a bad habit or addiction

If you're living a lifestyle you're ashamed of

If you're faith is lukewarm and superficial

If your heart is not right with God

And if you want to change,

***Hear the good news of the gospel:***

Jesus has come to set you free.

He knows you are looking for something bigger than yourself.

He knows that empty feeling inside.

Today he has called you and me by name, and come to our house.  
He wants us to find the life that really is life  
And he is asking us to give up that which holds us hostage.

***What is it that you need to surrender?***

***What will it take for you to let go?***

Jesus will never force us to give it up.  
He didn't run after the foolish rich ruler.  
He loved him, and he offered him the opportunity to be changed  
But in the end we each make our own choices.

We may not know HOW God will free us from our bondage  
But we do know that when it happens our lives are changed forever.  
We want to give, we want to share, we want to celebrate.  
We want to live new life, real life, free from any chains

This is the good news of our gospel.  
This is the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Let go, and life is yours.

In the name of the One who gives us new life, Amen.