

The Rich and the Kingdom

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew. We're in chapter 19. We're continuing to look at Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler.

So we began that last week. We're going to read the same reading, Matthew 19, verses 16 through 30. And this time we're really focusing in on the second half of this.

Verses 23 through verse 30. So let's look together again. We'll read beginning in verse 16 of Matthew 19.

And behold, a man came up to him saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And he said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good.

If you would enter life, keep the commandments. He said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness.

[1 : 1 7] Honor your father and mother. And you shall love your neighbors yourself. The young man said to him, All these I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you would be perfect, go.

Sell what you possess and give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful. For he had great possessions.

And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, Only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, 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.

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished. Saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible.

But with God all things are possible. Then Peter said in reply, See, we have left everything and have followed you. What then will we have? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, In the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

[2 : 3 3] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my namesake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

But many who are first will be last and the last first. Let's pray together. Oh Lord, we do thank you for your word and again ask for your spirit's help as it's open that we would understand this.

It's obvious in the passage that the disciples struggled to understand what Jesus was saying. We pray for your spirit's help to make clear the meaning of this passage.

That we would live in light of it. Lord, we pray that you would have us cling and hold on to what's important, what matters, what lasts.

Lord, be with us as your word is open. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. So as I said, we're continuing today to look at the rich young ruler. The second half of it, so we ended verse 22 last week.

[3 : 44] The rich young ruler went away sorrowful because he had great wealth. And so today we're really looking at, maybe we want to call it the aftermath of what happened. The rich young ruler walks away. And what does Jesus say to his disciples about that?

How does he really digest it for them? How does he help them to understand what's just happened? And what does he teach them regarding this? Especially in light of the fact that the rich young ruler does not follow Jesus.

He walks away sorrowful. He seems not to have been persuaded by what Jesus said. Or maybe we should say, as we looked at last week, that his love for his wealth, his riches, coveting, was of more value to him than was Christ.

He counted the cost of discipleship, which is important. He said, I don't want to give up what I hold so dearly.

So how does Jesus respond? What does the disciples say? We want to look at that encounter, really, that begins in verse 23. And the first point I want us to see is, Jesus says that there will be few rich people in the kingdom.

[4 : 57] What does that mean? Obviously, the disciples struggle greatly with this. What does it mean? What is Jesus teaching? How does that apply to us? Well, Jesus twice in this passage repeats the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom.

So much so that we see in verse 25 that the disciples are greatly astonished. They're amazed by what Jesus is saying. Now, part of that is, in that time, it was still generally believed that, or by the Jewish people, that wealth was a sign of God's blessing upon a person.

You may remember as we, in Sunday school, if you were here, when we looked at Job, and we talked about the theology behind this, that people tend to believe people were rewarded by God or punished by God in response to something they did.

It's almost like karma. If you can imagine, you hear people talking about karma today, but viewing God in that kind of way, that God's responding in some way to human action. And so we talked about retributive theology and the idea that they were getting what they deserve.

And so you may remember Job was a very wealthy man. He was blessed by God. And why he's blessed by God, people assume he must be a very godly man. But then when tragedy strikes him, remember all his friends, universally, it was assumed, Job's done something wrong.

[6 : 18] And so you go through the whole book of Job, you look at the council of his friends, and the council of his friends, almost universally, all the way through the book is what? Repent, Job. What's your problem?

If you just repent, maybe you still have some kids, some possessions. Maybe your wife wouldn't have left you. But it's your fault, Job. You should have repented by now. You've done some great sin and God's after you.

And so we talked about that time because we get a back, behind-the-scenes picture of what's going on with Job. We know that's not what's going on. And I argued back then when we looked at Job that one of the points for the book of Job being in the Bible is to teach us that that's not how God treats people.

I think that addresses things like the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, which argues something very similar, that if you have enough faith, you're going to be wealthy, healthy, and... Wait, wealthy, healthy?

Yeah, we'll just go with the wealthy and healthy. You're going to prosper if you just have enough faith. And so if you're poor or having bad health, it's obviously an indication of what? How small your faith is.

[7 : 26] And of course, those with the greatest faith have the greatest private jets and the best cars, and it works out really nice for the pastors in particular. There's a similar kind of mentality going on in that day and age where people would look upon people with money and assume God's blessed them, which in some way he has.

And if God's blessed them, it must be because they have great faith. And so for Jesus to say, there will be a few rich people who are going to get into the kingdom, and they're looking at it and saying, well, aren't the rich people the ones who are blessed by God?

Aren't they the ones with the greatest faith? And so you can understand their response. Who then will be saved? If the rich aren't getting in, what hope is there for the rest of us?

And so I think that helps us understand some of why they're responding the way they do to what Jesus said. Maybe I could put it this way. If God has shown you favor, it must signify that you belong to his kingdom.

Or maybe some of you really like logic. I actually put this into a syllogism. There are others of you who think I'm really too nerdy and like logic too much. But here's the syllogism, the logic that's going on in the mind of the disciples.

[8 : 37] The ones who get into the kingdom are favored by God. All rich people are favored by God. Therefore, all rich people are ones who get into the kingdom.

And so that's the logic that's going on in their head is that they're blessed by God. They're favored by God. Therefore, they must have faith. Therefore, they must be getting into the kingdom. And so they've drawn this conclusion.

Now, I think part of what we want to answer is why is it so difficult? Jesus saying it's very difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom. Why is it so difficult? And I think we're really helped with this as we consider what we've been looking at in the gospel of Matthew so far.

One obvious contrast, I think, is with what Jesus has already said about children back in chapter 18. So, for example, Matthew 18, verses 3 through 4.

He said, And so remember the disciples are asking, Who's the greatest in the kingdom?

[9 : 43] And we talked about, they're really asking, Which one of us is the greatest in the kingdom? There's 12 of us. Can you pick between us? Because we can't decide which one of us is really the best. And Jesus said, Unless you become like a child, none of you are even getting into the kingdom.

And so here, too, likewise, Jesus is warning about the rich. And I think the same issues at play here. What are you hoping in if you have great wealth?

It's very difficult for someone who's very wealthy not to hope in their wealth. Because wealth can get you out of most problems. You can buy your way out of problems.

You know, I have a favorite soccer team. One of the players on the soccer team got arrested while he was on holiday in Greece. And there was some fight that broke out he was involved in.

But I saw one of the charges was bribery. And I thought, You got money? What do you think you do? The police tried to arrest you. You know, if I give you, You know, I'll give you \$10,000 if you just let me go.

[10 : 44] Right? You just naturally assume that money is always going to solve the problems. Some problems money doesn't solve. And in some ways, I think, You try to bribe people, You may have just created more problems.

You have another charge now. But we imagine, don't we, That enough wealth will solve our problems. And so, the difficulty for the rich person, I think is well illustrated with contrast with the child.

And what are we seeing about children? And in particular, as we think of Luke, who uses the word infant. What do we know about infants? They're needy, aren't they?

Does an infant assume they can handle this on their own? No, they can't really talk yet. But if one was very advanced and able to talk, What would an infant, a baby, say to its mother, It's okay, I got this.

You know, why don't you and dad take a holiday? I know you guys have been stressed. It's been tough on you. You guys go on vacation for a week. I'll handle this. I'll do the cooking. I'll do the cleaning. I can handle the laundry.

[11 : 48] I'll change my own diaper. Does a baby say that? No, babies don't say that, do they? Babies can't change their own. What do they do? That's all they got. That's it. Things aren't going well.

They scream out. Because they need the help of the father or the mother. And so, that's what Jesus was teaching us before about faith. That faith is demonstrated in a child because of that neediness.

Because of that dependence. And if we contrast that, if we compare that with wealth and the rich, what's the contrast? Well, the wealthy, the rich person is really the opposite of that, aren't they?

The wealthy person or the rich person feels they are independent. That they don't need anyone else's help. They can handle it on their own. Again, we see in Matthew 19, just a few verses ahead, verse 14, Jesus said, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

It's of this nature, these kind of people, the ones that are dependent upon God, the ones who are looking to God, who are trusting God, who are going to enter into the kingdom. And so, he's just said, there will be very few rich people in heaven, but don't hinder the children because the kingdom is full of people like children.

[13 : 06] And so, we see really, I think, again, the contrast. Very few who are wealthy. Many who are like children. And I think we could even argue, the only rich people getting into the kingdom are the ones who are like children, right?

All of them, all of the people in the kingdom are going to be like children. So, the characteristics here really are humility, and dependence, and even a neediness.

A dependence upon God, a trust, a looking to God. But the rich are characterized oftentimes by pride, by self-sufficiency.

So, wealth and possessions become a hindrance into entering into the kingdom. It doesn't mean it's impossible. But we have to understand that they can be a hindrance to entering into the kingdom.

And so, I think oftentimes we, like the Jewish people, as I was describing before, we tend to look at people and say, people with great money are blessed. And there can be truth to that.

[14 : 13] But we also have to realize that there will be some people who will be blessed with wealth, and that wealth will be such a hindrance to the kingdom that they'll never enter in.

And so, God can bless somebody with financial resources in this life, but the end result will be they never enter into the kingdom. And so, would we really count that as blessing?

That's not a blessing, is it? I know I remember back when we were looking at the Gospel of John, and we looked at the man who was born blind.

And I was so struck by the fact that the man was at that gate begging the moment Jesus came by and said to be off at work that day. And I argued back then that I really believed the fact that he was born blind was God's mercy.

Remember the disciples say, who sinned? This man or his parents? And Jesus corrects that misunderstanding, which is the same misunderstanding that's here. It's just the other side of the coin. Do you see that? Wealth means blessing from God.

[15 : 17] Blindness means God's cursed him. Well, it had to be because he sinned or his parents sinned. And Jesus answers, no! But it's so that the power of God may be manifest. And how's the power of God manifest in them?

Jesus gives them sight and saves them. And so he's there so that he might be saved, which implies that if he had sight, he wouldn't be there and wouldn't be saved.

And so we can have a real struggle trying to judge in this life who's blessed and who isn't blessed. I'll mention this again, but look at verse 30.

Many who are first will be last and the last will be first. Our estimation, our categorizing, because don't we do this? We kind of put people in categories and we order them.

Here's the first, here's the top of the barrel. That order's going to be reversed when we get to heaven. It's not going, maybe not exactly reversed, but it won't look exactly like we perceive it.

[16 : 17] And so even how we judge blessings can be wrong because for some people, having the physical blessing of wealth is going to be such a distraction for them, like the rich and ruler.

So become an idol for them that's going to be of greater value to them than Christ. And they're going to choose the wealth over Christ and they're going to not enter the kingdom. And so scripture warns us of the dangers of wealth.

And primarily the way I see scripture warning us about the dangers of wealth is almost exclusively in relation to worldliness. So there's something about wealth that makes us want the things of this world, want the present stuff, the physical, the things that are here now versus the spiritual, the eternal.

And that's really how scripture addresses wealth. So for example, James 4.4, you adulterous people, not physical adultery, spiritual adultery, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. And so there's this choice between the world and God. Who are we going to be friend?

[17 : 36] But what's clear in the passage is we can't be a friend of both. To be a friend of the world is to put yourself in enmity with God. And then 1 John 2.15, Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. So again, the same thing. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If you do, then the love of the Father is not in you. And so you're beginning to see, I think, how difficult will it be to be wealthy and enter into the kingdom?

Well, you have to be given the stuff of the world but not actually love it. But love the Father instead. It probably affects how you choose to use your money, what you do with it.

1 Timothy 6 addresses the love of money. This is one I'm sure you guys are familiar with. It's misquoted all the time. It doesn't say, money is the root of all evil. It says, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains. And so the love of money, this desire for money, has called some to wander away from the faith.

[18 : 44] Now we understand from God's word, you don't lose salvation. But apparently there are some who were in the church, who were exposed to these things, who were perhaps near, who have wandered far away because they loved money more.

We think of people like Demas, who Paul rebutes. Or loving money more than God is warned against in Matthew 6.

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. In case you weren't sure which masters Jesus was speaking of, he says, you cannot serve God and money.

And so we see then the problem, the dilemma, that faces those who have wealth in this life. That there's always the temptation to bow your knee to the wealth, to obey it, to honor it, to worship it, rather than to God.

So the disciples are puzzled by this, as we've said already. It's partly because they assume that wealthy people are blessed by God and therefore they have greater faith. And so if the people who look blessed by God aren't getting in, who then can get in?

[19 : 56] Verse 25, when the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, who then can be saved? Now listen to Jesus' answer. But Jesus looked to them and said, with man this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

And so my second point, really, of our message is, salvation for anyone is impossible. Salvation for anyone is impossible. Now, this is really similar to what we talked about last week with the rich young ruler.

We looked at last week that none is good but God, and that the idea that none of us are good enough to earn our way into the kingdom. And this is a very similar idea, but I want us to understand what Jesus is saying in this as well.

Look back at verse 24. He says, again, I tell you, 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. So, he's already said, only with great difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom.

And then he goes on to say this about the camel going through the eye of a needle. You guys may have heard different interpretations of this. I've heard many. Going back through commentaries again, I saw many different interpretations.

[21 : 05] I've heard people argue that it cannot possibly mean an actual camel going through the actual, a needle like you would think of even a yarn or whatever kind of needle. I've heard people argue it's things like a hurricane.

You know, it's how hard would it be for a camel to walk through a hurricane or a tornado or a sandstorm, whatever it may be. People have argued this away. Notice the conclusion that the disciples draw.

We read it already. They look at him and say, when the disciples heard this, they're greatly saddened, saying, who then can be saved? The conclusion for the disciples is, if that's what you're saying, then no one's going to be saved.

And so, my goal was not to try to explain this. My best guess is that Jesus is speaking literally. It's easier for an actual camel to go through a needle, whether that be for yarn or however big a needle you can make, you're not getting a camel through that.

And Jesus' point is, it's impossible. And then Jesus clarifies, it's impossible, doesn't he? That's what we just looked at. Jesus says, with man this is impossible. And so, what hope is there for the rich to get in the kingdom?

[22 : 13] I think Jesus is arguing, there's no hope. It's impossible. And of course, he's speaking of this in terms of wealth.

And I think, if this is what Jesus is saying about the wealthy in particular, and we're going to draw it out to all people in a minute, but, if the wealthy in particular, how dire is the situation for us here in America?

I mentioned this a few weeks back, but, I tried to look up and see if I could get actual statistics, but it's difficult, obviously, comparing different periods of time, but we're probably living in the most wealthy, per capita, or however you want to think of, individuals in society.

We're probably living in the most wealthy society ever in the history of the world. And the wealth that probably middle class has in America might be comparable to the rich young ruler in Jesus' day.

And so, there's probably very few of us who live in America today who wouldn't fit into the category of the rich or the wealthy by the standards of the disciples. And so, probably, my guess is when we heard this earlier, we were thinking of, boy, Elon Musk is in trouble, Jeff Bezos, man, those guys don't stand a chance.

[23 : 27] We're immediately thinking of people who are way above us as being the rich and thinking, pfft, yeah, I'm sorry for those guys. I know how tempting it's got to be, but I think the reality is Jesus is speaking to every one of us.

That the affluence of America, the consumerism that's all around us that tends us toward worldliness, doesn't it? We want the new stuff.

The new iPhone comes out and all of a sudden, the old iPhone doesn't look so great. We were willing to pay \$800 for it last year, but now it's useless to us. We've got to have the new one because it's added a third camera or a fourth camera or whatever.

It can do different kinds of photos. I don't know what all it does, okay? I'm out of it. But whatever it is, every year, there's a new something that we've got to get the newer, the better. And so I think we really have to consider for how this applies to all of us.

How difficult will it be for us in America not to look to our wealth as our God, not to depend upon our wealth? Instead of our first response being prayer, we think, that's okay, I can afford that.

[24 : 33] Or I'll have to save up, but I can pay that bill off. And I think we can understand by contrast that there are cultures in this world that the things we face and they don't faze us because we have the money to pay for it.

There are people who are forced to go to their knees and pray to God and cry out to Him. And so are there ways that we even unconsciously are depending upon our wealth instead of depending upon God?

Now, as I've hinted to already, but it's not just impossible for the rich, but it's impossible for anyone. It's really what we saw last week, that there's no one good God's standard is perfection and no one measures up to that standard.

No person can work the spiritual change that's necessary inside the human heart to bring the dead man to life, to change the heart of stone to a heart of flesh. And so, Jesus says, with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

So, what I want you to see is that salvation is solely of God. God alone is the one who works salvation. We can contribute nothing to our salvation. Again, that's a problem for rich people, isn't it?

[25 : 42] Because we tend to think we can bribe God like we can anybody else. God's going to like us more because we have money. But you cannot buy salvation.

Because we could not save ourselves from our sin, Jesus came to do it for us. And that's what I want you to see. Jesus' whole argument with the rich and ruler was to point him to the fact, and we saw this last week, that he wasn't good enough, that he's still coveting, that his only hope is to come not on the basis of what he does, not on the basis of the wealth he has, but come like a child.

Come as one who's needy. Come seeking what only Jesus can supply. And so, if I were to say this another way, what Jesus is saying is without grace, no one's getting into the kingdom.

It's only by grace that we get into the kingdom. It's only through Christ. And then he moves on from this. Look at verse 27. Then Peter said in reply, See, we have left everything and followed you.

What then will we have? And so Jesus is encouraged, he's encouraged the rich and ruler already to sell all he has and come and follow Jesus. I saw a few commentators take the perspective that Peter's worried about Jesus at this point.

[27 : 00] Jesus maybe seems a little downtrodden. He's basically given the gospel to the rich and ruler. The rich and ruler is walking away, rejected it. He won't follow Jesus. He won't sell all he has.

And Peter's trying to give him like a little pep talk. But Jesus, we have. There may be some validity to Peter's misunderstanding of what's going on with Jesus. Peter may think he wants to encourage Jesus at this point.

I tend to think Peter, as we've seen throughout the gospel of Matthew, as he's the spokesperson for the disciples, that he and the disciples all together are probably thinking back to where we began in Matthew 18.

Which of us is going to be greatest in the kingdom? Look, that rich and ruler, we sold everything though. Don't forget about us, Jesus. What are we going to get?

And so I tend to see it more self, whatever the reason Peter asked this question, that he acknowledges that he and the disciples have left everything to follow Jesus. And that's what Jesus said was necessary for the rich and ruler to have eternal life and to enter the kingdom.

[28 : 07] Maybe Peter's saying, but if salvation's impossible, what of us? We've done what you told the rich and ruler to do. What of us? Are we going to be saved?

If it's not possible for any man, only through God, are we saved? What will we get? 1 Corinthians 3, 1 Corinthians 15, 19 says, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

If we've hoped in Christ only in this life, if our hope for Christ only extends to this life, we're of all men most to be pitied. Why? Because I think there's a reality to the fact that the Christian life demands sacrifice.

It's what Jesus is getting at with the disciples. We've already seen in Matthew where he said, take up your cross and follow me. We've seen him talk about hating your own family to follow Christ.

Leaving the dead to bury their own dead to follow Christ. Christ. And if that's how we live our lives and then we die and there's no eternal life, if we've only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied, aren't we?

[29 : 22] And so, maybe Peter, even with that perspective, we've sacrificed. What hope is there for us? If no one's getting in, if it's impossible, where does that leave us?

Look back at verse 21. Jesus said to the rich and ruler, if you would go, excuse me, if you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and then what does he say?

And you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. So maybe Peter's even thinking back to what Jesus said there about the treasures in heaven. Is that true for us?

Are Peter and the disciples getting in on that action? Are we going to get treasures in heaven as well? Now, I've been adamant in the past that we don't come to Christ for riches.

And I have to be balanced and make some confession here. Well, first let me say, I've quoted before Pastor Shai Lin, who is a musician.

[30 : 33] He says, if you come to Jesus for money, then he's not your God. Money is. And I think that's a summary of what Jesus is teaching in this passage. If you're coming to Jesus for money, then he's not your God. Money is. You come to worship money.

You're not really coming for God. You've heard people talk about when they get to heaven, what they're looking forward to. I've told you before about the sign that we saw where it said, if my dogs aren't in heaven, I don't want to go.

I've heard people talk about like their spouses. If their spouse isn't in heaven, they don't want to be there. why do we want to be in heaven? Why do we want eternal life? What do we desire there? It's God.

It's Christ to be in his presence. That's of greater value than anything else in this life, which is what Jesus is getting at in this passage. But I have to guard myself because we see Jesus here really offering temple rewards.

And I think we have to understand that Jesus doesn't just ignore these things. God doesn't just ignore the fact that there is reward. But there's a balanced perspective here.

[31 : 39] And Jesus is actually saying, there's reward for us in following Christ. And so if Jesus is saying that to the rich and ruler who's not yet a believer, then we have to understand that in some way, Jesus uses this as a motivating factor.

Although we know it's the Spirit who works to change the heart. Look at verse 29. Jesus says, we will receive a hundredfold and we'll inherit eternal life.

Now Mark's account makes this even more clear. We can assume what he means. You guys probably have an idea of what Jesus is speaking of, maybe because of Mark's account of what you've heard taught. But Mark makes it more clear in the parallel account in Mark 10, 29 through 30.

We read there, Jesus said, truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sister or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel 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.

So Mark makes clear what Matthew doesn't. The first part of this is temporal blessing. The second part is eternal blessing. And Jesus promises both to us. If we sell all we have, if we give it all up to follow Jesus, we're going to receive a hundredfold.

[33 : 01] A hundredfold is a good return on investment, isn't it? The stock market has been really crazy lately. There's been great volatility. There have been some stocks that are soaring 400% in a day.

Some that are dropping that much in a day. But a hundredfold is a great return on your investment, isn't it? And so Jesus is saying, if we leave all this behind, we'll receive a hundredfold. How do we view that?

How do we understand that? Well, first, what I want you to understand is the simple mathematical equation. Whatever we give up will be outweighed by what God will give us in return.

Whatever we give up will be outweighed by what God will give us in return. Now, what's meant by this?

How do we receive a hundredfold in this life? Just consider what he says. Of houses? Now, how many Christians do you know that once they became Christian received a hundred houses?

[34 : 07] I don't know any Christians that have a hundred houses. And brothers and sisters and mothers? A hundred mothers? And children?

There are Christians with big families, not any that I know of that have a hundred children. And lands? Let's think of all the Christians that have hundreds of lands with persecution.

What is he speaking of here? I have a very clear idea of my understanding of what I think Jesus is teaching here. I think Jesus is speaking of the church. Jesus is saying, we may give up our families, we may give up our homes, but we receive a hundredfold in the church.

Now, let's just work through this for a second. How does that happen? I started to talk to Ted and get a testimony. I figure Ted and Margie probably know this better than anybody else in our congregation.

But what does it mean that we receive a hundred houses? Well, from my own experience, and I think I can speak somewhat for Ted and Margie as well, but when a Christian travels to a town and there's no one, we can show up at a church, we can worship with people, and oftentimes we get invited into people's homes.

[35 : 29] Where are you going for lunch? Why don't you come over to our house and have lunch with us? You don't know me. You don't know anything what I'm like. I can be a serial killer.

You don't know. The only thing that bonds us together is what? Christ. That's it. But in Christ, we're family. And so I walk into a town and I know no one there, and within minutes, I meet brothers and sisters that I didn't know I had, mothers, fathers that I didn't know I had, children that I didn't know I had.

and they love me like family and sometimes they love me a complete stranger walking in as a Christian. They love me perhaps better than their own family because their family has maybe turned against them.

But because I'm a Christian, they love me and sometimes even they put us up in their houses. Where are you staying? Why don't you come stay with us? Because we were at a conference this week, brought the whole family along and it's just so amazing.

It's a Christian conference and you go there and everyone there were like family. You know, you're talking to people, you have friends there. I mean, you instantly have something in common. You have a love for one another that's uncanny.

[36 : 48] And so there's no land, maybe I ought to be careful because there are unreached people groups. There's very few lands that any of us will ever, maybe there's no land that any of us will ever visit that we won't have family.

And if we do visit there, I hope we make family there by God's power working in us. But wherever we go, we have lands, we have family, we have friends, brothers, sisters, mothers, father.

Just waiting for us wherever we would go. Now, as I think about this, I've debated how much to get into this. But I think this has been probably one of the hardest challenges for me personally.

I thought back and I didn't go and look back, but the, when we preached on letting the dead bury their own dead and leaving your parents behind, I feel really blessed.

And I've talked to many of you guys about your family life and I know some of you have faced really hard situations at home. But I have felt really blessed to have a great family life growing up and great parents.

[37 : 52] and just moving up here, one of the hardest things was leaving family behind and knowing that even though we're in the same country and all the technology you have, there's a reality to the fact that you can't always be there.

And I found it just even hard knowing my dad passed and I wasn't there. And my brother was there. I mean, really, all our family, mine and Amanda, all our family is probably within a 10-mile radius except for us.

And the only reason we're not there is why? Because of Christ. I feel God's called me here. I want to be here. But that's not to say things aren't hard at times.

The reality is it's going to be hard. But what is my comfort and what ought to be the comfort of all of us here? I've traded up.

I have more family than I had before. I may have given them up but you guys are my family. I have new fathers in the faith. New mothers. Brothers and sisters, children.

[38 : 55] They're my family. That's what we have to cling to. That's what we have to believe. And the balance that I spoke of earlier is communicated in this.

Jesus says in Mark with persecutions. So it's not just trade up to Jesus and you get more family, more people to take out. Take out for you.

You won't have to pay for hotels because people put you up everywhere. No, with that comes persecution. And so this is balance. But then Jesus goes on.

He says, and in the age to come eternal life. And so again, if we're just hoping in this life, even if we take Jesus at his word and we're hoping for just bigger family, more homes, more lands, but it includes persecution.

Take up your cross. That doesn't sound like such a good trade. And so Paul says, as I quoted earlier, if we've hoped in Christ in this life alone, we have all men most to be pitied.

[40 : 02] Just let that sink in. The agnostic, the self-proclaimed atheist is better off than we are with all their despair, with all their gloom, with nothing to hope for in this life.

If there's no Christ, if there's no eternity, if salvation isn't legitimate, then the Christian life is the worst life you could live. But, Jesus says to Peter and to the disciples, if you follow me, if you give up these things, then you receive eternal life.

I think Hebrews can be helpful for us in even understanding this. Hebrews 12, 2. This is immediately after, and I'm going to go back to the chapter on faith, but you know, the chapter, the whole of fame of faith as you were in chapter 11 moves into chapter 12, and in verse 2 of chapter 12, Hebrews, it says, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

So as I begin this and say, what has to motivate us in life has to be looking forward to the reward, the eternal reward. Let me just start by saying, it's exactly what Jesus did.

How did Jesus endure the cross? For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. And so what he set before him was being with his Father in heaven.

[41 : 37] What he set before him to some extent was the salvation of all the saints joining him for the joy and glory there is to be in heaven. And so what's to motivate us to give up riches?

What about even to give up the affluence of America to say, I'm willing to move as a missionary to an unreached people group to share the gospel with him. I'm willing to give up all the conveniences of electricity, internet, hospitals.

What's going to motivate us to that? For the joy set before me. I give that up. But what I'm doing it for where my sight is settled is not the hospital or the internet or my bank account but on Christ to be with him, to be with God's people gathered together in worship.

Which again, and I'm getting ahead of myself again, but verse 30, many who are first will be last. And the last first. It's just speaking to the fact that when we get to heaven we're going to be amazed.

There'll be people who we've never heard of who will receive greater blessing, greater reward. And so there's this inverse correspondence between the sacrifice in this life and the reward in heaven.

[43 : 00] So we have examples of this, not just with Jesus but with Christians. So we have Moses. Hebrews 11, 26 tells us that Moses, consider the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.

So why did Moses give up the riches of Pharaoh's house? Because he was obsessed with rewards. Do you get that? That's what it's saying in Hebrews.

Moses considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth. The reproach of Christ, the persecution was greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he looked to the reward.

He was looking to the reward. And so, because Moses was obsessed, was consumed with reward, he wouldn't settle for the riches of Egypt. Just let that sink in.

How does that factor? How do we do that kind of math? That maybe there will be people who say, look, I'm not willing to be rich in America because I want riches.

[44 : 02] I want wealth. And there's greater wealth and riches to be had in Christ than there is in America. In fact, I would argue Hebrews 11, the whole chapter, argues that that's what faith really is.

You know the definition at the beginning of Hebrews 11? Setting our sights on the future blessings over the present. I'm sorry, I didn't quote it. Here's Hebrews 11, 1. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

This is what faith is. We're hoping in what's not seen. What was the rich, young ruler hoping in? What he could see, what he could touch. But here's what faith is.

We hope in what's unseen. And I just summarize this by saying that we set our sights on the future blessings over the present realities. What drives us and what motivates us is not the circumstances we live in, but the future blessing that is to be had in Christ.

So in Romans 5, 3, Paul says, Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[45 : 17] And so Paul argues, and I've said before what a weird guy Paul is, right? He rejoices in his suffering. Why? Because suffering ultimately, and there's this long process, but it ultimately produces hope in what's eternal.

And so he rejoices in suffering. Here's a more modern example. David Livingston. You guys may know of David Livingston. He was a missionary to Africa.

He said, in his, he wrote, Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. In 1981, he wrote, For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office.

People talk of the sacrifice I've made in spending so much of my life in America. Is that a sacrifice? That's in America, I'm sorry, in Africa. He says, Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blessed reward and helpful activity?

The consciousness of doing good? Peace of mind? And a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought.

[46 : 23] It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather, it is a privilege. Anxiety. Here's what he counts as privilege, so just let this sink in.

Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger now and then with the foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life. We give up all the conveniences of this life.

May make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and the soul to sink, but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us.

I never made a sacrifice. I love that quote by David Livingston. If we understand rightly that sacrificing the stuff of this world is giving it up to gain something greater then we're not making a sacrifice at all, are we?

That's not a sacrifice. No one, we wouldn't say, I can't believe you sacrificed by getting a hundredfold what you had at the beginning. Oh, bless your heart how sad that is.

[47 : 33] He says, that's not a sacrifice. It's what Moses said. Moses was concerned with the rewards and he wasn't willing to give up heavenly rewards to get the stuff that Pharaoh offered.

And so, Jesus even puts it more concretely for the disciples. Look at verse 28. Jesus said to them, truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now, Jesus here is speaking toward the consummation of all things when Jesus is seated ruling in the new earth and the new skies, the new heavens.

And what Jesus is speaking of here, I don't think is distinctly clear. He may mean specifically that the disciples, those twelve, and we know that Judas isn't truly a disciple, he's replaced, but he may be speaking of twelve of them who will rule and really judge.

So, for example, Revelation 4.4, around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads.

[48 : 48] That may literally be representative of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples. It may be a figurative prediction or a figurative word of the participation of all Christians in the final judgment, which Jesus tells us that as Christians we will judge the world.

And so, I don't know, is he specifically saying, here's a specific blessing for you disciples since you've left all, or saying all Christians that we're leaving y'all that there will be reward for us and that we will judge the world.

But the point, as we've seen already from verse 30, is that having the most here does not mean you're going to have the most in eternity. That we cannot judge things by outward appearances.

That God knows and judges what's going on in the heart. So Jesus has brought a reversal of what we might expect. And he's, what he's trying to communicate to the disciples.

There's been this reversal and Mary sung of it in Luke 1, 51 through 53, foretelling what Jesus would be like. It says, He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

[49 : 58] He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate like children. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. That's the reality of what Christ is doing here.

And so, the warning for us is that we must not judge by what our eyes see. The temptation is always to think we know who's blessed and who isn't blessed by what we see.

True wealth will not be revealed until eternity. And I want to encourage us as well that knowing that's true and what we see in this, there's reality in which we're all wealthy if we're in Christ.

And what we receive a hundredfold with family and homes. But there's an eternal sense in which we don't really know the wealth of any person. And so, one of my favorite quotes is by Jim Elliott.

He says, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. It's on the back of your bulletin if you want to look at that when you go home even. But he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

[51 : 06] To me, this is a summary of what Jesus is saying in regards to the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler is an absolute fool because he would not give up what he's going to lose anyway to gain what he could never lose.

He clung to what's perishing. What one day will be consumed by fire or thief or moth. And he rejected what had eternal value.

But what Jim Elliott is speaking of is really the opposite of the rich young ruler and what we're called to do. The rich young ruler foolishly sacrificed a greater treasure for a lesser one. And what I see Jesus calling us to do as Christians or maybe if you're not a Christian, what Jesus is calling you to do in coming to faith in Christ is this.

Give up lesser treasure for greater treasure. Sacrifice. Think of what David Livingston said. Sacrifice the lesser treasure to gain the greater treasure.

Which is no sacrifice at all. But the struggle is this. That to do so requires us to set our side on what is unseen and what is eternal.

[52 : 17] To set our sights on heaven to set our sights on Christ rather than what we see around us each and every day. And that's not easy to do. So how are we going to do that?

Well, Jesus said salvation for anyone is impossible. And so just as we've seen already if any of you are to be saved it's only going to be by the grace of God. And so too if any of us are really going to set our sights on heaven instead of all that the world offers.

If God's going to break us of the sin of worldliness we need the spirit to be working in us to do that don't we? And so let's pray now that God would work in that way and we'll continue to pray as we go from here.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father we do ask that your spirit would be with us now as we go from here. Lord we I think universally we can confess we can acknowledge that we are a people who are worldly Lord by the standards even set before us we are a people who are consumed with concern for wealth and the stuff of this world.

And Lord we pray that you would break us from that. And Lord we pray that you would break us from that by the only way that we can be broken from that. Show us a better treasure. Lord may we be like the merchant who sold all his pearls all his possessions to gain that one pearl of great value or the man who sold all he had to buy the field with the treasure in it.

[53 : 49] May Christ be our treasure. Lord may we long to be with him to be with you in your presence forever. Lord we pray that that would be what we long for more than the stuff of this life.

May we love you more. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.