

# Eternal Comfort That Is Not to Be Missed!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] And we're going to turn now to our Bible reading. Josh Johnson is going to be preaching to us this morning from Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 16, verse 14 to 1710. We have visitor Bibles available, so if you're sitting beside someone who is new, perhaps, well, please grab a whole lot of a Bible for them so that they can be following along.

If you're using one of our visitor Bibles, that can be found on page 875. Luke 16.

The good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. Or perhaps the footnote translation might be helpful in helping us understand this. Everyone is forcefully urged into it.

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.

And he who marries a woman, divorced from her husband, commits adultery. There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things.

But now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.

And he said, Then I beg you, Father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

[ 2 : 5 1 ] But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear. And he said, No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said to them, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. And he said to his disciples, Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come.

It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves.

If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, I repent, you must forgive him.

The apostle said to the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

[ 4 : 02 ] Will any one of you who has a servant, plowing or keeping sheep, say to him, when he has come in from the field, Come at once and recline at the table? Will he not rather say to him, Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink?

Does he thank the servant, because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, We are unworthy servants.

We have only done what was our duty. Amen. May God bless to us his words. Well, do you open your Bibles once again, to Luke chapter 16.

One of the things that is difficult for us, is that the realities of heaven and hell, are unseen. And yet, these two realities will, and ought to, give shape to our whole lives.

We cannot, take them lightly. Now, the Bible is clear. Whilst they are unseen, they are realities.

[ 5 : 19 ] And they have been the theme, of the past three studies in Luke. A section of Luke's gospel, that concludes today. Luke has shown us, these unseen realities, through the picture, of the great banquet, of the last day.

And we have been seeing, the reasons that some, many perhaps, will miss out, on the great banquet. Miss out on heaven.

Some deliberately, and some inadvertently. Jesus has been, beckoning those, who would follow him, on his journey, to and through Jerusalem, and the cross, to be taken up, in glory.

He's been, beckoning those, who would follow him, to let the unseen realities, of heaven and hell, shape our lives, here and now. So that Jesus, is our absolute priority.

So that we listen to him. And he said, at the start of chapter 16, that this means, shaping our lives, and our money, around ultimate realities.

[ 6 : 23 ] He said, to learn from the dishonest manager's, shrewdness, by using our money, verse 9, to make friends, for eternity. Pour out your money, your substance, so that others, will taste of the joy, of Jesus kingdom, and so welcome you there.

But Jesus also said, verse 13, we need to be clear, we cannot serve, two masters. We cannot serve, both God, and money.

However much, we might like to think, that we can. When we're tempted, to think that we can, have a divided heart, that we can serve, two masters, that we can have Jesus, and be driven by money, or something else.

Well Jesus says, no, verse 15, God knows your heart. We cannot fool him. And once again, Jesus' clarity, on such things, provokes a pointed response, from the Pharisees, again and again, that's what's happened.

And so Jesus makes clear, that in light of eternity, in light of the great reckoning, that is coming, in light of the unseen reality, of heaven and hell, there are two vital things, that those who would follow him, must grasp.

[ 7 : 40 ] Firstly, Jesus' followers, must take seriously, God's commands, verses 14 to 31. Jesus' followers, must take seriously, God's commands.

Those who refuse, to take God's commands, seriously, will not, taste, of his heavenly kingdom. Jesus warns us, not to be surprised, that we'll be excluded, from his glorious kingdom, if we haven't, here and now, in this life, embraced his word, and his ways, his commands.

Now this has nothing, at all to do, with earning our way, to heaven, no, no, we couldn't possibly ever. God's commands, have always been, for those, who are already, in a covenant relationship, with him.

Those who have already, received grace, from his hand. But, that relationship, that relationship, is maintained, by faith, which is trusting, and taking seriously, what God has said.

Jesus tells us, again and again, that those who love him, obey his commands. Chapter 11, blessed are those, who hear the word of God, and keep it.

[ 8 : 56 ] And on and on, that's what he's been saying. And so, taking God's commands, seriously, is a response, to God's grace. But also, taking God's commands, seriously, reveals what really, masters us.

What our absolute, priority is. Remember, Jesus has already said, back in chapter 12, that where our hearts are, our treasure will be also.

In chapter 14, Jesus teaches, that his kingdom, is only for those, who truly treasure it, above all else. And so, how seriously, we take God's commands, is also a reflection, on what value, we place, on God's kingdom, and his grace.

And whether he, and he alone, is our master. But what we see, in these verses, is a chastening picture, of those who will miss out, and be surprised, at missing out, because they have the veneer, the facade of religion.

Well, it's not really, taking God's word seriously, at all. What we have here, are pictures, of the religious, paying lip service, to God's word, and his commands. And so, firstly, in verses 14 to 18, we see the issue.

[ 10 : 16 ] Jesus exposes, very pointedly, about the Pharisees. These verses, all hold together, the headings, added to the Bible, are not very helpful, for us here.

Verse 18 goes with the rest, it's not separate. And what we see in them, is that the Pharisees, have accused Jesus, of being terribly lax. That was back in chapter 15, verses 1 and 2.

He associates, with the wrong kinds of people, the disreputable. That's what started off, this whole block of teaching, that ends with a dishonest manager. They detest, that Jesus associates, with tax collectors, and sinners.

And we've seen, that sinners, in Luke's gospel, is often a reference, to prostitutes. Jesus does associate, with them, not to ratify, their morality, but rather, to rescue, and redeem them, to transform them.

But the irony here, is that the Pharisees, take great issue, with Jesus over this, but look at the very things, Jesus rebukes them, for. Verse 14, the Pharisees are, lovers of money, just like the tax collectors.

[ 11 : 28 ] And verse 18, Jesus makes clear, that everyone who divorces, and marries another, commits adultery. Now, this verse, is in reference, to a practice, that had grown up, amongst the Pharisees, and others, that took a provision, in the law, that was given, to regulate divorce, and bring protection, particularly for women, that would mean, they aren't left destitute.

The Pharisees, took this provision, and turned it into, a license to divorce, and remarry. All you need, is your certificate. Tick, we've not broken, any of God's commands, about marriage, because we have, our official document, look, it's in the law, we're all good.

And so off, they would go, on their next, sexual conquest. But Jesus, exposing, that whilst the Pharisees, take great issue, with others, over passions, and pounds, lust, and lucre, sex, and money, that the reality, is that they, themselves, are hypocrites, whose hearts, are so very far, from the law.

Isn't that, so often the case? The downfall, of many a man, is golden girls. Very often, these are the things, that can master us.

Riches, and relationships. Jesus has just said, that we cannot serve, two masters, both God and money. He has said, that we should shape, our lives, toward making friends, for eternity.

[ 12 : 48 ] And look at the Pharisees, response, verse 14, ridicule. And then verse 18, they redefine, marriage and sin.

It's so often the way, isn't it? Jesus makes, a very clear, and absolute point, about our priorities, and the self-righteously, religious, instantly ridicule. No, no, no, we need nuance here.

Jesus can't really mean, that our lives, need to be all about him. No, no, when Jesus makes, absolute claims, it's merely hyperbole. He doesn't really mean it. But such ridicule, pouring scorn, on Jesus' commands, about our priorities, about our pounds, is always driven, by verse 14, the love of money.

serving another master. The Pharisees were busy, verse 15, justifying themselves before men, tithing herbs and spices. But when confronted with the realities of eternity, and with the joy of making friends for eternity, with their money, they ridicule.

Sanctimonious religion is only ever caught up in fussing about minutia, being seen to take a hard line, but actually all the while, bubbling up with all manner of pride, and greed for them, and twistedness.

[ 14 : 11 ] They ridicule. But also, verse 18, they redefine. They redefine marriage, and divorce. They redefine sin. They've taken the regulation of the law, and turned it into new fault divorce.

Just get our certificate, and we can remarry. But Jesus says, no. To twist things like that, no, no, you're just committing adultery. They've redefined marriage along the lines of what they want it to mean, and that's utterly contemporary, isn't it?

Recent generations are not the first to redefine marriage, to be at odds with what the Creator has said about it. Ours is not the first generation to redefine marriage, so as to legitimize that which God calls sin.

And Jesus is not interested in a Christianity that toys around with Him and His Word, that's taken up with the outward signs, justifying oneself before men.

Even among those who seem very religious indeed, who have the vocabulary and the vestments of religion, even if they can talk in great words that confuse others.

[ 15 : 21 ] Jesus says to the very teachers of Israel, verse 15, God knows your hearts. He sees them. And He says, you're an abomination.

Jesus doesn't want actors. He wants people who are real. That's always been what God has been interested in, hearts that are given to Him.

Whole lives that have allegiance to God above everything else. Not hollowness, but wholeness.

That's what is brought about by taking God's commandments seriously. It isn't His law, His commandments, aren't a means of limiting us, of frustrating us. No, they are what will make us whole.

Holiness is wholesomeness. So that we aren't mastered by things that will only ever ensnare and enslave us and leave us empty, longing always for more, but a more that will never be enough.

[ 16 : 27 ] That is true absolutely with regards to riches and relationships, to lust and liquor. If we let them master us, they are cruel and destructive.

But actually, that's true for the whole law. God's law is a picture of what life is like in His kingdom. It's an overflow and reflection of His own character.

His kingdom will be a place where there will be no sexual exploitation, no financial exploitation, no disregard for people or for property. A place where we do not need to be worried about lies and propaganda.

His is a kingdom that will not have any idols that corrupt our hearts and take control of us. His is a kingdom that will bring true rest and true worship, worship of the one true God, which is what we are needed for and is what will actually satisfy us and bless us.

And so that's what we see in verses 16 and 17. There are two ages referenced in these verses. Do you see verse 16? John the Baptist straddled two ages in redemptive history.

[ 17 : 38 ] He was the greatest of the prophets. He was of the age of the law and the prophets. But since John, and now in the arrival of Jesus, a new age has dawned.

And with it, Jesus' declaration of the victory of His kingdom. A declaration that is good news, that is preached in order that, as the footnote says, verse 17, verse 16, everyone is forcefully urged into it.

So yes, there is a new age. Jesus is here beckoning, urging the crowds to enter into His kingdom through faith and repentance. But verse 17, just because that previous age has passed, that doesn't mean the law has.

Do you see? It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot to become void. Because His law is good. It's a blessing.

It's what ordered and whole lives will look like. And it's to be taken seriously. Whereas the Pharisees have but a veneer of righteousness, a veneer of honoring God, a veneer of religion.

[ 18 : 51 ] And Jesus says, I can see through it. And so He presses whom? His point in verses 19 to 31 with the illustration. Or we have a rich man, verse 19, who echoes all that we've just been seeing.

The Pharisees love money. And here is a rich man. And here is a man who is not interested in making friends for eternity. Do you see verses 20 and 21?

At his gates is Lazarus. And no help is given to poor, plagued Lazarus. As the dogs lick him, rubbing salt into his wounds. No help.

All Lazarus can get are the scraps that fall from the table. They aren't given. They just fall off. Well, both men die.

Perhaps one from hunger and one from overindulgence. Both die. And Lazarus, verse 22, is taken to Abraham's side. And we see here a divergent course for both of them.

[ 19 : 54 ] Neither because of their earthly status. It's not because one's poor and one's rich. It's in spite of that. God sees the heart. And so the rich man goes to Hades.

That word Hades is generally meaning the afterlife, but it also refers to hell. And clearly it is hell here. Because look at what awaits him. Verse 23.

Torment. Verse 24. He is in anguish. In flames. It's an interesting picture, this man, isn't it?

No name for him. No name for the rich man. And his eulogy reads something like, Here lived a rich man. He had nice threads. He was an indulgent foodie.

And he died. And so what is Jesus wanting to teach through this picture? It isn't that being rich is wrong.

[ 20 : 56 ] Jesus isn't anti-money. Being mastered by it is where money is the issue. But what is the problem here? Well, remember, this is an illustration of what Jesus has just been showing us.

Those who think themselves religious but who blatantly ignore the clear command, the clear teaching of God's commands. And so here was a man who, verse 24, thought himself religious.

He calls out to Father Abraham, who you can see beside Lazarus. He thinks himself a good Jew, a believer. And look ahead to verses 29 and 31.

His family are well acquainted with Moses and the prophets. That is the law and the prophets. Just as Jesus has been speaking about in verses 16 and 17.

That's what holds these two passages together. And so here was a religious man who knew the law and the prophets, who claimed the same faith as Abraham, but paid lip service to it.

[ 21 : 58 ] For here at his gate was a fellow believer who he had no concern for whatsoever. His religion didn't extend to actually doing what really matters.

He didn't use his resource to make friends for eternity. Jesus summed up the law as love for God and love for neighbor, for one another.

I think we get this wrong if we make this all about ministry to the homeless. Actually, it may well be that in our church, in our own families, that the Lazarus for us isn't a poor beggar.

It could be a neglected spouse or kids. It might be that where we are rich is in relationships and friendships. And the Lazaruses are those who feel lonely and isolated.

Perhaps because they don't have kids, because they're not married, or they just struggle to fit in. It might be that the Lazaruses for us are the dear friends or neighbor that we have.

[ 23 : 01 ] We've had many conversations with them, but we haven't ever actually loved them by inviting them to church. It might be that our Lazarus is indeed a poor beggar. But Jesus' point is much broader than that.

He's saying, do not let a divided heart, a privilege, something that we're rich in, become a master that means we overlook his word. We cannot have two masters.

God knows our hearts. Well, here, we see no love for neighbor, no making friends for eternity. And the chastening thing is, in all of this, that when we're satisfied to settle for the masters that this world pushes upon us, whether it's money or sex or whatever else that ridicules or redefines God's word, these things will stick with us into eternity.

There are consequences that will ripple into eternity. There are two consequences here. First, notice how this rich man's moral character, or rather immoral character, perseveres with him into Hades.

Verse 24, Lazarus, whom this rich man ignored, is then asked to bring relief for him. He expects Lazarus now to act as his servant, to serve him.

[ 24 : 23 ] And again, verse 27, okay, well, send Lazarus to be a messenger to my family. It beggars belief that he could be so presumptuous. But this merely pictures an extension of how he lived in this world.

The one who feasted sumptuously, as if the world was at his beck and call, here to serve him. Well, he now expects to see him in eternity. And the reality is that what we are now will not suddenly become something different in eternity.

So if we are letting all manner of respectable sins take root, if we're happy to succumb totally to patterns of ungodliness, then that is what is going to shape what we will always be.

And God's kingdom cannot tolerate such things. But likewise, if we are given to becoming whole and wholesome now, then it is that which will shape what we will always be.

And that is the very flavor of God's kingdom. But the second consequence, which is far more frightening, is hell itself.

[ 25 : 37 ] Notice verse 25. Lazarus, who endured bad things in this life, and that is going to be characteristic of following Jesus through the cross, difficult things in this life.

Lazarus, who endured bad things, will be comforted in heaven. That's the picture of Jesus' kingdom, sweet relief, gathered to Abraham's side, gathered with all the believers from history to banquet, to find comfort and wholeness.

But for this rich man, for those who pay only lip service to the law and the prophets, for those who like only to talk about God's word, without ever actually doing it, well, the picture is beyond chastening.

It's hard to read. It's hard to preach about. Verse 23, it's torment. Because once again, just like those who were left outside the door back in chapter 13, the rich man can see Abraham and Lazarus.

He's aware of what he's missing out on. There is a conscious torment to missing out on God's kingdom. Seeing it, but knowing forevermore that you're excluded from it.

[ 26 : 54 ] And that torment is compounded by then trying to do something about it, but it's too late. Do you see in hell, our cries will be futile.

He cries out to Abraham, and the response comes, verse 25, in your life, you've chosen your course. You wanted the good things of this world, and you had them.

And so now, it is only anguish. Anguish and fire, flames, verse 24. Revelation speaks of hell as being a lake of burning sulfur.

Jesus has already said in chapter 13 that it is the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. And more frighteningly, verse 26, the stark message of Jesus here is that a time will come when it is too late.

The door will be closed, or rather here, the chasm will be too great. The chasm has been fixed. It's permanent. And the message from Abraham is there's no passing between heaven and hell.

[ 28 : 02 ] Oh yes, you can see heaven from hell. It stands as an enduring and permanent torment to you that you've passed it up. But there's no moving between them.

The chasm is fixed. And so hell is an eternal and fiery anguish. It is a perpetual, conscious torment about what you've passed up.

And once there, it's too late to do anything about it. Now, some would want to try and soften this by saying, of course, this language is only figurative, representative.

But we mustn't take this too literally, they might say. Perhaps this is a parable. I don't think that it is. And I think we could be in danger of falling into the very error of the Pharisees who ridicule what Jesus says if we pursue that.

But even if that were the case, if it were figurative, representative, what would it be representative of? It would still be something truly terrifying and chastening.

[ 29 : 14 ] Well, having been faced up with all of this, the rich man then asks, if I can't be saved, then send a message to my family, my brothers, verse 28, warn them lest they come and endure this same torment as me.

But look at Abraham's response, verse 29, your family have the law and the prophets. They have warning enough. Let them heed the word of God.

But still, even now, this rich man won't take God's word seriously. He doesn't value God's word, his commands. Verse 30, no, no, Abraham, if you send a message from the grave, they will then repent.

But that isn't the way, is it? Verse 31, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. Echoes of what would come after Jesus' own resurrection.

But here's the thing, the crux of all of this, as one writer says, the brothers did not need to be convinced that the afterlife is real or that after death there comes judgment or that there is a hell.

[ 30 : 26 ] They needed to be convinced that their neglect of God's law was serious enough to land them personally in hell. What is it that stands between the brothers and this dismaying picture of hell?

What is it that stands between us and the reality of an eternal hell? It is the gospel. It is the word of God.

It is the law and the prophets. A word that comes to each of us and is coming to us right now this morning commanding us to repent and believe in Jesus. To take him and his words seriously.

A word that we're scorned will have devastating effects. but a word that when heeded when received with the arms of faith a word that promises to us eternal comfort at Abraham's side that promises to us God's heaven.

God's word is sufficient for salvation. Salvation isn't in the extraordinary. It isn't through apparitions and visions. It's brought to us all that we need through the scriptures.

[ 31 : 39 ] Those scriptures which according to Paul when he was writing to Timothy are able to make us wise to salvation. Paul says faith comes through hearing and hearing by the word of God.

The message here is that if the plain teaching of the Bible is ignored obfuscated or redefined then no sign from heaven or from hell from the grave will change hearts.

But notice whilst this man's brother gets no warning from hell about its horrors we do get a warning. God's word gives one to us and the warning is the rich man's voice crying out to us with a message from hell itself crying out telling us pleading with us to do all that we can not to go there.

Will we listen? Those who refuse to take God's commands seriously will not taste his heavenly kingdom. Well secondly verses 1 to 10 of chapter 17 Jesus also tells his followers that they must be shaped by God's character.

Jesus' followers must be shaped by God's character. With eternity at stake it is vital that Jesus' followers share his heart for the saints and for service.

[ 33 : 14 ] Jesus doesn't just confront the Pharisees he also charges his disciples. Those who belong to Jesus those who would follow after him ought to mirror Jesus' own ways and priorities.

His people are to let the gospel of grace shape how they view other saints verses 1 to 4 and their own service verses 7 to 10. And sandwiched in between these two verses 5 to 6 we have Jesus' words that encourage his disciples as to how it's possible he gives us the stimulus.

So firstly about the saints verses 1 to 4 Jesus' followers will mirror his own love for the saints by not dragging his people into sin and also by helping them to deal with sin.

So verses 1 to 2 do not drag the saints into sin. Do you see we've just had a terrible picture of the awfulness of hell. A voice crying out from hell saying do not come here.

And then straight away Jesus speaks to his disciples and says take great care great care not to pollute my people in a way that causes them to be dragged away from me and face this judgment.



[ 34 : 34 ] There will be temptations to sin verse 1 temptations to forego and forsake God's commands but notice woo to those through whom these temptations come.

Woo to the one who would set people on the course for hell. Woo to the one who would endanger the eternity of anyone who belongs to God.

And this can take various guises misleading people about the seriousness of sin. Oh it's no big deal go for it enjoy it. Could be that.

But I wonder if the context here might also have us see this command as a contrast to the Pharisees. The Pharisees were those who would insist that they were the sound ones the righteous ones they were the bastions of truth they held all the right doctrines but Jesus rebukes them as hypocrites because they missed the heart of the law there's no love but rather they're content to give in to their lusts and to lucre.

But also the Pharisees were marked by an arrogant elitism. Jesus himself isn't sound enough for them he mixes with the wrong people he needs to repent.

[ 35 : 52 ] They have an elitism that obsesses over being reformed enough or truly Calvinistic or whatever it is. That is another way to lead people into sin to chase a twisted gospel which is new gospel.

well Jesus' concern for his people is enormous and so look at verse 2 if you are intent on pulling away or corrupting or tempting others to sin or trying to multiply your own pharisaic heart then Jesus said it would be better that you're thrown into the sea with a mill stone a heavy weight tied to you.

It would be better for you to be drowned now than to be let run riot to divide and corrupt God's people God's church. These words ought to make us think twice three times before engaging in anything that might rip people away from the gospel away from the church.

Do not have that as a burden that you'll have to carry forevermore. Do not drag people into sin but also verses three and four Jesus says help the saints to deal with their sin.

There will be sin in the church Jesus is realistic about that. There's no perfect church but Jesus followers are to mirror his grace when sin is present.

[ 37 : 23 ] We are not to ignore sin in the church or downplay it. Do you see verse three if your brother sins rebuke him and if he repents forgive him. Rebuke but rebuke in a way that wants to forgive.

We mustn't downplay sin. Jesus certainly doesn't. We mustn't ignore it. Jesus doesn't. But we must seek to forgive it as Jesus has forgiven us.

But we mustn't miss that the first step here is rebuke. Not harsh rebuke, not rebuke that's callous but rebuke that seeks restoration and forgiveness. but rebuke nonetheless.

And taking Jesus seriously here means that we will need to rebuke brothers and sisters. And that will mean not talking to everyone in church apart from the person you have a gripe or concern about.

No. Taking Jesus seriously will mean going to someone who has wronged us or who we think has stepped out of line and speaking with them first.

[ 38 : 32 ] Not last or even not at all. First. And the reality is that that takes courage doesn't it? It is always far easier to share concerns with those who aren't involved.

involved. But Jesus is saying we actually need to help each other to deal with sin. Eternity is at stake. And that means having honest conversations with those involved.

not to condemn but to seek forgiveness. And it takes courage too doesn't it in a church. If someone comes to you to share a gripe about someone else it takes courage to say I'm not the person to talk to about this.

I'm not the person you should be speaking to. So we need to be courageous and honest to rebuke but always seeking to forgive.

And look at what Jesus says verse 4 to forgive and forgive and forgive. Even seven times the perfect number. Never tire of forgiving.

[ 39 : 36 ] Never tire of us being a church who will forgive one another. Because God's forgiveness toward us is profound. Well needing such courage and patience and grace can seem like a big ask.

And that's likely what prompts the Pharisees to say verse 5 increase our faith. How can we do this? Increase our faith. And so Jesus gives us in verses 5 and 6 the stimulus. Jesus himself will enable us to do miraculous things.

Things that he himself has done. Jesus words in verses 1 to 4 aren't actually for a subset of his followers who happen to have a super human faith. No.

What Jesus is talking about here is ordinary everyday Christianity. And look at Jesus response. verse 6 if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed you could uproot this massive mulberry tree.

Sometimes we can get caught up here in what is going on with the tree perhaps imagining some sort of magic power mind control to raise up objects to our will. But that's the focus on the wrong thing.

[ 40 : 46 ] Jesus focuses on the mustard seed not the mulberry! tree and his point is that it isn't the intensity of faith that matters but the object of faith.

The everyday Christian life the Christian life that seeks to mirror Jesus love for the saints isn't in need of grand glorious faith but genuine faith.

Listen to Charles Simeon faith's operation will be exceedingly powerful even though it be small as a grain of mustard seed for the weakest faith if genuine unites us to Christ and makes us partakers of all his fullness even as the branch of a vine participates in all the virtue of the stock and root.

Moreover the smallest faith brings the Holy Spirit into the soul and secures to us almighty operations. When we come to Jesus and put our trust in him his seed is planted within us he gets to work to transform and change our desires and thus something as unlikely as being able to entirely uproot a massive mulberry tree branch roots and all that's possible Jesus is reassuring us that as we trust him he will enable us to have the requisite courage the requisite grace and patience and everything else that's required for what he asks and that carries on into our service verses seven to ten Jesus fullness his spirit will be shaping our lives towards serving him and so when we think about wholehearted and costly service in the church once again it isn't for a select group the same indwelling power of

Jesus and his spirit fuels all of us to serve him to have a single master God not money or anything else and these verses are really all about our attitude to serving and of course God does delight in our service we read that elsewhere Hebrews talks about our service as a sacrifice that's pleasing to God Philippians likewise it's a pleasing aroma but these verses are not about how God sees our service but rather how we see it those who have truly grasped the wonders of the gospel and the realities of heaven and hell those who have God's seed and spirit within them will exemplify an attitude towards service that is indefatigable because we will realize that our service is what we've been created for what we've been redeemed for it is our duty and so how incongruous it would be to finish a term of serving in a ministry and think great job done okay

[ 43 : 49 ] God where's my path on the back perhaps I can now take a break from serving you I've earned it verse seven perhaps God will you now serve me I'm going to hand this responsibility back to you now can you imagine our service of God is not doing him a favor he doesn't come to us begging us to help him no the reality is verse eight that service leads to more service and when we truly grasp God's character when we grasp what Jesus has done for us we realize that we're actually esteemed to be able to share in God's work and when we do we're truly mirroring Jesus himself his seed is truly at work within us because he's the one who came not to be served and so as we put our trust in him as we follow him on his path to and through

Jerusalem to and through the cross to be taken up in glory he bestows on us vast riches he promises to us his very kingdom but he asks in fact he commands that our lives are his for his service joyfully gladly enduringly now we cannot ever outdo his service of us can we and knowing that the true follower of Jesus will say verse nine verse ten sorry we are unworthy servants we have only done what was our duty those are the words of faith aren't they the words that show we grasp the majesty of his grace that we are conscious of the debt that is in our column that he has paid and so the message of all of these verses is that heaven and hell are very real indeed one is a place of comfort one a place of torment and anguish and with these realities in mind

Jesus bids us to take seriously his commands his gospel and he urges us shaped by his own character that's the normal Christian life normal and yet miraculous but Jesus says genuine faith even as small as a mustard seed can do miraculous things let's pray Lord grant us your gracious help to embrace all that it means to follow you help us so that we as a church would be marked indelibly by your character and that we would have fixed in our minds and our hearts and our horizons the unseen realities of heaven and hell and help us by your gracious enabling to be courageous in dealing with sin among ourselves help us in all these things as only you can for we ask it in

Jesus name amen amen