

LEAVING THINGS BEHIND Part II

Text: Mark 2:13-17

Key Word: Behind

Key Thought: There Is Much Freedom to Be Gained by Leaving Things of Our Past in the Past

My sermon for today continues the thought of last week about choosing to leave behind things of our past that often hold us back from going forward. I shared the words of a song that seemed to portray what I wanted to say.

Every heart needs to be set free
From possessions that hold it so tight
'Cause freedom's not found in the things that we hold . . .
**And we can't imagine the freedom we find
From the things we leave behind.**

Written by Michael Card, Scott Roley and Phil Madeira
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I mentioned about a number of Biblical accounts of people leaving behind significant things to follow Jesus. We spoke about **Simon/Andrew/James & John** who all left their **nets and their families**. Today we are going to take a deeper look at **Matthew** who walked away from his **tax table** as well as the **woman at the well** who left behind her **water jar**. Next week I will speak about the **blind man** who dropped his **cloak** that he had once used to catch his beggarly coins and also about **Lazarus** who left behind his **grave clothes** and an empty tomb.

What Will We Leave Behind to Follow Jesus?

I. SIMON/ANDREW/JAMES/JOHN - Nets/Families

II. LEVI - Tax Table/Money

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar

II. LEVI - Tax Table/Money

*“Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.
14. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth.
“Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.”*

Mark 2:13-14

Levi (Matthew) was the son of Alphaeus. James was also son to the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3). Jesus found him sitting at the toll-gate on the Great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean. He was a publican who collected toll (taxes) for Herod Antipas (who killed John the Baptist). The Jews hated or despised these publicans and classed them with sinners.

It was unusual for a Jew to be a tax collector. It would have meant that he was seen as a defector. Jews hated to be taxed. They hated even more to have their taxes collected by one of their own. It is possible that he was a young man who loved to live extravagantly. In doing so, **he would have had to depart from his father's family to enter into this scandalous employment as a publican.** It would have been contrary to his father's will, Cleophas, or Alphaeus, who was the husband of the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Jesus knew that Levi had left his original upbringing to serve the cruel and greedy Romans. But **it was time** for him to come back. **Time** to return to the God of his fathers. **Time** to stop aiding and abetting the Romans and their tyrannical leadership. **It was time** to come home. **It was time** to leave behind his tax table and the dirty money that came with it.

There Comes a Time in Some People’s Lives That They must Leave Behind the past That They Were Never Really to be a Part of. They may have tried to live it. They may have even enjoyed the benefits. There is pleasure in sin for a season of time yet . . .

“all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (had pleasure in unrighteousness - KJV).”

II Thessalonians 2:12

Levi responded so quickly that it makes us believe that he couldn’t wait for an opportunity to escape his old lifestyle. He just needed someone to prompt him. He needed someone to release him from his life of sin. Jesus made it clear to the teachers of the law that by eating with Levi and his associates that He was **accepting them so they could build up a willingness to move closer to God.** After all that is what Jesus came to do.

II. LEVI - Tax Table/Money (Contd.)

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Mark 2:17

I wonder how many people in our world are being bound to their tax tables and affluent lifestyle when they know for a fact that they were never meant to follow that way of life? I wonder how many are just waiting for someone to see something in them that others have missed? I wonder how many feel like a prodigal son or daughter?

“History is the record of an encounter between character and circumstance.”

Donald Creighton
“Towards the Discovery of Canada”

It was the right time for his true character to be developed. Perhaps Jesus didn't make him the keeper of the money because He didn't want to constantly remind him of his past. It was time to leave things behind.

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar

Let us venture on into the Scriptures to find a Samaritan woman who went to a well at noon hour (or 6:00 p.m. if following Roman time - Robertson Word Pictures) to get some water. She most likely chose that time of day to avoid meeting with others - especially other women.

Here came a woman who had been living a loose lifestyle. Both the Jews and Samaritans only allowed for three divorces. She had already had five husbands and was now living in an adulterous relationship (John 4:18).

Jesus asked her for a drink. She came to have her thirst met. What Jesus spoke figuratively, she took literally. She quickly came to the conclusion that she was not able to give to Jesus the kind of “water” that would cause Him to never thirst again. But He was able to!

Christ showed her that the water of Jacob's well yielded a very short satisfaction. Of whatever waters of comfort we drink, we shall thirst again. But whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforting message of the gospel, shall never thirst again. Carnal hearts look no higher than carnal means to reach their end. Spiritual hearts desire that which comes from a spiritual vein of life.

The carnal mind is very ingenious in shifting off convictions, and keeping them from fastening. But look how closely our Lord Jesus brought home the conviction to her conscience!

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar (Contd.)

“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’”

John 4:15

Here is the point. She was getting ready to lay aside her “water jar” because it couldn’t satisfy the thirst that was within her. Her relationships with these past husbands and present man could not fulfill the desires within her. **Her spiritual “water jar” was as empty as her pottery jug and she knew it.** It contained so many holes that she became tired trying to plug the holes and fill it up again. She was ready to leave this lifestyle behind.

*“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,
29. ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’”*

John 4:28,29

Not only did she have to leave aside her adulterous relationship(s), **she also had to lay aside her doubts.** The truth began to sink into her heart and she soon became an incredible witness for Jesus. The townspeople must have seen an incredible change or else they never would have left their homes to go to the Jacob’s well. **Just like Jacob, her deceptive nature was changed as she surrendered to the will of God.** Take a look at the impact she had upon others as she was willing to lay aside her “water jar.”

***“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.** “He told me everything I ever did.”*

40. So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

*41. **And because of his words many more became believers.***

*42. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; **now we have heard for ourselves,** and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’”*

John 4:39-42

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar (Contd.)

SEARCHING FOR SELF FULFILMENT

*** “*New Rules*” created quite a stir in the early ‘80s. In the book, professor Daniel Yankelovich of New York University documented a shift in social values in the ‘70s, a shift more massive and more rapid than any of the recent past.

The book was subtitled, “*Searching for Self-Fulfilment in a World Turned Upside Down.*” The old rules, Yankelovich said, stressed duty to others, particularly to one’s family. If someone were selfish and got caught, it was embarrassing and looked ugly. But no longer. In what Yankelovich calls “the duty to self ethic,” our primary responsibility is for our own needs and interests. All other relationships and values must fit into that order of priority.

Yankelovich felt that the movement may be liberating, but he is an honest scientist. After tracking 3,000 people in personal, in-depth interviews, and analysing hundreds of thousands of questionnaires, he admitted that so far the search for self-fulfilment had been futile. It resulted in insecurity and confusion. “*What is self-fulfilment?*” he asked. And “*When you find yourself, what will you do with yourself?*”

The frightening thing is that 83 percent of Americans buy into the “*new rules,*” either in whole or in part. But those foolish people are not evangelical Christians, right? Wrong! James Davison Hunter, in his examination of students and faculty in 16 leading evangelical colleges and seminaries, used Yankelovich’s earlier questionnaire and concluded that evangelicals are more committed to self-fulfilment than their secular counterparts.

“The percentage of evangelical students agreeing with these statements far exceeded the corresponding percentage of the general population.” Hunter wrote. “*Self-fulfilment is no longer a natural by-product of a life committed to higher ideals, but rather is a goal, pursued rationally and with calculation as an end in itself. The quest for emotional psychological and social maturity, therefore, becomes normative. Self-expression and self-realization compete for self-sacrifice as a guiding life ethic.*” ***

“Moody”
May 1993, p. 34

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar (Contd.)

We've all heard the expression "*We've come a Long Way, Baby.*" I believe we've often slipped back into the pit of man's wisdom. It has left us with a world searching to find itself and what is truly valuable in life. Our society could change immensely if it only applied what the Bible clearly teaches.

Is it time for you (like Levi) to return to the God of your fathers? **Is your life's ambition getting in the way of God's will for you?**

Are there any "water jars" in your life that you need to leave behind? Have you been searching in the wrong places for things to satisfy the deep desires within your heart?

Is it time to leave something behind that has hindered your spiritual growth? If so, I invite you to come to the altar and leave it with God.

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Date: June 2/24

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Songs: Just as I am - D

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What Will We Leave Behind to Follow Jesus?

II. LEVI - Tax Table/Money - *Mark 2:13-14; Matthew 10:3; II Thessalonians 2:12; Mark 2:17*

III. THE WOMAN AT THE WELL - Water Jar - *John 4:18; John 4:15; John 4:28,29;
John 4:39-42*