

# Christ the Sovereign Ruler

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 November 2014

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible readings this morning. We're back in Luke's Gospel at Luke's Gospel, Chapter 6. If you have one of our visitor's Bibles, that's page 861. Page 861, and we're going to read the whole chapter. We looked at Chapter 5 last week and we saw that Chapters 5 and 6 are bound together. They're one section in Luke's Gospel and they're very carefully ordered. Last week we saw that there were three stories, each beginning with the same little phrase, not so obvious in our Bibles. If you have a King James Version, it's very clear. Each phrase beginning, and it came to pass, and then the story. And then the second half of the chapter, Jesus' words, which explain the meaning of those stories. And it's exactly the same here in Chapter 6. Three events that show Jesus' power and authority and the authority of his word. And then the second half, more of his explanation and his summons.

So let's read the whole chapter then together. Chapter 6 of verse 1. And it came to pass on a Sabbath, when he was going through the grain fields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath? And Jesus answered them, have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those with him? How he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him. And he said to them, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. And it came to pass on another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him.

But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, come and stand here. And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it? And after looking around at them all, he said to them, stretch out your hand. And he did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. And it came to pass, and these days he went out to the mountain to pray. And all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve whom he named apostles. Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew, his brother, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas, the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. And he came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.

[ 4 : 40 ] Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other cheek also. And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who begs from you. And from the one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return.

And your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged.

Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over and put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. He also told them a parable. Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that's in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, brother, let me take out that speck that is in your eye, when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite. First, take out the log of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?

Everyone who comes to me and hears my word and does them, I'll show you what he's like. He's like a man building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock, and when a flood arose, the stream broke against it. That house could not be shaken because it had been well built. [ 7 : 42 ] But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

Well, let's turn in our Bibles to Luke's Gospel, chapter 6, page 861 in the Church Visitors' Bibles. The people that God came to redeem in Christ his Son, he therefore came to rule. The good news that Jesus Christ proclaimed was the gospel of the kingdom of God, that is the ultimate rule, the reign of God. And Luke in his gospel wants us to be very clear that our Savior is also our sovereign. We saw last time in chapter 5 that Luke shows us that Christ is the sovereign rescuer with a unique power and authority as the Son of Man to redeem sinners and to usher in a new age of rejoicing. And the picture of joy in Levi's house at the end of the chapter is likened by Jesus himself to the joy of the bridegroom on his great day of fulfillment. But that also means that if the day of God's redemption has at last come, then so has his ultimate rule of righteousness.

And in chapter 6 here, Luke wants us to see clearly that Jesus is also our sovereign ruler. He has unique power and authority as the Son of Man to rule over his saints, the true sons of his Father that he has come to save.

[ 9 : 44 ] And therefore, he has come to usher in a new age of responsibility. The people who know God's salvation are indeed a people of great rejoicing.

In him we have redemption. Our sins are forgiven. But we are also a people of very great responsibility. Because in him we have renewal as sons of the Father, sons of the Most High, the one who is kind and who is merciful even to the ungrateful and the evil, even to his enemies.

And Luke chapter 6 is all about what it means that Christ is our sovereign ruler. It's a long chapter. Obviously, we can't dig out its teaching in depth today. But I hope that by looking at it as a whole, we can more clearly see the big picture that Luke wants us to see here.

As we said last time, the chapter hangs together very clearly, just as chapter 5 does. There's three episodes in the first half that give us glorious signs, which demonstrate Jesus' unique authority. And then from verse 20 to the end of the chapter, we have Christ's gospel summons that declares with unique authority what Christ's righteousness for his kingdom people must look like.

[ 11 : 03 ] So the whole chapter is about what it means for Jesus to be the unique and ultimate ruler of his people. Now, God rules his people by his law, by his revelation of truth and righteousness.

But the key question for us is, what is God's rule, and therefore, what is God himself really like? And the first part of the chapter shows the continuing clash between Jesus and the established religious order of the day, the scribes and the Pharisees.

Remember in chapter 5, verse 30, they grumbled at his way with sinners. But when we get to chapter 6, verse 11, we read that they're filled with fury at Jesus. And they accused Jesus of being lawless, that is, being at odds with their great hero and teacher, who is Moses.

Moses, who was the mediator of God's law. But Luke, you see, is pointing us to a very great irony. They grumbled. Now, grumbling is a very loaded word in the Bible.

Those who grumbled all through the Exodus story and all through the wilderness were those who grumbled against Moses, weren't they? And against God, whom Moses represented with unique authority in his day.

[12:24] And now these men are grumbling and opposing the unique authority of Jesus. But Jesus exposes them as being against him, because in fact, they have a totally warped and twisted view of God and of the very nature of his salvation.

And therefore, a twisted and a warped view of God's rule. And a very perverted and a poisonous view of God's law.

What has happened to them is that they have lost the whole plot, really quite literally. Lost the whole plot of God's revelation in Scripture. So that they totally misunderstood what Moses was, in fact, about in the first place.

Never mind misunderstanding the fulfillment of everything Moses pointed forward to in Jesus himself. Everything that Jesus was bringing as the Messiah, who was, in fact, utterly at one with Moses.

Although he was, of course, someone far greater. So all through this chapter, we see Jesus' unique authority to show the contrast, not so much between the old ways, which are passing away, and the new.

[13:35] That was chapter 5. But the contrast between the truth about God's law and the complete falsity and the perversion of God's good and right and health-giving way that these Pharisees and the scribes had made of it, which was utterly evil and utterly dead and utterly deadly.

So Luke is telling us that Jesus Christ is both the fulfillment of all that God's law means and that he is unique as the authoritative interpreter of what God's law means and, indeed, what God's law has always meant for human beings.

So let's look then and see what it is that Luke really wants us to understand here. First of all, in verses 1 to 19, we have, as I've said, the glorious signs. Three glorious signs that demonstrate the unique authority of God's rule over his kingdom on earth, revealed ultimately in Jesus Christ, his Son.

And the first, in verses 1 to 5, are about Jesus' disciples plucking some grain as they're walking through the fields on the Sabbath. And the message of this incident, given by Jesus himself, is that God's true revelation brings health and not hunger to men.

God's law, his rule over man, which is expressed ultimately in the lordship of Christ, it brings man the delight of true and living righteousness, not the deprivation of false and dead religiosity.

[15:15] And the law and the fourth commandment in the Decalogue did, indeed, forbid work on the Sabbath. And so the Pharisees here construed plucking and eating a few grains of corn as work.

And so they condemned the disciples. But notice Jesus' response. Jesus didn't say to them, Oh, come on, don't be silly, that's not work. He didn't get into discussion of what does and doesn't count as work, as the rabbis would have done, and talked endlessly all about it, made it just a matter of opinion.

Now, that's not what he does. He says something far, far more radical. Look, verse 3, Haven't you read your Bibles? Is what he says to these experts in the Bible.

And he reminds them about David, the great anointed king, who apparently broke the law in a far, far greater way, by eating not just a bit of grain on a Sabbath day, but going into the temple and eating the holiest bread in the whole nation, which absolutely no one, except for the special priests, were even allowed to touch.

And he ate it himself, and he shared it with all his motley band of soldiers. Now, these men could hardly criticize great King David, could they? Was God's great king a terrible sinner, sacrilegious, scorning God's law?

[ 16 : 39 ] Well, of course he wasn't. And he wasn't scorning God's law, because he understood God's law. He understood that God's revelation was life-giving, and enlivening, and protective of life, not life-sucking and deadening, which is what their religiosity, and their legalism, had turned it into.

Notice, Jesus is not saying that God's Sabbath command just doesn't matter, or is he actually saying that he's come utterly to abolish it? If he meant that, he would have said so, and he could have hardly blamed these men, could he, for a completely new situation coming into play that they couldn't possibly have known about?

Now, Jesus is telling them that they simply hadn't understood their own scriptures in the first place. They had literally lost the plot.

They had missed at the very heart of the whole story of the Bible is about God's redemption, his liberating from bondage of his people into freedom, to be his redeemed people.

And of all God's laws, of all God's laws, the Sabbath provision was surely the greatest reminder of that that there could ever be. It's a veritable picture, isn't it, of liberation, of blessing, of rest.

[ 18 : 01 ] It's the very opposite of bondage and deprivation. In Deuteronomy chapter 5, the Decalogue gives us this promise from God of a day of complete and joyful rest every single week to every single Israelite, and their household, and their servants, or even their animals.

And he tells them, this is to remind you that once you were slaves in Egypt in bondage to work and labor, but now you're my liberated people.

Slaves don't get a Sabbath rest, do they? It's the joy and privilege of a people who are released, who are restored, who are redeemed, who enjoy God's glorious rest.

That's why a one-time Prime Minister Harold Macmillan said that this commandment is the greatest piece of workers' rights legislation in history. Could there be a greater possible irony?

In chapter 4, remember Jesus quotes from Isaiah about the year of the Lord's favor and says, this is being fulfilled in your very presence. The Jubilee year, remember the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

[ 19 : 12 ] Every seventh year there was a Sabbath year when you didn't have the work of the ground, but God would so bless it he would provide you with food so you had a whole year off. And every seventh Sabbath year, that is every 50th year, was the Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor.

The ultimate, ultimate picture of Sabbath delight, of release, of all captives, of restoration, of all properties. Joy and rest. And of course, that's why the prophets took up that picture of the Jubilee year as a picture of God's ultimate salvation.

Everything that Israel looked forward to and longed for. And Jesus said in the synagogue to them, this has begun in your very presence with me and my ministry.

And that is what he's saying here in the same way, in action, by walking through the field that day and eating the corn. In fact, if you read Leviticus chapter 25, verse 12, it says that in the Jubilee year, though you will have neither sown nor reaped, you may eat the produce of the field.

It's a living illustration of God's great salvation. A vivid picture of the fulfillment of the very scriptures that these scribes and the Pharisees claim to be experts in.

[ 20 : 33 ] Right in front of their very eyes. And not only do they miss it completely, they think that instead of being in line with all God's revelation in the law and the prophets and fulfilling it, that Jesus is in effect opposing it and against it.

But Jesus says, it's you who haven't read your Bibles properly. You've lost the plot. Quite literally, they've lost sight of the heart of the whole story of the Bible, which from the very beginning was about God's promise of salvation and his Savior to come.

And you see, if you lose that, the whole center of God's story of salvation, you will misinterpret everything. And the outcome will be really and utterly tragic.

See, when you take that out of the center of what the whole Bible is about, well, you turn the wonderful story of God's redemption of man for the life of the world to come and the liberation of his kingdom, you turn it into a grim story of just man's regulation of his fellow man, something that's just for this world only.

And what is a liberating message of life by God's grace becomes perverted into a legalistic bondage of death, withered, and utterly powerless to do anything to help man even in this world?

[ 22 : 04 ] And isn't the second story here in our passage such a testimony to the powerlessness of religion, religion devoid of the presence and power of the Spirit of God in the good news of Jesus?

Here's the synagogue, the domain of power for these scribes and these Pharisees, and yet their teaching and their understanding of God's law was utterly impotent, utterly powerless to help this man with the withered hand.

In fact, they had no interest in this man and whether he was healed or not. Their only interest in the likes of a man like him was whether they could use him to entrap Jesus so that he would transgress one of their heartless and repressive regulations that they had twisted God's law into.

But you see, in this episode in verses 6 to 11, Jesus is intent to show that God's true revelation brings healing and not harm to man. That God's law, that his rule, which is ultimately expressed in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, that it brings man restoration to true and living righteousness, not the repression of false and dead religiosity.

What more glorious demonstration of Sabbath blessing could there possibly be than the healing and restoration and release of a man whose withered right hand would have utterly prevented him from working in life, prevented him from a fulsome life for himself and for supporting a family.

[ 23 : 39 ] But you see, when you lose the plot about what God's revelation is really about, when you read the Bible as the Pharisees did, through the spectacles of mere religion, all you become interested in is regulation.

not redemption. And you become not only hopelessly legalistically, but you become heartlessly inhuman at the same time. And so just as Jesus, verse 7, is planning healing, they are plotting hatred.

And he challenged them in verse 9 about what is really lawful, what is really in line with God's true revelation of his nature and his purpose and with God's plan and purpose for this world.

to save life as Jesus was doing or to destroy it as they wanted to do to him, which was in line with the true God of his revelation in the law.

Is God's law primarily about accusing and condemning and destroying? or is God's rule in fact the way of rescue into life and release and restoration and into the truest destiny for human beings?

[ 25 : 00 ] That's really the foundational question for us all, isn't it? And many people are so confused about the whole nature of biblical truth and what it's all about.

and that's because like the Pharisees and like most of the Jews of Jesus' day, ever since, many people have continued to look at the Bible through the wrong spectacles entirely.

The spectacles of religion instead of the spectacles of redemption. And so they've stripped out the presence and the purpose of a living God whose chief purpose is to rescue and redeem sinners for himself and bring them into true and everlasting life, to bring them into an eternal, everlasting Sabbath in a world of release and renewal and restoration.

But you see, when you forget that and when you treat the Bible in that way, you're left with something that is merely earthly, merely powerless and impotent and very unattractive and even repressive.

because on their own, the mere commandments of religion can only control and regulate and condemn. They can't transform.

[ 26 : 15 ] They can't change and liberate people. But you see, that's quite comfortable, isn't it? And quite comforting to human beings.

We like religion because religion, not just irreligion, is a way of keeping the real God at a distance from us. Religion helps us to foster the image of self-control and a self-contained world where everything is manageable, where if we keep the rules, we can do everything that's necessary and just keep everything nicely so that we keep a disturbing God at a distance.

We keep the troubling words of God about sin, about sin that's so serious that God has to not only transform the entire universe to sort it out, but that he has to transform the universe of our particular lives and sometimes turn it utterly upside down in ways that we don't want because we are utterly helpless by ourselves.

That is a very humbling thing, you see, to come to terms with for human beings. In fact, the Sabbath institution itself preaches the need for God's grace.

Man must rest. He must cease from his own labors. And he must do that in order to receive from God his healing, his restoration, his rest by his gracious provision alone.

[ 27 : 48 ] That's what we need. And Jesus pointedly demonstrates the grace of God's law there and then by healing this man. And you notice that it's in his command, in his word, in his law, that the enabling grace comes to this man in which he finds healing.

Now one thing this man could not do for himself was to stretch out his hand. That Jesus commands him to do that, but in the command comes the summons of grace and power by which he is wonderfully restored.

And it was wonderful. It was marvelous and transforming for that man's physical life as well as being a wonderful sign to others of the unique power and authority of Jesus.

Not only to heal, but to interpret truly what God's law had always been about. that had always been about, the coming day of a never-ending Sabbath of the kingdom of God, and the day of great redemption of sinners through the power of God's Savior Christ.

But instead, verse 11, do you see, instead of overflowing joy, they're filled with fury discussing what they might do to Jesus. And Matthew makes it absolutely explicit.

[ 29 : 13 ] what they wanted to do was to destroy him. See, that's what happens when people lose the plot about what God's revelation is really all about.

They don't care about the spiritually crippled or helpless. As long as their comfortable and pleasant, the ordered routine of religious life gives them what they want.

The focus so drifts from the world to come and from the real destination of God's story, they just become concerned with regulation and with rules and with red tape.

Very concerned with things like church government and procedures and planning and money and all manner of ways of making sure that things are done in church just the way that we like them to be and not shaken up and messed up and in any way getting out of control in ways that we don't like them to be.

But you see, you can't have comfortable, self-contained, this world mentality in the presence of the real, living Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 26 ] You can't. Because he shakes everything up and he will always challenge that mentality of religion. because his kingdom is all about the transformation totally of this world and our lives.

It's all about the assertion of his rule, of his absolute authority, the breaking in of his kingdom of heaven right now into our lives and into our churches and into this world.

You see, if those who claim to be God's people lose the plot, so in fact we turn out to be at odds with his true heart and with his true purpose.

If that happens, he will not be stopped, but they might have to be tragically left behind. And that is the message loud and clear of this next incident in verses 12 to 19 when Jesus calls 12 apostles and gathers around a whole community of a great crowd of disciples who are committed to his unique and authoritative rule.

Because God's true revelation, he is telling us, will be heard and will not be hijacked or hindered by men. God's law, his rule over man expressed ultimately in the lordship of Jesus Christ will be declared and will be demonstrated with authority in this world by a living church, by people called by him to true righteousness, not destroyed and deformed by a dead institution and by people who use the language of religion and yet whose hearts are full of hatred for God's real rule and full of hatred for God's true son, the real Jesus.

[ 32 : 18 ] See, the religious establishment of Israel here want to kill Jesus, but God will bless man even if he has to set aside the whole religious order to do so.

And that is what we are seeing here. God's word will not be chained. The gospel of the kingdom is the seed that will bear fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

His word will not pass away and neither will his church, the true church, built on that word. And preserved to cherish that word and proclaim that word in the world.

And so following Jesus' night of prayer in verse twelve, he does two things. First, he appoints twelve apostles, literally sent ones, who will be the official witnesses, the foundation stones of his church.

Surely they're symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel renewed and reborn through grace in Christ.

And they will share fully, later on, in his ministry of power.

[ 33 : 24 ] And God will give them, Christ will give them fully his authority to speak his words to the church. That's what we see in the upper room in John 14 to 17. So he chooses his apostles, but look at verse 17.

Also, he comes down with them and with a great crowd of other disciples, all his followers.

followers. And in the midst of them, his mission continues and multitudes come to hear him and to be healed by him.

And you see, the picture we have here in verses 17 to 19 is surely that of a desperately needy world, a world oppressed by the curse of sin and by the bondage of Satan himself. But that need being met by the power of Jesus and the gospel of his kingdom in the midst of a people who are called to be his true kingdom people, a people who love him and who welcome him as their sovereign Lord.

Someone's put it this way, the picture presented in these verses is a mighty Christ in the midst of human need and the prospect of a living, vital church in the midst of it becoming the channel of divine grace to men.

[ 34 : 40 ] See, in stark contrast to the deadness and the deadliness of the established religion of the day, devoid of the grace of God, perverting God's revelation into a morass of religiosity, here is a vision of the true church filled with the presence and power of the real Savior.

God's word will not be chained. But here's the question, what kind of people will embody the true revelation of God so as to commend it warmly to the world and not hinder it and not hide it from the world and not pervert it in the way that the scribes and the Pharisees had done?

Well, Jesus leaves us in absolutely no doubt whatsoever and the rest of the chapter from verse 20 to the end gives us great clarity as he lays out his gospel summons. A gospel summons that declares with unique authority God's true righteousness for his kingdom people on earth.

Christ's people are liberated for the age of true righteousness and therefore they are liberated for responsibility as true men, as true sons of the Most High as verse 35 puts it.

and Jesus' true followers he says will be like their master and they must seem to be seen to be like their master so as to fulfill their calling in the way that alas Israel had not fulfilled it.

[ 36 : 15 ] Jesus speaks with authority you see because he is real and people can see that. He is the living embodiment of the grace of God's true law and we see in him the living law of liberating grace.

We see it personified. And so must my disciples be seen he says if the world is to see and to understand my saving gospel.

The apostles yes they are to be true special guardians of the truth of the kingdom but all his people all his followers share the responsibility of living out his true kingdom righteousness.

Look at verse 20 it's to all his disciples that he speaks this is for you he's saying for all you who would follow me. Now again we can only skim the surface of what's sometimes called the sermon on the plain that contains so many things that are familiar in Christ's teaching elsewhere like in the sermon on the mount.

Let's just try to summarize and understand what Jesus is saying here. What kind of people and what kind of church will truly embody and demonstrate the liberating righteousness of the good news of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ?

[ 37 : 31 ] Who are the disciples who will not hinder God's words but instead will make it widely heard and eagerly heard? Well in verses 20 to 26 Jesus says true disciples are so genuinely bound to the Son of Man that they find blessing and reward even when they're hated by enemies as He was.

It's very likely that many followers of Christ many true followers will experience relative poverty and hunger and weeping now in this world because look at verse 22 because the people of this world will hate them and exclude them and revile them and spurn their names as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Jesus isn't saying anything extremist here not at all He's just relating simple reality. Very often that is what it means to follow Jesus. I've spoken to several men this very week who have had to flee their own country because they began to follow Jesus and they have known real hunger and real poverty and real tears for the sake of the Son of Man.

But even in many more minor ways we know the same. We are praying for our children at school. Very often don't they tell you that they feel excluded and reviled and spurned from the in crowd because they dare to say that they follow Jesus Christ.

Not extremist this. Nor are we ourselves unfamiliar with the concept of being dispossessed of property and being made poor for the sake of faithfulness to the lordship of Christ and being true to His gospel.

[ 39 : 24 ] That's what this is about Jesus is saying. He isn't saying of course that being poor or hungry or sorrowful that these things are a blessing in themselves.

Of course not. It's a deprivation. But when it is for His sake because His people are so clearly bound to Him that His enemies become their enemies then He says it is a blessing. Blessed are you when you have that on account of the Son of Man for my sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy. Why? Because this is the road to a glorious future says Jesus. Your reward is great in heaven. And this is the road of genuine faith. So their fathers always did to the prophets.

even Moses who these men claimed to revere during his actual lifetime was opposed and grumbled against constantly. He knew the reproach of Christ. Every single one of the prophets as Stephen says in Acts 7 was opposed and persecuted.

[ 40 : 32 ] So rejoice says Jesus when there are tears and hunger and want and bitter attacks and slander even for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that a total reversal of the values of this world? This world says verse 24 doesn't it? Blessed are the rich. Blessed are the satisfied.

Blessed are the happy. Blessed are the popular. We want all men to speak well of us. But no says Jesus that's the heritage verse 26 of the false prophets who hid the real truth of God for their own gain and for their own popularity in this world's eyes.

You would never hear Jeremiah or Malachi on thought for the day. Not a chance. Let me tell you that Radio Judah at 10 to 8 in the morning had a steady stream not of these guys but of the very well-connected cheery satisfied and popular religionists with all sorts of messages of tolerance and scornful words about anybody who talked about things like God's anger and punishment and a need for repentance especially to do with any matters concerning sexuality.

Look at verse 26. It's a warning isn't it to the church today that wants to be popular that wants to be celebrated wants to be influential and to preachers who want that and all preachers want that.

[ 41 : 58 ] We're liars if we say something different. This is a warning. But one mighty lesson stands out plainly in these verses says Bishop Ryle.

Two sweeping assertions which flatly contradict the current doctrine of mankind. The state of life which our Lord blesses the world cordially dislikes. The people whom our Lord says woe unto you are the very people the world admires praises and imitates.

This he says is an awful fact. It ought to raise within us great searchings of heart. Blessed are you who are poor and hungry and weep now hated and excluded reviled and scorned as evil for the sake of the Son of Man.

A total reversal of the world's valuation. But these are the followers says Jesus and this is the church that will display real saving kingdom righteousness to this world.

This is the church that will know the real redeeming power of the Savior at work in the midst. True disciples are so genuinely bound to the Son of Man that his enemies will inevitably be theirs.

[ 43 : 18 ] And secondly verses 27 to 38 true disciples are so genuinely born as sons of the Father that they find true blessing and reward in loving their enemies even as his great mercy and his kindness is shown to the ungrateful and the evil.

Yes, the followers of Jesus will be at least at times excluded and reviled and mistreated on account of loyalty to him. But we are not to retreat, says Jesus, into a victim mentality.

We are not to become bitter and hardened people who are closed-hearted to the world. That's a very, very easy thing to do, isn't it? Especially when you've been badly hurt, especially when you've been mistreated.

It's the most natural thing in the world to close your heart forever to others. But Jesus' followers are no longer to be of this world.

And so along with rejoicing the joy of being bound to Jesus in suffering, we are not to show retaliation, he says in verse 27, but love. Love your enemies.

[ 44 : 28 ] Do good. Bless. Pray for them. Pray for those who abuse you. Give, verse 30, to those who would exploit you. Verse 31, in all things do to others as you wish that they were due to you, not as they do due to you or have done to you.

He's not saying we're to be soft-headed. Of course not. He's not saying give money to somebody who begs when you know it's going to feed their drug habit. Of course he's not saying that. But what he is saying is that we're to give without seeking reward for ourselves in this world.

That's the world's way, isn't it? That's what verses 32 to 34 remind us. You give for me. You love to be loved back. You do good to get good back. You lend to get money back.

But that's not loving and giving, says Jesus. That's sponsorship, isn't it? You give to get something. Now, verse 35, you are to love and lend and give, expecting nothing in return.

Giving from hearts that are full of mercy and kindness, even to the ungrateful and evil. Why? Because you, he says, are true sons of a father, the most high God, who is merciful and loving, almost beyond belief, and certainly beyond anything that is natural in the human heart.

[ 45 : 57 ] But because his life is yours, and his life is in you, and his love is in you.

And you will love like him. Not because, not because such people deserve that love, but simply because he commands it. And because you love him, and because you want to honor him. And so, like your father, you won't be censorious and harsh in your judgments, verse 37, quick to condemn. You'll be forgiving and generous, using the measure of God's grace that has so liberally measured out his grace and forgiveness and mercy to you.

You see, true disciples are so genuinely born as sons of the father that they love even their enemies, even as he is kind and merciful to the ungrateful and even to the evil.

And so, Jesus says in the threefold parable that ends the chapter, only such true disciples who are genuinely building on the solid rock, only they can possibly lead others to the safety and the joy of eternal life.

[ 47 : 13 ] Jesus isn't saying, when he says judge not, that we're to have no moral values. He's not saying that anything goes. He's not saying that all behavior should be tolerated and nothing should be said to be wrong.

Of course he's not saying that. The whole chapter is about what is right and wrong and good and evil. But what he is saying, friends, is that those caught in sin, those caught in a wrong way of life, that they won't ever be helped by people whose hearts are full of pride and prejudice and a sense of superiority.

But rather, they will only be helped by true disciples of Jesus, whose hearts are touched by penitence and by the sincerity of true faith.

If you don't see the gospel of grace clearly, if you are blind to the true way of faith, you cannot lead anyone else in the true way of Christ, can you?

You'll both fall into a pit, says verse 39. Because, look at verse 40, the disciple goes where the teacher leads. So there's no hope if the teacher is a heretic and totally blind to the truth.

[ 48 : 21 ] And there's no hope, says Jesus in verse 41, if the teacher is a hypocrite. He cannot possibly help a brother who is caught in sin. You see, Jesus is no fool.

He knows that sin is real. He knows that right judgment will have to be made, and that people will have to be led out of their sin with help. But to be able to help someone get a problem of sight and understanding sorted out, so as to help them in their walk of faith, then first, he says, we need to know our own hearts.

And we need to know that our own sin is very often like a log by comparison to the speck that they're dealing with. It's only people who know the weight of the grace that has touched them and that keeps blessing them and removing the vast logs of their own sinfulness.

It's only brothers and sisters like that who cherish the Savior's grace to them who can ever possibly help others in their sin. Spiritual people, as Paul calls them in Galatians 6.1, who are able to restore others gently, knowing all the time their own frailty, knowing all the time that they're one step from falling into the temptation themselves.

That's right, isn't it? And someone like that that you want and you need when you've made a real mess of your life, not some proud, censorious person who looked down on you.

[ 50 : 05 ] And isn't that the kind of church where people will see grace at work and sense a gracious Savior at work and want to be there in the midst, finding the source of that grace and mercy?

Look at verse 40 again. Isn't it a very sobering verse? For every one of us who seeks to show others the way of discipleship and the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a very, very sobering verse for any preacher or any church leader at all, I can tell you.

Those whom you train become like you. do. And you see, if a preacher is harsh and proud and judgmental and declamatory, quick to condemn, censorious, then won't people think that that's the right way to be?

And won't a church become the kind of place that just crushes bruised reeds and squashes and destroys sinners in their sin? Not a place where grace and forgiveness is easily to be found?

Maybe that's why the Lord finds it necessary so often to make his leaders so aware of their own crippling thorns, so that they know that all that they can boast of is their own desperate weakness and the wonderful grace of the Savior.

[ 51 : 38 ] That's what Paul said, isn't it? It's certainly, I think, why James gives the warning that he does in James 3, verse 1. And friends, Jesus says here you can't hide reality.

We may fool ourselves, but we won't fool others. We'll be known by our fruit, and as the fruit, so is the tree, right down to its roots. That's the undeniable message, isn't it, of verses 43 to 45? In this realm, all forms of unreality come to grief, and no one gets off, as one writer puts it. And Jesus rams that home, doesn't he, in his last paragraph.

In Matthew's parallel account, by the way, of these Sabbath stories here, he includes Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees and says, you haven't understood the scripture that says, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

And Jesus is saying exactly the same here. It's not Lord, Lord, that I want. It's not extravagant praise. It's not great worship songs. It's doing what I tell you.

[ 52 : 44 ] Real faith is expressed in obedience to Jesus. Indeed, in the Bible, real faith is obedience to Jesus. It's the obedience of faith.

And if our faith is not real, well, we may fool ourselves. Perhaps for a time, we might even fool others' judgments, but we will not fool God.

The house built without real foundation, well, verse 49, is very plain. On the great day of judgment, when nothing can possibly be hidden, the ruin of that house was very great, utter calamity. the people God came to redeem in Jesus Christ, his son. He came to rule. Our savior is our sovereign.

And therefore, if he's not manifestly our ruler, if we're not so genuinely bound to the son of man that we share in the hatred of his enemies, if we're not so genuinely born as sons of the father that we share his love, blessing, giving, showing kindness as he is kind and merciful, even to the evil, if we're not hearing and heeding his word, and allowing his commands to shape our lives and our characters in every way, so as to build on that solid rock, if he is not manifestly our ruler, then it cannot be, can it, that he is truly our redeemer?

[ 54 : 22 ] If he's not manifestly our sovereign, then it can't be that he really is our savior. And like the man building with no foundation, we're courting disaster.

Friends, only the real Jesus Christ, Christ the sovereign ruler, who ushered in a new age of responsibility for all true sons of his heavenly father, only he can be Christ, the sovereign savior. savior, who will bring us all at last to that new age of rejoicing, those who hear his words and do them. So let's bow before our sovereign Lord.

Let's pray. even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount.

But you love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

[ 55 : 34 ] merciful, even as your father is merciful. O God, who declare us thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure.

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.