

The Perfect Honours of His Glorious Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd like to take your Bibles now, we're going to read in our passage for this morning, which you'll find in Luke's Gospel, and at page 873, if you have one of the church visitors' Bibles.

Page 873 in Luke's Gospel, chapter 14. Remember, we began a new section here at chapter 13, verse 22, last time with that little marker post from Luke, as Jesus went on his way, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem, all the way through the second part of Luke's Gospel.

There are those little markers reminding us of the journey that Jesus is on, a journey not just to Jerusalem, but a journey to the glory of heaven. Which is a road for him, and as he teaches, for all who follow him, that goes only through the cross.

And so here we are at chapter 14, verse 1. One Sabbath, when he went up to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully.

And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and the Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

[1 : 24] You see, they'd put the man there deliberately to raise that question. But they remained silent. And he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on the Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?

And they could not reply to these things. Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the place of honor.

Saying to them, Then you'll begin with shame to take the lowest place.

But when you're invited, go and sit in the lowest place. So that when your host comes, he may say to you, friend, move up higher. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. He said also to the man who had invited him, When you give a dinner party or banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

[2 : 47] But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you'll be blessed because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said to him, A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

And at the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I bought a field and I must go out and see it.

Please have me excused. And another said, I bought five yoke of oxen and I go to examine them.

Please have me excused. And another said, I've married a wife and therefore I cannot come.

So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, Go out quickly to the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame.

[4 : 01] And the servant said, Sir, what you have commanded has been done and still there is room. The master said to the servant, Go out to the highways and the hedges and compel people to come in that my house may be filled.

For I tell you, None of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. Now great crowds accompanied him. And he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his

own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000?

And if not, while the other is yet a way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, anyone of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

[5 : 31] Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown, it is cast away.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

Well, it would help if you turn with me to our passage in Luke's gospel, chapter 14, page 873, if you have one of the church Bibles.

A passage all about the perfect honors of Christ's kingdom. These chapters here in the middle of Luke's gospel are all about feasting, banquets, which represent the perfection of the Savior's coming in glory, when his kingdom at last is fully manifested.

And there will be great joy and celebration on that day. But Jesus is preparing his hearers for that day now. Because entry to that kingdom and all its coming great perfection is now.

[6 : 51] Chapter 13, verse 24, as we saw last time, strive now to enter through the narrow door.

Before it's too late, says Jesus, before you can, you'll find that you can no longer do so, even if you want to.

We saw last time in chapter 13, the perfect wideness of Christ's kingdom. There will be room, says verse 29, for all. People will come from east and west, north and south, all over the world, to join the feast at the king's table.

But there will also, according to Jesus, be pain and sadness, as verse 30 shows. And some who seem to have been last in this world will be first, and will find a great place of honor and blessing at God's table.

But others, says Jesus, even those who have seemed to be first in everything in this world, will be last. Look at verse 28. Some, says Jesus, will be cast out, often to their great surprise and their shock, either because of their conscious rejection of Christ and his gospel, or just because of their unconscious neglect of his call on their lives.

But it's all the same in the end. Jesus says, verse 34, they would not, even though he would, call them and woo them like a mother hen with her chicks. And it's a very solemn message, as we saw.

[8 : 23] And chapter 14 continues with the same theme. And the particular focus here is on the perfect honors granted to those who will inherit Christ's coming glory.

It's about to whom such honor is given, and about how these honors can and can't be inherited. And therefore, it's about the critical choices and costs involved for all who would aspire to share in the honor and glory of Christ's kingdom.

Now, the chapter all hangs together very clearly. And we'll see again here a rather familiar pattern that we've seen in Luke's gospel. First, he gives us a sign, and then he gives us a sermon.

First, a picture that illustrates Jesus' message, and then Jesus' direct preaching that applies and drives that message home. So if you look, first of all, at verses 1 to 6, we get the picture there.

We get a sign that pictures the perfect honor of Christ's coming kingdom. We see a helpless man drowning from the fluid that's building up in his own body, and we see him rescued and restored to the honor of true humanity.

[9 : 39] At the hand of the Lord Jesus. And in fact, here are some of the very people that were mentioned in chapter 13, verse 26, the people who ate and drank in Jesus' presence.

They heard his teaching. But in fact, as we see very clearly here, they were not at all with him in any other sense of the word. Here is a Sabbath day feast, a society Sunday lunch, if you like.

But these very religious Pharisees were here with a very wrong motive. Rather like people who do sometimes come to church very dutifully, in their Sunday best, carrying their Bible, but in fact, come with a very wrong attitude.

They're actually there to find fault, to seek out something to criticize, in something that's said or done, something that's not right, something that's unsound or unspiritual, or whatever it might be. And they're watching Jesus, says verse 1, almost certainly because they've planted a problem right in front of him. Verse 2, this man with dropsy, that means that his body was filling up with fluid, probably due to failure of his heart or his kidneys.

[10 : 48] The life-threatening condition, today still, even as it was then. But of course then, there were no diuretic drugs or hospitals or any of these things. Here is a man desperately needing healing, and everyone knew that that healing could only come through the power of God, that Jesus had been exercising.

But it was a Sabbath, and so work was forbidden on the Sabbath. Well, of course, that's true. The Sabbath was a joyous gift of God, given to his people, given to give them rest from the burdensome toil of life, from the sweat of daily labor that is so necessary.

It was a day of rest, a day of renewal, a day of release. And it was to remind God's people that they are a redeemed people, who one day will be redeemed forever from the toil of this curse, released into God's everlasting rest.

So how perverse then, to consider the rescue and release of a helpless dying man, as somehow burdensome toil, something evil and not good, something against the will of God, who is himself the great releaser, the great rescuer.

How perverse. But that was their clear attitude. And they challenged Jesus openly by putting this man right in his path. And so verse 3, we're told Jesus responded to them with a question that silenced them.

[12 : 21] Is it lawful, says Jesus? In other words, does God delight to heal and restore on the Sabbath day, his own Sabbath day of rest and healing and restoration? Is it lawful or not?

Well, Jesus floors them. They can't answer. And in their silence, he shows them exactly what God, the great lawgiver, desires and loves to do. And he exercises the power of God and releases this man.

They must have been seething, but what could they say? You see, like so many people then and since then, these people wanted a Jesus.

They wanted a Messiah, a Christ, altogether different from the real Jesus of history. The one who reveals to them what God is actually like.

And they hated a Jesus who didn't follow their ideas of what God's Messiah ought to be like. That makes you ask the question, doesn't it?

[13 : 26] Why would the master of a house ever open the door to the knocking of these kind of people? And would these kind of people ever actually be happy to be at a banquet where this kind of person was the master of the house?

That's C.S. Lewis' trenchant point that he makes, isn't it, in his book, *The Great Divorce*. I don't know if you've read it, but I would recommend it to you. It's a fantasy, of course, where a busload of people who are in hell get a day trip up to heaven.

And the funny thing is they absolutely hate it. They hate everything about it. And they cannot wait to get away again. Because, you see, if you hate the real Jesus Christ, if you hate the real Son of God, how could you possibly stand being in his presence forever?

It would be utter torment, would it not? And it was painfully uncomfortable for these Pharisees. Jesus floors them. He exposes their sheer inhumanity, which in turn exposes their sheer ungodliness, their unholiness.

Because, you see, if you hate man and have no care for man, who is made in the image of God, that shows just that you hate God too. To so pervert the Sabbath, which was made for man, to bless man, so as to prevent any help and healing for man, to do that is utterly to dehumanize holiness.

[14 : 55] But, you see, real holiness is true and real humanity. It is the image of God restored in human flesh. It's in Jesus that we see that so perfectly.

Not these religious men. You see, Jesus turns human religion always absolutely upside down. And he exposes his hypocrisy.

Verse 5. You see, they'll save an ox quickly enough, if it's their own or their own son on a Sabbath. Well, of course they would, because not to do so would be a loss to themselves. But it wasn't any loss to them. If this poor man with dropsy, he went off and died.

No loss at all. Who cares? So there's no need for him to be helped or healed. A drowning ox, yes. But a drowning man, no. In other words, you see, far from loving God with all their heart and soul and mind and strength and loving their neighbor as themselves, they love themselves with heart and soul and strength.

And they hate their neighbor. They make themselves number one, first in life's calculation, and they put others last.

[16:12] They exalt themselves and they denigrate others. And they see others, especially the insignificant, non-entities or dishonorable people, as dishonorable.

But themselves, of course, as occupying the places of highest honor. But you see, in Jesus' kingdom, the true and abiding honors come not to those who think themselves first, but to those who are last, says Jesus, to those who are humbled and helpless.

And it's these that the Lord Jesus loves to bring his highest honors of grace into their lives. See, Jesus' miracle here is both a fulfillment in front of our eyes of everything that the Sabbath truly signifies, and it's a sign, it's a parable of the gospel of the kingdom of God.

A gospel that brings healing and wholeness and restoration and renewal and true life, life in all its fullness to those who are by nature utterly helpless, utterly hopeless.

Those who are reduced to the absolute lowest place. See, this man isn't even a guest at this dinner party. He's just there as a prop. He's being used by these people.

[17:39] But it's he, not they, who get lifted to the highest place. In fact, he discovers that his place is already the highest place to be in front of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to find the highest place in all the world.

Not to be at the table of religion. And Jesus, our wonderful Savior, re-humanizes this pathetic man. While these pious religious people utterly dehumanize themselves by their actions.

It's a picture, isn't it, of the great clash that the gospel of the kingdom of God always has with the religious ideas of human beings. Because human beings think that if there is a heaven, and if there are honors to be gained, then it's going to be all about who we are, and what we are, and what we do for God, who will then be obliged to honor us.

And no, says Jesus, that's wrong. It's all about what we receive from God, gratuitously. The release, the restoration, the life that comes only from God's Sabbath healing of grace that comes into empty and helpless hands.

And that, you see, is what Jesus goes on to explain now in verses 7 to 35, where after the picture in the sign, we have a sermon that preaches the perfect honors of Christ's coming kingdom.

[19:09] And Jesus' words describe how this heavenly restoration that brings true honor and true humanity as human beings made in the image of God, how that is found. And you'll see that the message is structured around the responses that Jesus made to the various people at the dinner party and indeed to his followers.

And it falls really into two halves, 7 to 14 and verses 15 to 35. So if you look at verses 7 to 14, first of all, you'll see it's a challenge to proud religion.

Jesus' kingdom honors cannot be bought with earthly gain or influence. That's his big point.

No, Christ's grace can only be received as a gift. And that's very clear in the first parable in verses 7 to 11 where you see Jesus' grace comes to the humble, not the proud who think themselves above other people.

He noticed, verse 7, you see how people scramble for places of honor. Some people's chief satisfaction comes from displaying their imagined sense of position and distinction and honor.

[20:22] They'll only enjoy an occasion if everybody sees them in an important place. They need to be noticed. And that's what we see in spades, isn't it, when we have diplomatic events around the world.

They give such headaches to organizers precisely because that's true. Do you remember Nelson Mandela's funeral? What was it? It was all over the newspapers. All the eyes were on the Danish Prime Minister.

Do you remember? Sitting next to Mr. Obama taking that selfie. Do you remember? That was a really great seat to be in. Of course, Mrs. Obama on the other side was looking a bit less than pleased, wasn't she?

Because the Danish Prime Minister was a rather attractive blonde bombshell and Mr. Obama was looking very pleased with himself. But that was a great seat. Or do you remember, some of you will

remember back to the funeral of Pope John Paul II.

That was a major diplomatic exercise. Do you remember what happened there? Poor Prince Charles found himself two seats away from guess who? Robert Mugabe who leaned across and shook his hand and caused an absolute international embarrassment.

[21 : 27] Boy, that was a really bad seat that everybody wanted to avoid. You see, when the world is watching, you want to be in the very best seat that you can be in.

A seat of honor. A seat of position. A seat of exaltation. And so it is in life. But Jesus says in verse 9, watch out.

Because it's the one who issues the invitations who is in charge. Not you. And you may find that your ambitions actually lead you to a very public humiliation and demotion and shame.

Far better then, he says in verse 10, to go low, to be humble, not haughty. You see, Jesus obviously is concerned here with far more than just good manners and wise etiquette.

He's talking, isn't he, about profound spiritual truth. And the truth is that real honor in his everlasting kingdom comes to those who know their own unworthiness.

[22 : 33] To those who know that they have no claim upon honor from God himself. But who know that God's honors are bestowed gratuitously and mercifully.

That to press for such honor as though you deserved it, that simply displays your own innate dishonor. And it needs to be said, doesn't it?

Because spiritual pride, spiritual snobbery is a very real thing in the human heart. We know that. But the call of his kingdom grace challenges us not to be self-seeking, but to be content to receive humbly from Jesus' hand what we can't possibly procure for ourselves.

just as the man with dropsy had received. See, when we really understand the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of grace, then we will rejoice to receive it freely.

Because verse 11 says, we've grasped the truth that in this kingdom everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And it's he who humbles himself who will be exalted.

[23 : 46] And that's Christ's upside-down kingdom. As far as human nature is concerned, because in chapter 13, verse 30, do you remember, we're told, the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

It's upside-down. So those who really understand and have come to love Christ's true kingdom, they rejoice to receive freely from his grace.

And therefore also they will rejoice to give freely. And that's verses 12 to 14. You see, grace says Jesus comes not only to the humble, but to the honest.

Not to those who use people with ulterior motives. For some, you see, giving an invitation to dinner is all about a quid pro quo. It's about what you're going to get in return.

You put others in their debt so that then they'll have to do something for you. Very hard to enjoy being at something like that, isn't it? When somebody invites you and then you know that you're just going to have to reciprocate.

[24 : 51] So the apparent gift that they're giving you actually isn't a gift at all, it's a burden. I was reading in the paper the other day about children's birthday parties these days and how that is becoming the truth for that.

Ever more extravagant and ridiculous events often issued with the invitation is a long present list, just like you get at a wedding with all sorts of suggestions as to what little Johnny ought to be having this time.

Boy, am I glad we're past that stage. But you poor parents must absolutely hate it, mustn't you? You'll be thinking to yourself, what on earth are we going to do for our little Johnny when his party comes that can possibly live up to match this?

So you get that invitation. It's not a gift, it's a burden. Or you have a friend who every time they come to see you when you invite them over for dinner lavishes upon you the most extravagant gifts. And it just stresses you because you feel, oh my goodness, when we go to see them we'll have to do the same. And so what probably happens is actually you don't go and see them very often. So that gift that your friend is giving you is actually a burden which is destroying your relationship with them.

[26 : 04] Don't be like that, says Jesus. Verse 12. Don't be mercenary in your relationships with other people. Of course he's not saying don't ever have supper with your friends or your family or don't spend time with people your friends with.

Don't be silly. Of course he's not saying that. But what he's saying is don't be dishonorable and dishonest in pretending that you're giving generously to others when in fact you're actually just trying to gain something for yourself from your rich neighbors that he says there. You see it's actually gain for you to do that so you can crow about having them at your house. You know the sort of thing. Oh yes Jane you like that painting of mine. Well isn't that funny because that's the very painting that Sir Rupert liked the best when he was over for dinner. You do know Sir Rupert don't you? Because he's the chairman of Megabank. Hmm. We've been invited to their Christmas party again. It's always great isn't it? Don't you love their Christmas party? Oh. Oh.

Oh you haven't been. Oh. But you see Christian name dropping is just as nauseating. Amazing how some people think it's incredibly impressive for other people to always be told oh yes I was just talking to so and so.

[27 : 23] Some Christian celebrity or other. Telling you that they know them and they've had them to stay and blah blah blah. You see Jesus is addressing here the whole wider principle of using other people for our own selfish ends.

Seeming to give but actually giving only in order to get something for ourselves. And that's very easy to do. We all do it. Maybe you get friendly with somebody but actually it's because that will give you access to someone or to something else.

Something that you can get away into. Something or someone that may be very useful to you. Or perhaps you get very friendly with some person that you know and you let them think that you're really perhaps quite keen on them and interested in them in a romantic way.

And actually it's their flatmate you've got a bit of a fancy for. You just want to get in the door. Amazing to think such a thing could happen.

It's very easy in a church context too isn't it? Offering to serve in some area but really what you want is to have some position some status in front of others.

[28 : 44] But you see the call of the kingdom of grace challenges us not to self-gain but to self-giving like Jesus who gave himself genuinely and generously to those who had nothing to offer to him.

And those who understand and belong to his kingdom of grace they rejoice likewise to give freely not seeking return. Verse 13 to give to the crippled the lame the blind who have nothing to offer back to us.

To rejoice to honor those that God rejoices to honor gratuitously because to do that is to share in the true honors of his kingdom a kingdom of grace and mercy and to show grace and to show generosity that reflects the God who is the generous giver of grace himself not the duplicitous getter who is always trying to screw things out of us.

And that kind of honor true heavenly honor just cannot be bought through any kind of earthly wealth or influence or power. It's something that grows supernaturally and it only grows in the soil of hearts that are touched by grace that have become generously giving gracious hearts themselves.

And friends the truth is we can't fool God on this one. Do you remember Ananias and Sapphira? Acts chapter 5 read it later. They wanted the honor didn't they of being seen to be generous like generous Barnabas who'd sold a lot of property and put it into the apostolic mission.

[30 : 30] They wanted the honor of that without actually being generous in the way that Barnabas was. They wanted the reputation of generosity in the church without the root which was actually true generosity of heart and giving.

Giving for generosity's sake giving for Christ's sake not for what I can get in return for my giving. But you see Jesus says that those who have truly understood the kingdom of grace having received freely give freely for that kingdom not for themselves.

And that leads to the second thing in Jesus' sermon the second thrust in verses 15 to 35. And this is a challenge to those who are apparently passionately responsive to his invitation.

And to them you see the message is equally clear. Jesus' kingdom honors although they cannot be bought they must be valued and valued above all earthly gain or influence or relationships.

you see there's no such thing as cheap grace. God's grace in Christ costs and it costs everything. The remark in verse 15 from one of the guests shows that he's obviously admiring what Jesus is saying about the values of humility and honesty.

[32 : 02] He's applauding Jesus. But you see it's not enough just to have admiration for the idea of a kingdom like that. You see you can do that and still refuse to enter still refuse to embrace the

kingdom of God because the cost of commitment to that kingdom in the end is too great.

It's possible you see isn't it to admire the gospel of Jesus Christ and to desire the honors of his kingdom but to miss out because you don't value it highly enough.

Hence the parable in verses 15 to 25 where Jesus' answer is that a choice must be made. A choice about what you really do value above all things.

And the parable addresses what really lies behind the choices that people make in refusing to enter Christ's kingdom. And each case what keeps people out is that the value of something in this present life is higher to them than the value of what Jesus lays before them in his coming kingdom of glory in the world to come.

Verse 16 and 17 describe a lavish glory that is to come. It was a great banquet. Of course it's not just about food it's about the occasion it's about the honor the joy the celebration but it's a great banquet we're told for many.

[33 : 29] And the guests in the end as verse 21 makes clear will be those who have been very conscious all through their lives of a great longing for true fulfillment but a fulfillment that has been unrealized in this life and yet on that great day will be found to be fulfilled with great abundance.

But like in chapter 13 again Jesus says some will miss out not so much now because of unconscious neglect but conscious rejection of the offer verse 18 all alike made excuses because in each case what was offered to them was not valuable enough to be worth missing out on some present possession or some present preoccupation whether it's field or oxen or wife we might see earthly property real estate earthly possessions and earthly passions in love relationships nothing wrong with any of these each of these in fact is a great gift from God himself but the call of Christ's kingdom you see is a call to prioritize his kingdom and his honors above all earthly life and loves remember back in

Luke 12 seek first the kingdom of God seek first the treasures that will never fade and fail and trust God for all the needs of this present life but so often we don't do that and yet if we don't says Jesus it will imperil and indeed in the end it will prevent entry to the glory of Christ's coming kingdom and those who are excluded on that day may be shocked so that last time in chapter 13 but they shouldn't be shocked because Jesus is very plain here in telling us exactly why that happens and it's because their earthly horizons are so full of the things that they have or things that they want to have now that it eclipses everything that will be true and lasting ultimately and as Jesus said back in chapter 8 that is a very real danger for many who seem passionately responsive to the call of Jesus Christ in the beginning if they don't make clear and decisive choices now it's a real danger that in the end they'll just fizzle and fade remember his parable of the soils and the sower some hear the word and receive it with joy says Jesus passionately but they have no root so in time of testing they fall away or they're choked by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life this summer I have two reunions to go to one is 30 year reunion since I left school and the other 25 year reunion since I left medical school it's a bit depressing I think it's really as long ago as all of that but the most discouraging thing to me the most discouraging thing is to think of all of those friends that I had at university who were alongside me in the Christian medical fellowship and in the Christian union who have gone the way of the story of the and at the time it has been because their real focus is on the here and the now it's not entirely unpredictable because most of them were sadly in churches then charismatic churches where all the focus was on the here and the now on health and healing and blessing and prosperity and great giftedness and not on the true gospel of the Lord Jesus of what is to come so it's not really a surprise but friends don't be naive that's what Jesus is saying he knows the human heart he knows what will keep people out of his kingdom on the great day it will be properties it often is that holiday home in the country that keeps you increasingly away from the real living fellowship of Christ where you belong and where you need to serve it often is possessions not just money but the professional positions as you go up the ladder how often these things put strains on marriages on families but above all upon spiritual life and development and passions a marriage perhaps to someone who is a great catch humanly speaking but far from a great match spiritually speaking all of these things so easily anesthetize us to the call of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ but friends Jesus is saying to us in the end these very things can preclude us from the honor of sharing in his heavenly kingdom because if his coming kingdom is truly valued then choices must be made and that can be very hard especially if in God's goodness we have an abundance in our lives now

[39 : 00] Jesus will say in Luke 18 how hard it is for those who have much to enter the kingdom of God but our choices will reveal our true priorities and what we truly do value the most when you take a job when you take a promotion at work do you think about the spiritual implications for you for your family where you'll find a place of worship a place of service in a church a real sphere of service do you think about that you'll think about the pay you'll think about your pension you'll think about where you live and schools but do you think about that when you're thinking about going away to university young people do those kind of things cross your mind or is it all just about the course or the reputation of the student union or the time where you want to go if you truly value the kingdom of Jesus Christ then according to Jesus himself in our life in this world now choices have to be made these are choices that can if wrongly made exclude us from the kingdom of God and sometimes these choices are very hard very painful very costly but as Jesus goes on to say in verses 25 to the end the cost must be borne notice again we're told great crowds are coming with him they seem to be passionately responsive to his message but Jesus offers them again no cheap grace there is cost there is great cost to following me he says see the honors of his kingdom they are unmerited they are unearned but they are not unconditional in the sense of demanding nothing from us quite the opposite says Jesus my kingdom demands everything if honor in this kingdom demands humbling now so feasting in his kingdom comes to those says Jesus who will endure fasting now look at verse 26 if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters yes and even his own life he cannot be my disciple whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple that is pretty radical is it not of course when Jesus says hate in verse 26 he doesn't mean us to take it violently literalistically in a wooden way

Jesus isn't a radical recruiter of suicide bombers and terrorists who literally maim and hurt and destroy their loved ones of course not but he does use this language so that we can't blunt the very real challenge of his call he doesn't mean that we're to love no one but he does mean that we're to love no one no one more than him to be his true disciple means that we put everything else in life in second place even our own life he says to join his banquet the things the people property possessions possessions positions family all he says verse 33 all must be renounced and put firmly into second place he doesn't mean we literally have to give everything away anymore he's telling us we have to literally give away our wife and children of course not but he does mean that even these our nearest our dearest relationships must be surrendered to the sovereign lordship of Christ and the reason that he focuses

I think in verse 26 on these closest relationships is because it's these conflicts of love that so often present us with the costliest choices of them all is it easy to tell your family that you must go and live away in a far away town or country or even continent because that is where the lord has work for you to do it's not easy is it is it easy to go and to stay perhaps in a place where you feel naturally you would not really rather be in with all sorts of privations that you feel far away from family and friends and others because you have to serve Christ there it's not easy these choices are so costly often particular because they're not choices between something good and something evil but between something good and lovely and beautiful over against what Christ says is best of all for our lives and for a reward which according to Jesus will not be seen until the day of the resurrection of the just we don't see it right now but friends

Jesus is honest to all of his would-be followers it's costly he says at the start and it's costly all the way through the real life of Christian discipleship and Christian service and Christian ministry and so he says in verse 28 you need to count the cost right at the start just as you do with a building project you don't start something you're not going to be able to finish how terrible if we got halfway through our building project here in Bass Street and run out of money and the whole city would look upon a pile of rubble and a boarded up frontage and say what fools they were George you would never have shown your face again in public would you how terrible that would be but friends how much more terrible to hear the words of verse 30 look at them to hear those words proclaimed to earth and heaven by the angels of God on the great day of judgment about yourself and your would be profession of Christ this man began to build and wasn't able to finish you need to count cost of following me says Jesus but also and he says this in verses 31 and 32 count the cost of not following me not making your peace with the God of power and might who has a call on your life don't think for a minute that you really can get the better of almighty

God as if you were more powerful than him although somehow you could pick yourself against his call on your life and overcome him don't be a fool says Jesus that would be like the cost of a man with an army of 10,000 thinking he could take over an army twice the size that leads only to utter ruin far far less costly in the end to face reality and sue for peace now on his terms and to face utter ruin in the end as verse 34 puts it to be thrown away cast away forever exactly the same words Jesus used in 1328 about being cast out of the kingdom of God you see what he's saying if salt doesn't taste salty if it has none of the properties of salty then it's useless for anything no point in calling it salt anymore so a disciple says Jesus who doesn't follow in Jesus way who puts all things as more valuable than Christ and his kingdom who doesn't gladly bear the cross and follow in his road well in fact he's not a disciple at all he's not a nominal

[46 : 57] Christian he's not a backsliding Christian he's not a sort of Christian not very enthusiastic at the moment three times Jesus says here plainly he cannot be my disciple and that means according to verse 24 he shall not taste of my banquet now the only possible outcome of that says Jesus is to be cast away glory no use anymore even for the manure pile in the coming kingdom of glory do you think we get the message is it possible for us not to get Jesus message the honors of his kingdom cannot be bought not by anything we have not by any earthly gain or influence or power it's a kingdom of grace but friends that kingdom must be valued above every earthly love and even above life itself there's a price to be paid for fruitfulness and for faithfulness in the

Christian life and the cost is the same for everyone says Jesus whether you're great or small whether you're rich or poor whether you're wonderfully gifted or whether you're just plain Joe whether you're in the pew or whether you're in the pulpit it costs everything says Jesus any one of you who does not resign renounce everything cannot be my disciple so friends he who has ears to hear let him hear don't avoid yourself from the perfect honors of his glorious coming kingdom because deep in your heart really and truly you value something else higher or someone else higher in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ let's pray heavenly father your words to us are strong they cut deep into our hearts but how we thank you that you are a God of truth who will not lie but puts before us the choices and the cost of following your son help us we pray that our eyes might be open to the true lasting and abundant glory of your kingdom that in its light everything else might pale into shadows that nothing should ever drive us or drag us away from the way everlasting for

Jesus sake we pray amen to return the Jessica