



THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE THING!

MARK 10:17-22

Surrender Over Success



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RODMAN STREET CHURCH
4.26.26

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Title: The Problem of the One Thing: Surrender Over Success

Sermon Summary: This powerful message takes us into the tension between performance and surrender, using the story of the rich young ruler from Mark 10:17-22 as our foundation. We're confronted with a challenging question: what is the one thing standing between us and complete devotion to Christ? The sermon brilliantly contrasts two responses to Jesus—Paul's declaration 'one thing I do' versus the rich ruler's struggle with 'one thing you lack.' Paul's total surrender versus the rich young ruler's reluctance to let go of his wealth. The central message emphasizes that salvation is not about performance or achievement but about surrender and relationship with Jesus.

Through the lens of the NFL Draft happening in Pittsburgh, we see how the world measures us by talent, speed, and achievement, but God's Kingdom operates on an entirely different principle. Success, wealth, morality, and even religious discipline cannot earn our salvation. The rich young ruler had kept all the commandments since his youth, yet something was missing. When Jesus looked at him with love and revealed his one thing—his attachment to wealth—the man walked away sad. The transformative truth is this: we can't hold onto our one thing and fully follow the only One who can save us. Surrender isn't about losing our life—it's about finding it.

This isn't just ancient history; it's our story too. We all have that one thing we're holding onto, whether it's money, relationships, pride, plans, or image. The preacher emphasizes that success, wealth, education, and status are meaningless without Jesus, and that true fulfillment comes only through making Christ the "number one draft choice" of one's life. The sermon calls listeners to identify their "one thing"—whatever is holding them back from fully following Jesus—and to release it in surrender. When we make Jesus our number one draft choice, we're not just chosen; we're changed, saved, and secured for eternity.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Request for the One Thing

We examine the rich young ruler's question to Jesus about eternal life, revealing how we often approach God based on performance rather than surrender.

Chapter 2: The Reveal of the One Thing

Jesus reveals that the rich young ruler lacks one thing and must surrender everything to follow Him, demonstrating that real love tells us the truth even when uncomfortable.

Chapter 3: The Response to the One Thing

We see two contrasting responses to God's revelation - Paul who surrendered everything for Jesus versus the rich ruler who walked away sad, holding onto his wealth.

Chapter 4: Making Jesus Your Number One Draft Choice

We are called to make Jesus our number one choice, understanding that when we surrender to Him, we don't lose our life but find it, receiving salvation and eternal purpose.

Key Points:

- The rich young ruler came to Jesus seeking eternal life through performance, asking "what must I do?" when salvation requires surrender, not works
- Paul gave up everything for the one thing (Christ), while the rich young ruler gave up the one thing for everything (his wealth)
- The world measures you by performance, talent, and achievement, but God seeks surrendered hearts
- Discipline can build your body, but discipleship transforms your soul
- Success, money, fame, and status are not enough without Jesus—they cannot fulfill the soul
- Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and loved him before correcting him, showing that real love tells the truth even when uncomfortable
- Your "one thing" is whatever you won't give up for Jesus—it could be money, relationships, pride, ego, lifestyle, or plans
- You cannot hold on to your one thing and fully follow the only One (Jesus)
- Revelation demands a response—when God shows you something, you cannot see it and stay the same
- Making Jesus your "number one draft choice" means being not just chosen but changed, not just selected but saved

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 10:17-22 (Primary focus: The rich young ruler's encounter with Jesus)

- Philippians 3:13-14 (Paul's declaration: "One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead")
- John 14:6 ("I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me")
- Romans 10:9 (Believing in your heart that Jesus is Lord and confessing with your mouth)

Stories:

- The NFL Draft in Pittsburgh 2026, with young athletes being evaluated at the combine based on performance, speed, strength, and talent
- Tony Dorsett, the Hall of Famer from Pittsburgh who played for the Dallas Cowboys
- The imaginary testimony of "Mr. Wendell," a successful young man who initially walked away from Jesus like the rich young ruler but later surrendered everything, testifying at his 20th class reunion that "I still have it, but it no longer has me"
- Pastor Canady's personal testimony of leaving his job at Pillsbury in 1991 when God called him to ministry, facing ridicule from family and friends who couldn't understand his decision
- The two thieves on the cross beside Jesus—same Jesus, same truth, different responses: one mocked and went to hell, the other surrendered and heard "today you will be with me in paradise"
- The two disciples on the road to Emmaus (referenced from a previous sermon two weeks after Easter)

- The parable of NFL players being drafted but not all making the team, paralleling people who meet Jesus but don't make the commitment

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Referenced or Read:

1. **Mark 10:17-22** - The rich young ruler's encounter with Jesus (primary text)
2. **Philippians 3:13-14** - "One thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"
3. **Romans 10:9** - "If you believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved"
4. **John 14:6** - "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"
5. **John 14:1-3** - "Let not your heart be troubled... In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you"
6. **1 Corinthians 15:55** - "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"
7. **1 Thessalonians 4:16** - "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (alluded to)

Alluded to or Paraphrased:

8. **Luke 24:13-35** - The Road to Emmaus (referenced as "two weeks ago")
9. **Isaiah 55:6** - "Seek the Lord while he may be found" (referenced as "go at them early in the morning while he can be found")

10. **Psalm 30:5** - "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"
11. **Matthew 25:21** - "Well done, good and faithful servant... I will make you ruler over many things"
12. **John 10:10** - "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly"
13. **John 10:28-29** - "No one can snatch them out of my hand"
14. **Luke 23:39-43** - The two thieves on the cross
15. **Romans 3:23** - "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Thematically Related Verses (not directly mentioned but align with sermon themes):

16. **Matthew 6:33** - Seeking first the kingdom of God
17. **Matthew 16:26** - "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?"
18. **Luke 14:33** - "Whoever does not give up everything cannot be my disciple"
19. **Philippians 3:7-8** - Paul counting everything as loss compared to knowing Christ
20. **James 4:8** - "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you"

QUOTES:

Paul gave up everything for the one thing, and the rich ruler gave up the one thing for everything.

God is not looking for the most talented. God is looking for the most surrendered.

You can come the right way and still ask the wrong questions. Success can fill your life, but it cannot fulfill your soul.

Your one thing is whatever you won't give up for Jesus. You can't follow Jesus while you are holding on to what He told you to release.

Before Jesus corrects you, He connects with you. Real love will tell you the truth even when the truth is uncomfortable.

A millionaire without Jesus is still broke. You can have all the money, all the fame, but if you ain't got Jesus, you ain't got nothing.

When you surrender your one thing, you don't lose your life, you find it. Paul let go so that he could go forward.

Success is not enough if you don't have Jesus. Only Jesus can save your soul, only Jesus can change your life, only Jesus can secure your future.

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5-Day Devotional: The Problem of the One Thing

Day 1: The Question of Eternal Life

Reading: Mark 10:17-22

Devotional: The rich young ruler ran to Jesus with urgency, knelt with humility, and asked with curiosity—yet he still missed the point. He believed eternal life was earned through performance rather than received through surrender. Like this young man, we often approach God asking, "What must I do?" when Jesus is asking, "Will you follow me?" Success, morality, and discipline cannot fill the void only Christ can occupy. Before Jesus corrects us, He connects with us in love. Today, examine your heart: Are you trying to perform for God's acceptance, or are you ready to pursue Him? Salvation isn't about adding up good deeds—it's about believing Jesus is Lord.

Reflection: What question are you really asking God today? Are you ready for His answer?

Day 2: When Jesus Reveals Your One Thing

Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

Devotional: "One thing I do," Paul declared—pressing forward, forgetting what lies behind, straining toward the prize. Jesus told the rich ruler, "One thing you lack." Both men encountered the same truth but responded differently. Paul surrendered everything to gain Christ; the ruler surrendered Christ to keep everything. Jesus doesn't give us a list of failures—He reveals the one thing standing between us and abundant life. It might be money, relationships, pride, image, or plans. Your "one thing" is whatever you won't release for Jesus. Real love tells uncomfortable truth. When Jesus reveals your one thing, He's not rejecting you—He's redirecting you toward freedom. Revelation demands response.

Reflection: What is your "one thing"? What are you holding onto that God is asking you to release?

Day 3: The Cost of Holding On

Reading: Matthew 16:24-26

Devotional: The rich young ruler came running but left walking. He came excited but left empty. He came searching but left sorrowful. Why? Because when confronted with surrender, he chose preservation over pursuit. Jesus said, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Success without surrender is spiritual bankruptcy. You can have money but lack meaning, status but miss security, morality but need a Messiah. The difference between breakthrough and bondage is often one thing. The ruler's face fell because he valued his possessions more than his purpose. Don't let one thing keep you from the only One who can change your life. Surrender isn't loss—it's finding what you've been searching for.

Reflection: What are you protecting that's actually preventing your spiritual progress?

Day 4: Jesus Looked and Loved

Reading: Romans 5:6-8

Devotional: Before Jesus revealed the problem, Scripture says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." This is the heart of the Gospel—Christ loves us while we're still holding back, still incomplete, still struggling. He doesn't wait for perfection to extend affection. The rich ruler needed correction, but Jesus led with connection. God demonstrates His love in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He gave everything—His time, strength, and life—holding nothing back. They mocked Him, but He stayed. They beat Him, but He stayed. They crucified Him, but He

stayed. Early Sunday morning, He rose with all power, proving His love conquers death. Because He held nothing back, you don't have to stay stuck, bound, or divided.

Reflection: How does knowing Jesus loves you before you perform change your approach to Him today?

Day 5: Making Jesus Your Number One Draft Choice

Reading: Joshua 24:14-15

Devotional: "Choose this day whom you will serve," Joshua declared. On draft day, names are called and dreams come true—but not everyone who gets chosen stays committed. The world drafts based on talent; God chooses based on surrender. When you make Jesus your number one draft choice, you're not just selected—you're saved. You're not just signed—you're sealed and delivered. Teams may draft you and cut you. People may cheer today and criticize tomorrow. But when Jesus chooses you, nothing can snatch you from His hands. Success isn't enough without Jesus. Money, fame, and followers cannot save your soul. Only Jesus secures your future. Paul gave up everything for the one thing; the ruler gave up the one thing for everything. What will you choose?

Reflection: Have you made Jesus your number one choice, or is He competing with other priorities in your life?

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, I surrender my "one thing" to You today. Forgive me for holding back what You've asked me to release. I choose You over success, status, and security. Transform my life from performance to pursuit, from holding on to pressing forward. Thank You

for looking at me and loving me. I make You my number one choice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Small Group Guide: "The Problem of the One Thing"

Based on Mark 10:17-22

Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Begin by asking God to reveal each person's "one thing" and give courage to surrender fully to Him.

Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

Question: If you could be drafted for anything (sports, career, talent), what would it be and why? How does the world measure success in that area?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

The sermon contrasted two responses to Jesus:

- **Paul:** "One thing I do" - complete surrender
- **Rich Young Ruler:** "One thing you lack" - walked away sad

The key question: What is YOUR one thing that's keeping you from fully following Jesus?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Request (15 minutes)

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

1. **The rich young ruler came to Jesus like he was at a "combine" - ready to prove himself. How do we sometimes treat our relationship with God like a performance review rather than a relationship?**
 2. **What's the difference between asking "What must I DO?" versus "Will I FOLLOW you?" How does this shift change our approach to faith?**
 3. **The pastor said, "You can come the right way and still ask the wrong question." Have you ever approached God with the right posture but the wrong mindset? Share an example.**
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Section 2: The Reveal (15 minutes)

"One thing you lack"

4. **Before correcting him, Jesus looked at him and loved him (v. 21). Why is it significant that Jesus connected before He corrected? How does this change how we should speak truth to others?**

5. **Jesus didn't give the man a list of failures - just ONE thing. What does this tell us about how God deals with us? Why is identifying our "one thing" so important?**
 6. **The sermon stated: "Your one thing is whatever you won't give up for Jesus." Take a moment of silence (2 minutes) and ask God to reveal what your "one thing" might be. (Optional sharing afterward)**
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Section 3: The Response (15 minutes)

He went away sad

7. **Two men, same Jesus, different responses. Paul surrendered everything; the rich ruler walked away. What made the difference?**
 8. **The pastor said, "You can hear the Word, feel the conviction, and still walk away just like him." Why do people sometimes walk away even when they know the truth? What prevents surrender?**
 9. **"Success is not enough if you don't have Jesus." In what areas of life are you tempted to substitute success for surrender?**
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Key Takeaways

Write these down or display them:

- ✓ **The world wants your performance; Jesus wants your heart**
- ✓ **Talent may get you drafted, but surrender gets you into heaven**

✓ **You can't follow Jesus while holding onto what He told you to release**

✓ **Paul gave up everything for the one thing; the rich ruler gave up the one thing for everything**

✓ **When you make Jesus your #1 draft choice, you don't lose your life - you find it**

Practical Application (10-15 minutes)

Personal Reflection Questions:

Have each person journal or share:

- 1. What is my "one thing" that God is asking me to surrender right now?**
 - A relationship?
 - A habit?
 - Pride or control?
 - Money or possessions?
 - A dream or plan?
 - Unforgiveness?
 - 2. What am I afraid will happen if I let it go?**
 - 3. What has God promised will happen when I surrender?**
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This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE action step:

- **Identify your "one thing"** - Spend 30 minutes in prayer asking God to reveal what you're holding onto
 - **Take one step toward surrender** - Make one concrete decision to release your "one thing" (end a relationship, give away something, confess something, etc.)
 - **Share your struggle** - Tell one trusted person about your "one thing" and ask them to hold you accountable
 - **Study Paul's transformation** - Read Philippians 3:7-14 daily this week and journal about what Paul gave up and what he gained
 - **Declare your choice** - Write out and pray daily: "I choose Jesus. I choose purpose. I surrender my life to Jesus Christ."
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Accountability Partner Exercise (5 minutes)

Pair up with someone in the group:

- Share what your "one thing" might be (only if comfortable)
 - Commit to checking in with each other this week
 - Exchange contact information
 - Pray together before leaving
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Closing Reflection

Read together:

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" - Matthew 16:26

Question for silent reflection: If Jesus looked at you with love today and said, "One thing you lack..." what would He say next?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer prompts:

- Thank Jesus for not giving up on us
 - Confess the "one thing" we're holding onto
 - Ask for courage to surrender
 - Pray for each person by name to make Jesus their #1 draft choice
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For Next Week

Read: Luke 18:18-30 (parallel passage)

Memorize: Philippians 3:8 - *"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."*

Prepare to share: One way you took a step toward surrendering your "one thing" this week

Leader Notes

- **Be prepared** for emotional responses - surrendering our "one thing" is deeply personal
- **Create safety** - remind the group that what's shared stays in the group
- **Don't rush** - if the Spirit is moving in discussion, let it flow
- **Follow up** - reach out to group members during the week to encourage them
- **Model vulnerability** - leaders should be willing to share their own "one thing"

Remember: Success is not enough. Only Jesus can save your soul, change your life, and secure your future. Make Him your #1 draft choice today.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The pastor contrasts the NFL combine's focus on performance with God's desire for surrender rather than talent. In what areas of your life are you still trying to earn God's approval through performance instead of surrendering to His will?

2. Paul gave up everything for the one thing, while the rich young ruler gave up the one thing for everything. What is the 'one thing' in your life that you're holding onto that might be preventing you from fully following Jesus?

3. The rich young ruler came to Jesus the right way but asked the wrong question by focusing on what he must do. How does our culture's emphasis on achievement and doing affect how we approach our relationship with God?

4. Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and loved him before correcting him. How does understanding that God's correction comes from love rather than judgment change how you receive difficult truths about yourself?

5. The sermon states that you will be a man or woman longer than you are an athlete, emphasizing eternal purpose over temporary success. What temporary identities or achievements are you prioritizing over your eternal purpose in Christ?

6. The pastor mentions that success can fill your life but cannot fulfill your soul. What successes or accomplishments have you achieved that still left you feeling empty, and what does that reveal about your spiritual needs?

7. Both thieves on the cross heard Jesus, but only one surrendered and was promised paradise that very day. What does this teach us about the immediacy of God's grace and the importance of our response to Him?
8. The rich young ruler walked away sad because he had great wealth, choosing his possessions over following Jesus. What possessions, relationships, or comforts would be hardest for you to release if Jesus asked you to surrender them?
9. The sermon emphasizes that revelation demands a response and you cannot see truth and stay the same. What truth has God recently revealed to you, and how have you responded or resisted responding to it?
10. Making Jesus your number one draft choice means being chosen, changed, saved, and secured rather than just achieving worldly success. How would your daily priorities and decisions change if you truly made Jesus your first choice in everything?

**YOU HAVE TO
WAKE UP
EVERY MORNING
AND TELL
YOURSELF
"I CAN
DO THIS"**