



SCRIPTURE:

Luke 10:17-27

RECAP:

The American dream has been around for generations. It is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success when everyone is provided opportunity. That has translated as a whole that Americans are a very blessed people – especially materially. Have you ever wondered, no matter how much or how little you have, what you would do if you were asked to walk away from it all? Especially if what you were to receive in return was much harder and counterintuitive to all you had worked for? Today, we are going to look at two stories of two men who were presented with an opportunity to walk away from everything to follow Jesus. One is the story of C.T. Studd, a famous English athlete who followed Jesus at great personal cost, and the other is the story of the Rich Young Ruler that we find in each of the first three gospels. His story is one of the most tragic in all of Scripture. Let's stand and read his story found in Mark 10:17-27.

Exegesis:

VS 17: Tells us that 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?" This young man ran up to Jesus and knelt at his feet. Many scholars believe this man was probably the ruler of a synagogue. It was unusual that he ran up to Jesus, because running at this time in the Middle East would have been seen as undignified. If we add these facts together, we quickly see that this man was potentially risking great social consequences as he threw himself at Jesus' feet. To add to the riskiness of the encounter, he used the title, "Good teacher". The title good here would have often been reserved as a title for God. It was not a title that would have been thrown around loosely. And maybe it is most important for us to understand that the man's question to Jesus is very strange. Jews, especially the leader of a synagogue, would have known exactly what was expected of them as far as their religious duty. They were to follow the law. But yet this man came to Jesus sincerely, asking what he could do to earn salvation. So Jesus answers.

VS 18: And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Jesus was not disclaiming that he was God the Son. Like he often did, He was using a question to draw out where this man really stood. He had claimed that Jesus was the very essence of good, but Jesus was about to reveal the man's true heart.

19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20 And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."

Notice that Jesus did not list the commandments that deal with a person's relationship with God. At this point, Jesus stayed with the commandments that dealt with the man's treatment of others. The man quickly responded that he had kept all of these from his youth, or likely from the time he was 13. If this was the entirety of the law, then maybe it wouldn't have been impossible for someone to keep them and earn their salvation. But notice that the man who said, "I've kept all of these since I was a boy," did not run off rejoicing. Instead, Matthew 19:20 records that he asked, "What do I still lack?" Jesus answers in verse 21.

21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Some try to say that Jesus's answer revealed that poverty is better than wealth but that is not what Jesus was saying here. Instead, He was instructing that when someone truly follows Him, then that follower can allow nothing to come between themselves and their devotion to God. Look at this picture. Jesus is God who loved this man unconditionally and compassionately. And because Jesus loved him so, he told the man exactly what to do to obtain eternal life...Sell everything you have. Give it to the poor. And follow Me. Now, let's be clear. Selling all he owned and giving it to the poor did not hold salvific power. NO! Jesus held the saving power and he would have rescued the young man if he would have followed Him in faith. Selling his goods and giving them to the poor would have been a living testimony that he trusted Jesus, that he placed his faith in him, and that he followed him. Jesus described this when he used striking language that we read in Mark 8:34. Jesus tells every follower, **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."** This is the God that asks us to follow

him...Because He loved the young ruler so much, Jesus demanded that the man radically follow Him. And because Jesus loves us so much, he also says to us, count the cost and follow me! If we follow Jesus, he gets everything. All of us. We cannot compartmentalize our life and give him only what we want him to have. We can't say, you get part of me, but I get all of you. Listen! Let nothing come between you and Him! Nothing or No One is greater. There is no better for you. If you miss this there is only eternal sorrow.

22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Wow! The young ruler worshiped the created instead of the creator. He chose to allow things to stand in the way of an eternity with a holy God. He rejected the one who loved him so much he had lived perfectly for him, and was about to die for him. The man would not lay down his possessions to follow Jesus, which stands in stark contrast to what soon happened as Jesus laid down his life to pay for the sin of the world. Verse 22 may be the saddest verse in all of the Bible. It was right there. Salvation. Eternal life. Infinite joy. The presence of God. But he walked away. And when he did, Jesus took the moment to teach the heart of the issue.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 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." 26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"

Wealth or money in that day would have been considered a blessing from God. We see this in Genesis in the life of Abraham, a man of righteousness who was greatly blessed by God. It is also seen in the life of Job where his friends assumed he had lost favor or lost righteousness with God because he had lost his riches. This understanding would have been a concept widely held among the Jews. But Jesus' teaching stood in such contrast to what they had been taught, that it amazed his disciples and exceedingly astonished them. Jesus compared entering the Kingdom of God with a camel going through the eye of a needle and contrary to many attempts to say that there was a gate in Jerusalem named, "The eye of the needle," there is no proof that such a gate existed. Jesus meant exactly what he said. He was overstating his point to make it clear that even the best of the best could not earn their salvation. And no doubt his disciples were

wondering - if the best could not save themselves - then how could a few lowly fishermen be saved?

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

The rich young ruler came to Jesus with his hands full, wondering what he could offer to inherit eternal life – He risked social status, he recognized Jesus as an authority, he reported his own good works, and yet he rejected Jesus' offer. He walked away empty in sorrowful pride.

Jesus offers salvation that cannot be earned. He makes the impossible possible. And just as he asked his disciples to count the cost and follow him, to lay down their fishing nets, their jobs, their families, their dreams...he calls us to radically follow him. What would it have looked like if the rich young ruler would have laid it all down and followed Jesus? It may have looked like the life of C.T. Studd.

C.T. Studd

Charles Thomas Studd, better known as C.T. Studd was born in England in 1860. He was the youngest of three sons born to a wealthy farmer named Edward Studd, who had made a fortune in India. As one of the wealthiest families in all of England, the Studds grew up wanting little. Mr. Studd, C.T. 's father, loved all types of sports, but especially horse racing and cricket, the most popular sport in all of England at that time. C.T. also loved sports, and he had a special passion for Cricket. He and his two older brothers were considered Victorian Gentlemen Cricket players, each representing Eton College and then later Cambridge University. These three brothers dominated the cricket scene in the 1880s, and they became known as the Set of Studds. The closest comparison I can think of in recent American sports history might be the Manning football dynasty, with Archie, Eli, and Payton each having stellar SEC and NFL careers. If you know their story, it is hard to minimize the impact they have had on their sport and their respective communities. In their time, the Studd Brothers were amazing too. And C.T. became the best of the bunch. Though he was not very good in his younger years, he worked tirelessly to improve his game, and by the time he was 19, he had become the captain of his team at Eton College. C.T. really made a name for himself when he played amazingly in an important national Cricket match between England and Australia. Australia won that match, but the next year C.T. helped England recapture its cricket glory through his stellar play. He became so good and so well known for his dominance in the sport that he holds a place of prominence even today in English Cricket. You could think of him as the

Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky, Cristiano Ronaldo, Roger Federer, or Tom Brady of his day.

But just before C.T. following his brothers to Eaton, family and friends were shocked to learn that C.T. 's father had given his life to Christ after being tricked by a friend to go hear the great American evangelist, D.L. Moody. Mr. Studd immediately turned his focus from sports and entertainment to using his time and influence to advance the kingdom of God. At the time, C.T. was 16 years old. He said, "I was not fully comfortable with the change in my father. He used to come into the room at night and asked if I was converted. I used to pretend like I was asleep when I saw the door open. In the day, I would sneak to the other side of the house when I saw him coming". C.T. said, "...I met a real play-the-game Christian. It was my own father." During the next year, a visiting preacher shared the gospel with C.T. And he recalled, "I got down on my knees and I said "thank you" to God for all that He had done through Christ to save me. And right then and there, joy and peace came into my soul. I knew then what it was to be born again...".

C.T. was saved, but for the next six years, he admitted that he was selfishly caught up in building his own brand rather than building God's kingdom. He worked tirelessly to become one of the best cricket players in the history of the sport. Thousands came to watch him play. His dream was becoming a reality but according to his own testimony, he said that during that time he never shared Christ with others and that his love for Jesus grew cold.

Jess Jennings writes that, "C.T. was living the "British Dream." And that "dream" then was just as deadly as the "American Dream" is today. Addictions to money, status, and comfort deceive the mind and begin to control our lives. This addiction causes most Christians to, in Studd's own words, "glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ".

Around 1884, three events in C.T.'s life impacted him profoundly. First, his brother George became very sick. C.T. asked himself, "Now what is all the world's popularity worth to George? Is it worth possessing all the world's riches when a man faces eternity? He purposed in his heart that only God and his word were of eternal worth. Secondly, he rededicated his life to Christ at a D.L. Moody campaign, and he began to share the gospel with his friends. He said, "I cannot tell you what joy it gave me to bring the first soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. Formerly, I had as much love for cricket as any man could have, but my heart was no longer in the game. I knew that cricket and popularity would not last. The only thing worth living for was for the world to come" Then thirdly, when C.T. witnessed a farewell send-off for a missionary going to China he said, "I had never

thought of going out of the country before. I had felt that England was big enough for me". But as he heard about the "thousands dying every day without Christ," the call to go became real to him. Many opposed his "foolish decision," to go, reminding him of the impact he could have among youth at home because of his fame. Friends and family begged him to change his mind. But after reading Matthew 10:36, which says, "Your enemies will be right in your own household," C.T. marched forward and never looked back. C.T. heard the call from Jesus to, "Follow Me!" He counted the cost and then he did it. He laid down everything to follow the Lord! He would spend most of the remainder of his life as a missionary in China, India, and the African Congo. And if the story ended there, it would be an amazing story of God's grace and mercy, and of C.T.'s obedience. But it is not the end of Studd's story or his impact.

When six of C.T.'s friends saw his obedience, each also volunteered to go as missionaries to China. They were given the name, "The Cambridge Seven," and they offered themselves to Hudson Taylor for missionary service at the China Inland Mission. Their decision of obedience caught the attention of the English world. Before they left for China, The Cambridge Seven traveled from campus to campus across Great Britain challenging students to follow Christ and to follow them to the nations. The Cambridge Seven walked away from their British dreams and they gave it all to follow Jesus. An entire generation noticed and thousands followed in their footsteps.

From 1885 to 1894, C.T. served in mostly harsh conditions in China, pressing far into the interior where the gospel had not been before. While there, C.T. turned 25 and received his family inheritance worth more than 25 million dollars today. Before deciding what to do with the money, he read what the rich young ruler had failed to do when Jesus revealed the true condition of his heart. So what did C.T. do? He gave all his money away! All \$25M! A big portion he gave to D.L. Moody, which was used to start the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Another large portion was given to support the work of the Salvation Army. During this process, He married Priscilla Steward, a young Irish missionary. He tried to give her a portion of the money, but she refused. Instead, they gave it all away, fully surrendered themselves to the work of the Lord, and vowed to never get in the way of each other's service to him.

After ten years on the field in China, due to declining health in both C.T. and Priscilla returned to England with their four daughters. While home, Studd became an itinerant preacher in Britain and in the United States. Studd's life of authenticity and his message to follow Christ at all costs caused a sensation in the public press and fanned the flame for the Student Volunteer Movement –where over several years more than 100,000

students committed to become missionaries and over 20,500 of which ultimately made it to the field.

From 1900 to 1906, the Studd family moved to India among English speakers where C.T.'s father had made his fortune. They saw fruit, they saw their daughters baptized there, well-known missionary Amy Carmichael is said to have attended that baptism service, but in spite of their successes, C.T. was never truly satisfied. He wanted to go to the hardest places.

Back in England, C.T. saw a sign which said, "Cannibals want Missionaries." Going inside, he heard a German Christian talking about his experiences in Central Africa. He reported that many tribes had never heard of Jesus Christ. Explorers, big game hunters, Arabs, traders, European officials, and scientists had all been to these regions, but no Christians had ever brought the gospel. Later in life, C.T. wrote about that day, "The shame sank deep into my soul.' I asked, 'Why have no Christians gone?' God replied, 'Why don't you go?' 'The doctors will not let me go,' C.T. responded. He sensed the Lord's answer, 'Am I not the Good Physician? Can I not take you through? Can I not keep you there?'"

At age 50, C.T.'s health was failing and he had no money. Still, he sought missionary support from many sources. A group of businessmen agreed to send him if he could pass his medical examination. He failed, and the businessmen refused to send him. C.T. met with them and said, "Gentlemen, God has called me to go, and I will go. I will blaze a trail through my grave if it may only become a stepping stone that younger men may follow". From 1910 to 1915, C.T. took two different trips to Africa to explore possibilities. On one of those trips, C.T. and a 20-year-old named Alfred Buxton traveled by bicycle and foot for nine months to reach the heart of Africa. Very much aware of his age and increasing limitations, C.T. said, "I may not be as efficient as youngsters, yet I am more efficient than an absentee".

By 1916, C.T. had established the "Heart of Africa Mission" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He served the last 13 years of his life, seeing his wife only twice. During this time, Priscilla was healed of her ailments and ran the Heart of Africa Mission's home office. She became one of the most effective mission mobilizers of that day for the work in Central Africa. Studd became known as The Great Chief in the heart of the Congo. C.T. lived in a small circular hut. The walls were made of bamboo tied together with native string. It had a grass roof and a dirt floor. The only furnishings consisted of a native bed, a table and chair, and a small bookshelf. Near the foot of the bed was an open log fire. C.T. died in that hut in total poverty in 1931 at the age of 70. Over 7,000 people from tribes across the Congo later gathered in peace to honor The Great Chief. This gathering

served as evidence of the impact C.T. had on the people there as evidenced by the large number and the peace between the tribes. The Lord had used C.T. Studd to touch the Heart of Africa.

Before his death, C.T. wrote, “Last June at the mouth of the Congo, there awaited a thousand prospectors, traders, businessmen, and gold-seekers. . .waiting to rush into these regions as soon as the government opened the door to them. For rumor declared there is an abundance of gold. If such men hear so loudly the call of gold and obey it, can it be that the ears of Christ’s soldiers are deaf to the call of God? Are gamblers for gold so many and gamblers for God so few?”

Studd’s son-in-law said, “C.T. ’s life stands as a sign to all succeeding generations that it is worthwhile to lose all this world can offer and risk everything on the world to come. His life will be an eternal rebuke to easy-going Christianity. He has demonstrated what it means to follow Christ without counting the cost and without looking back”.

C.T. challenged a generation to come join him with words like these: “Every true Christian is a soldier of Christ—a hero. . . Braver than the brave, who considers disease, danger, and death as his best friends.”

“Believing that further delay would be sinful, some of God’s insignificants and nobodies have decided to believe the Bible, to trust in our powerful God, and to make a definite attempt to finish the Great Commission in this generation.”

“Some wish to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

“Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”

In the last year of his life, C.T. wrote, “As I believe I am now nearing my departure from this world, I have but a few things to rejoice in: That God called me to China, and I went in spite of utmost opposition from my loved ones. That I joyfully acted as Christ told that rich young man to act. That I deliberately, at the call of God, went alone on the ship to Africa in 1910, gave up my life for this work, which was not only for the Sudan, but for the whole unevangelized world.

My only joys have been that when God has given me a work to do, I did not refuse it". "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Back in Mark Chapter **10:28 Peter began to say to Jesus, "See, we have left everything and followed you."** Peter reminded Jesus just how much they had given up to follow him.

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. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Peter wanted to know that their sacrifices to follow Jesus were worth it, and Jesus put a stamp of worth on it right there. He said that all who made these sacrifices – those who gave up their houses, or families or land – that they would be repaid from the Lord 100 times what they give up in this life and in eternity. There were blessings to come to the obedient disciple in this life and beyond, but that blessing came "with persecutions." He was brutally honest – being a disciple has its real cost.

Standing in total opposition to the response of the Rich Young Ruler, C.T. Studd's life shows us the potential cost. It also challenges us against a life of Namby Pamby Christianity – a life without substance or character. It challenges us to live a life of sacrificial obedience to the Lord. In response to such a challenge, what can we do?

Application:

1. Trust Jesus Fully. Stop trying to earn your place with God. You can never have enough, do enough, or give enough to satisfy your own lusts of the flesh or God's wrath toward your sin. Jesus alone has made a way for your salvation, and he alone can satisfy your soul. He says to follow him, and he means completely. If you have not placed your faith in him, do so today.

2. Follow Jesus Recklessly. I get that the word reckless can be controversial when talking about the Christian life, but I think it makes a point for us. The Rich Young Ruler and C.T. Studd had the same opportunity to follow Jesus. Both realized that the cost to follow him was significant. One chose immediate yet temporary satisfaction, the other chose immediate sacrifice yet eternal reward. Obedience has its cost and accepting that cost will at times appear reckless. It will cost you to radically follow Jesus. For some of us

it will cost careers, for others relationships, still others will have to lay down their possessions, forgo social status, and more. For some of us, it could even cost us our lives. The world will say we are crazy. Some in our family or even our church will say we are crazy. But listen, reckless abandon of self for the sake of the gospel is never the wrong decision; for the obedient believer, it is the only decision. He is worth your everything!

3. Do hard things for God Continually. God had His eyes on C.T. Studd. He saw something in this amazing athlete that others could not see. God saw some places in the world that few would be willing to go to, and because he went, the gospel spread into inland China, northern India, and the heart of the African Congo. Even today, the Heart of Africa Mission still exists as the Worldwide Evangelism Crusade, with over 1,800 missionaries serving across the world. Studd's work was impossibly hard, but through Studd's obedience, the Lord made the impossible possible. In the world today, if it is easy to take the gospel there, the gospel is already there. But everywhere is not easy. The reality is that 7 of every 8 people on the planet are likely lost without Christ. More than 5 of every 8 live in the 10/40 window, an area 10 degrees north of the equator to 40 degrees south of the equator, stretching across North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. 61% of that group, more than 3.2 billion people, are part of what is known as an Unreached People Group, or UPG – this means that less than 2% of the people living in each group are believers, and without us – God's people – going as missionaries, there is little to no chance for the gospel to advance. These are some of the hardest to reach people in some of the hardest to reach places in the world. And some of us must take the gospel to them. God is saving the lost, and he is using his church to be his messengers. In case you haven't picked up on it, TJC is committed to being an obedient sending church.

Like C.T. Studd, the Lord sees the willingness in some of us to go to the hard places and do hard things for him. And some of us are going. Katherine Berman and Abbie Campbell leave next week to go to up to 4 countries in SE Asia over the next year to train, be equipped, and take the gospel to the unreached and hard to reach. Our mobilization pastor and his family leave in a few weeks to move to the Middle East to work among Arab Muslims. Other families and individuals have put their "yes" on the table, and they are progressing toward being able to go as well. Still others are working nonstop to learn how to send and support each one well. We are getting requests left and right to send missionaries to the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe and Southeast Asia. Will you put your "yes" on the table to go? Will you lock arms with us to mobilize and send the goers well? We're learning that making disciples of all nations is really hard, but it is worth it!

4. Find your place in Finishing the Great Commission. Honestly, let's face it. If making disciples of all nations was easy, it would probably be done already. But the work is not done. More than 155,000 people die daily without Christ, and most don't have access to the gospel. We have an obligation to take Jesus' salvation message to them. We have to be honest with ourselves and before God. What takes the highest priority in our lives? If it is all of the things the Rich Young Ruler kept, or the things C.T. Studd gave up, then our lives will be shallow and our impact will be temporary. But if Jesus is our highest priority, then we must obey his commands. We will position ourselves and our families to live life on purpose. We will work to become World Christians. We will be the Lord's people who sees the gospel need in the world and honestly takes ownership of the part we can play in God's global story.

I want to be clear about one thing. Jesus will not bribe you to do this work that he has already commanded us to do. And he will not promise some prosperity-gospel return-on-investment. There is no promise of a material return for a material sacrifice – no promise of security and safety if we live on mission – no promise of health and wealth if we'll just follow him – no promise that the safest place we can be is in the center of his will – have you read the same Bible I'm reading? None of these promises are there. Instead, He promises that he will be with us, and he promises that we will receive our due reward in this life and in eternity. To that God, let's line up to give our everything! This generation of believers is responsible for this generation of souls. We have everything we need to go after lost souls and make disciples of all nations. We have the information. We have the inspiration, and we have the infrastructure. But the question is: Do we have a generation of "gamblers for God"? It is time to do hard things for Jesus, Church. Let's live life on purpose and radically follow him! Let's be gamblers for God!
Pray

QUESTIONS:

Read Mark 10:17-27

1. Why does Jesus respond the way he does in verse 18 when the rich young man calls him "Good Teacher"?
2. Why does Jesus respond with some of the 10 commandments when the man asks him how to inherit eternal life?
3. What is the one thing the man lacked?
4. Why does Jesus say it will be impossible for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God?
5. What must we do to inherit the kingdom of God?

6. What is one major takeaway you had from the life of C.T. Studd?
7. Are you willing to live recklessly for Christ and do hard things to proclaim his name? What would that look like in your life?
8. What is your next step to find your place in finishing the Great Commission?

PRAYER TOPICS:

- TJC Pastor: Tim Lance
- NAMB Church Planter: Matt Flores - Rio Rancho, NM - *Awaken Church*
- International Partner: Jason Daniels - Rome