

**Sun., Sept. 27:**

Message Series: Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy

Message Series Theme Verse: "Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." -Leviticus 19:18b

Memory Verse: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." -Matthew 6:21

Message: Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy #3 "Messy Love: Sacrifice"

Text: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field." - Matthew 13:44

Scripture: Matthew 19:16-26

Blurb: Messy love means self sacrifice. This Sunday we eavesdrop on Jesus' conversation with a rich man. Jesus tells him to give up all his wealth and follow Jesus. This makes us ask, "What do we need to give up in order to follow Jesus?" Come this Sunday asking this questions, but come ready to hear what you might not expect!

*Out door worship.*

*Offering boxes available as people leave.*

*Parking spaces designated for drive in worshipers.*

*Cheap, plastic carnival bead necklaces for the kids (or everyone).*

**OPENING MUSIC:** *Treasure Me* -Sanctify

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." -Matthew 6:21

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*O for a Heart to Praise My God*

*Love Is a Mess*

*Reckless Love*

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

**SERVE MOMENT:** St. Andrew's Homeless Shelter Food Train -Cassi

**GROW MOMENT:** "Grow Groups" -Cassi

**PRAYERS** -Pastor Andrew

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE** -Pastor Andrew

**MESSAGE:** Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy #3: Messy Sacrifice -Pastor David  
(Drawing upon a sermon by the same title by Pastor Scott Carroll, Outbreak Church.)

Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy. Sacrifice. Jesus told this short parable in Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field."

I want to re-tell another, modern-day parable, too. You've heard this before, but it is powerful for me...I suspect, because I am a dad, and my beautiful daughter was once this age. It goes like this: A dad came to his little daughter's bedroom for prayers one night and notice that she was wearing a string of cheap, plastic beads. He asked her why she was still wearing them in bed. "It's because I like them. I think they're so pretty."

The dad asked, "Can I have them, please?"

"Oh, no, Daddy!" she exclaimed, as she grabbed them tightly in her hand. "I want to keep them."

"Okay, that's fine" he said.

The next night the dad again came into her room, and with a tinkle in his eye he asked, "I see you're still wearing your toy beads. May I please have them, please?"

Again, she refused, "Oh, no Daddy! I want to keep them."

"Okay, that's fine" he said.

The next night, he asked her the same question, and again she clung to her beads.

Finally, on the fourth night, the dad came into his daughter's room to find her crying in her bed. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Through her sobs she said, "I know you're going to ask me for my beads. I just love them so. But I love you, too, Daddy. And since you want them, I'm going to give them to you." And with that she put her beads into his hand.

The dad's heart was touched! But then he reached into his pocket and pulled out a beautiful strand of real pearls. "Here, my beautiful daughter! I got these for you. I saw how you loved the cheap, toy beads, that and I wanted you to have some that was real. So I asked for you to give me your cheap beads so I could give you these beautiful pearls."

Her teary eyes widened with surprise and joy as she put the glowing pearls around her neck. "O, Daddy! They are so beautiful! I'm never going to take them off!"

Love is the alternative way that Jesus calls His followers to live. When people see us, engage us, hear us, God wants them to see and hear a markedly different way of life: a way of abundant life, a life of joy and peace. It is the way of loving God and loving others. But that way is not easy. It's messy! It messes with our lives, all the inward struggles we have, and it messes with our messy world, calling us to take up the struggles we see. It's messy because it's hard: we must have the Holy Spirit to make us able to live this way because it doesn't come naturally. We're not wired like this.

Four times the Bible records the second greatest commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. The first is the original commandment, in Leviticus 19:18, and we see here that godly love is messy in that it means forgiving others. The next one comes when a Jewish expert tries to test Jesus, and he quotes the verse along with greatest commandment to love God, as the summary of the Law. Godly love, we see, means messy mercy.

Today we see the third time this commandment appears. Again, we are with Jesus, who is still in His third year of public ministry. The Jewish leaders are targeting Him and trying to discredit Him. But there are also some others who come to Jesus, seeking spiritual guidance, as well. Turn to Matthew 19. Look down to verse 16. Now, many of our Bibles give a heading for this passage as

“Jesus and the Rich, Young Ruler.” Well, that’s actually a misnomer. We know he’s a wealthy young man, but it doesn’t say anything about him being any sort of ruler. That’s an inference that someone of his wealth must be a ruler. But it doesn’t actually say that. Perhaps he inherited his wealth. We don’t know. No matter. Let’s pick it up in verse 16:

“16 A man approached Jesus and said, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?”

Let’s just stop there and unpack this a bit. Here’s a man—we’ll see that he’s a young man in a couple of verses—who is asking an honest question. He’s not trying to trap Jesus, like last week. He probably’s been watching Jesus, checking Him out, and seems to believe that Jesus may be the real deal. Maybe Jesus can really help him. So, he comes to Jesus and asks what he needs *to do to have* eternal life. But look again at what he asks: he wants to know what *good deed he has to do to get* eternal life. Does this give you an insight into his thinking? He’s a rich guy, and he understand how the world works. To *get* something of value, you have to *do* something. So, Jesus, what task, what practice, what cost, does he need *to do* in order to secure eternal life.

Jesus sees this man for who he really is, and Jesus tries to reach out to him where he is at, and draw him into true and abundant life. He’s asking the wrong question, isn’t he? We’ve been walking with Jesus long enough to know that there is nothing that we *can do* to earn eternal life. We’re like the little girl who has no ability to buy real pearls. But then, too, there is nothing we *need to do!* Jesus is the one who earns eternal life for us. He earns it, and then offers it to us as a free gift.

Verse 17, “Jesus said, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There’s only one who is good.’” Pause again. The answer here is supposed to be obvious. Who is the only One who is good? That’s God Himself, right? So Jesus is trying to stoke the man’s faith. He comes to the good Teacher, asking about the good thing to do, to get the good reward of life eternal. It is not lost on Jesus that the man is choosing to come to Him. Jesus is saying, “You know this is a God question, right? And you ask me about it. Look inward. Is there any part of you that might believe that I am from God? Might you just be starting to believe that I am the Messiah?”

But then, Jesus moves back into familiar territory. If you love God, that should show up in your behaviors. Eternal life comes from God, so, love for God should compel us to follow God’s way. Jesus said, “If you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments.”

Now, the Jewish law has 613 individual commandments. Does he need to keep them all, like the Pharisees do? Verse 18 “The man said, ‘Which ones?’”

Jesus gives a sampling of the 10 Commandments. “Then Jesus said, ‘Don’t commit murder. Don’t commit adultery. Don’t steal. Don’t give false testimony. 19 Honor your father and mother,’” and then Jesus includes the Second Greatest Commandment from Leviticus 19:18, “and love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

So, the Law, says Jesus, is summarized in the 10 Commandments, and loving your neighbor as yourself. This is how you love God in your life. Verse 20, “The young man replied, ‘I’ve kept all these. What am I still missing?’”

The young man has been obedient and religious, but he still feels there is something missing in his life. He’s not complete. He’s rich, he has earthly treasures, and he has followed the Jewish religion well. But he is still not whole. There is something about him that is lacking.

Quite literally, they have finally gotten to *the heart* of the matter!

So, Jesus makes it personal, and zooms in from general laws for everyone and speaks directly to him as an individual. Verse 21, “Jesus said, ‘If *you* want to be complete, go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me.’”

The man stands there with his eyes wide. Somehow, Jesus hit him in a way he didn't even understand. This was crazy talk! I would imagine that the man was prepared to do quite a bit should Jesus tell him to. But Jesus said something that the man did not anticipate, or was even aware just how deeply it struck. Jesus exposed something in him that I bet he didn't even know about himself. The man was trying to be a good person. And then Jesus gives him this extremist command.

What would you do if you were this man? Well, verse 22, "But when the young man heard this, he went away saddened, because he had many possessions."

In that moment, the young, rich, eager man backed down. Sell everything? Give it all away? This is what it takes to be a follower of Jesus?

Well, two things for us eavesdroppers here: 1) One is to not make this command any bigger than it is. This is not a command Jesus gives *everyone*. This is a command for this person, targeting his particular situation and struggle. The man struggle with his priorities. He was too attached to his wealth. So, Jesus calls him to realign his priorities. This is not a command for all of us. Even so, 2) Secondly, Jesus may indeed call you to give up your wealth! Jesus does call people to do this. He calls people to give up whatever is above Him in our priorities. We each struggle like this young man. We have unhealthy attachments to some things that we need to surrender. It may be wealth. So, if the Holy Spirit is laying this upon your heart, it is for you!

Speaking of the trap of wealth, let's keep reading. Verse 23, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'I assure you that it will be very hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 In fact, it's easier for a camel to squeeze through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's kingdom.'

"25 When his disciples heard this, they were stunned. 'Then who can be saved?' they asked.

"26 Jesus looked at them carefully and said, 'It's impossible for human beings. But all things are possible for God.'"

I have some bad news for you today. That bad news is that you are very rich. You have nearly all of what you need and much of what you want. We are among the most wealthy in our world, and throughout human history. According to Bloomberg Studies, if you have a value of \$488,000—including all your possessions, like your home, too—that puts you, in the top 1% of the world in wealth. If you're not there, you're close!

And the bad news is that Jesus said it was nearly impossible for rich people to get to heaven. The whole "camel through the eye of a needle" thing was an ancient Jewish idiom used to show how ridiculously impossible something was. It occurs a number of times throughout the Jewish Talmud, and even in the Koran. Some think it referred to a small gate in Jerusalem, but that gate didn't exist yet in Jesus' time. It's name came from this idiom. It is simply a hyperbole to express impossibility. So, along with the disciples, we gasp, "How is it that we can be saved?"

The young man had resources. And he wanted to know how to expend his resources in such a way that he could secure heaven. Salvation was something he wanted to achieve, to earn, to possess. But in the answer, Jesus is saying to him that his resources are not a benefit. In fact, to him, they had become a hindrance! They can keep us from fully putting our devotion on God. He had—perhaps even unconsciously—put his trust in them. He had become a self-made man, a self-assured man, a self-secure man.

That's what money seems to do to people. Wealth isn't bad. It can be a blessing from God. But the problem is that we people struggle to keep a right, healthy relationship with money. We start to get attached to it. And that makes us frighteningly similar to this rich man. Stop and notice, is the Holy Spirit convicting you? Listen up!

Salvation, true living, is not something you get or possess. It is a right relationship with Jesus. And that's why, in this story, Jesus really isn't calling this man *away from money*, but instead Jesus

is calling him *to radical following* of Jesus. And to do that, in order to grab fully onto Jesus, he has to let go of his grip, his attachment to his wealth.

This story shows us that godly love is just so messy, because it messes with our innermost heart. It hones in on our deepest love, and it separates—slices—our allegiance to God and our allegiance to the resources or idols in our hearts. Are our lives built on radical love for God and for others? Or is there too much love for comfort, for peace of mind, for sufficiency, for self?

Jesus is showing that it's really not about money. It's about sacrificial love. Do you love God in a way that you lay all other idols aside for Him?

So, messy love is sacrifice. Three points. 1. Messy love of sacrifice demands **radical surrender**. Salvation is not simply a prayer accepting Jesus as your Savior. It is a taking of Jesus as your Lord and Master, too. Yes, it requires repentance, but that's just the wedding. The marriage is living each day keeping Jesus as your first and foremost love.

2. Messy love of sacrifice means totally **redirecting our desires**. We may *have* wealth, but we must take care not to *desire* wealth. The antidote of wealth is radical generosity. Give lavishly to God's work. That will keep wealth in its right position. But maybe your struggle is not with wealth. What, then, is your idol? What do you need to "go and sell"? Is it your job, your influence, your comfort, your family, your position, your self-determination? Following Jesus requires us to let go of the lesser treasure we are gripping so that we can receive the greater treasure He is offering.

In the parable of the treasure, Jesus said that the man happily—eagerly, joyfully—sold all he had so he could buy the field and have the treasure there.

Be sure to hear the last verse that Jesus says here. He said that it is impossible for people to give up our allegiance to our idols. Our love is too attached. But what is impossible for people is possible with God. We can, if we surrender it to Jesus. He will help us do it. When we ask, but our fingers are still closed in a death grip, He comes and helps us pry our fingers open. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you eager to give up whatever priorities are above Jesus for you. It is possible!

And that's our third point. 3. Messy love of sacrifice also brings to us a **radical reward**. Jesus tells the man that he can be complete...whole...perfect. He will have treasure not on earth, where moth and rust destroy, or where thieves break in and steal, but treasure in heaven, that will last forever.

Jim Elliot, the missionary who was killed in the jungles of Ecuador for his missionary work—his story is told in the movie, *The End of the Spear*—said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Your Heavenly Father comes to you each day and asks you to give up the treasure you so tightly grip, because you love it so. But He is trying to give you a real treasure, one that is eternally valuable, if you would but give up what you cannot keep.

Kids, listen up! This is for you, too! If you were listening a bit ago, I told the story of a girl who loved her bead necklace. I have a cheap toy necklace for each of you. They're over hanging on the Kid's Bag stand. Be sure to go get one before you leave. It's a cheap toy, but I want you to have it to help you to remember to always choose what God wants to give you rather than what you can see. What you have now may look good, but God wants to give you a better life. Keep your necklace to remind you to be willing to give up what looks pretty, but doesn't last, or give you real joy. That only comes from Jesus, and you can only get it when you reach out and take what Jesus offers you.

Messy love: sacrifice that brings greater reward!

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG:** *More Precious than Silver* -Sanctify

**ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David**

In Fellowship Hall: Hope Moves

Next week's message: "Messy: Love Is a Decision"

Outdoor worship! Bring a chair and jacket.

Grow Group sign up

St. Andrew's Shelter food train signup

**OFFERING: -Pastor David**

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

**MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David**

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." -Matthew 6:21

**BENEDICTION -Pastor David****CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify**