

Truly SEEING Christ's Eternal Kingdom

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: 05 May 2019

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 00] So we're going to turn to our Bible reading, and we're beginning a new series of studies this morning, looking at a section of Luke's Gospel. So we begin this morning by reading Luke chapter 17, and we're going to read verses 11 through to the end of the chapter.

You'll find that on page number 876 if you're using one of the church visitors' Bibles. Reading Luke chapter 17, and we'll read from verse 11 through to verse 37.

On the way to Jerusalem, he, Jesus, was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

When he saw them, he said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?

[1 : 31] And he said to him, Rise and go your way. Your faith has literally saved you. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, Look, here it is, or there.

For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. And he said to the disciples, The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, Look there, or look here. Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

[2 : 55] But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house not come down to take them away. And likewise, let the one who is in the field not turn back.

Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed.

One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left. And they said to him, Where, Lord?

He said to them, Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Amen. This is God's word.

[4 : 04] Do turn, if you would. Do turn, if you would, to Luke's Gospel, chapter 17 and to the passage that Josh read for us together.

Where Jesus is teaching us about what it means to be those who truly see Christ's eternal kingdom. After our studies in Matthew's preaching of the cross around Easter, we're going to go back to some of Jesus' final teaching before his passion.

But we're turning this time to Luke's Gospel for a change of evangelist, although not, of course, a change of message. The final movement of Luke's Gospel begins at chapter 19 and verse 28, where Jesus enters Jerusalem, the triumphal entry with crowds shouting the words of Psalm 118, Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

But, of course, the problem all the way along has been that people haven't yet grasped what is the true meaning of the coming of this king. And they haven't grasped what his kingdom really will

mean.

And so that is what Jesus is focusing very sharply on in teaching at the end of his earthly ministry, in this section that is immediately prior to his passion.

[5 : 31] And it goes from 17, verse 11, through to chapter 19, verse 27. And the trouble was that people then, just like people today, were totally taken up with the world of the here and now.

Tended to see everything in political terms. Well, nothing new. Tended to see everything in terms of personal prosperity, personal well-being and so on. But, you see, Jesus is determined to break through that blindness to ultimate realities.

And he's determined to force people to see that what really matters for all human beings is not just the present, but the future. Because that future is eternal.

And so he confronts people with the ultimate question. Are you preparing for eternity? That's still a very big question.

Most people, of course, try to silence that question, try to suppress that question. But even the most carefree and reckless of us will find that kind of question nagging at our minds.

[6 : 36] Sometimes, maybe in the dark of night, in the group of sleeplessness. But these thoughts come to us unbidden. I came across recently a story told by Jerry Lee Lewis, widely regarded as rock and roll's first wild man.

And it was about a conversation that he had once with Elvis Presley. About exactly this issue.

Here's what he said. He said to Elvis, Elvis, I'm going to ask you one thing. If you die, do you think you'll go to heaven or to hell?

And he got real red in the face. And then he got real white in the face. And he said, Jerry Lee, don't ever ask me that again. He was real frightened.

And he wasn't the only one. I mean, you worry. When you breathe your last breath, where are you going to go? Said the great wild man of rock and roll.

That's an honest question. And it's a question that many others do ponder. Even if it is only when perhaps they're faced with some crisis in life that shatters that quiet illusion of our invincibility.

[7 : 47] Forces us to face up to these stark questions about life, about eternity. And about the possibility of a coming judgment. But these are the very issues that Jesus Christ brings out into the open and gives plain answers to.

And here in Luke 17 and 18, he is answering questions about exactly these ultimate things. Are you preparing for eternity? And that's a key question.

What does it really mean to be saved for eternity? And so is the question in chapter 18, verse 26. Look at that. The question, who can be saved?

Because if it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, the kind of person who seems so favored, so blessed by God here on earth, if it's so hard for such a one to be saved, then who can be saved?

And Jesus says, well, you're right in a sense. It's quite impossible with man. But not with God. Not when God opens blind eyes to see at last what is hidden from man, which is the real truth about who Jesus really is.

[8 : 58] And what the salvation that he is talking about really does mean. Jesus talks a lot in these late chapters here about salvation and about what really is.

And he talks a lot about faith. The kind of real faith that actually does save with certainty. On the great day when, as verse 30 here of chapter 17 tells so plainly, on the great day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Revealed to judge the whole world forever, that is. In our passage this morning, we'll see that Jesus' great focus is on opening spiritual eyes to really see what it means to find salvation in Jesus. And to open eyes to see what his kingdom that he's talking about really does mean. Because according to Jesus, the faith that can truly save must first of all be the faith that can truly see his kingdom, see what it's really all about.

And that's the message of verses 11 to 37 here in Luke chapter 17. It's very plain indeed. What he is saying is that real Christian faith, true Christian faith, is that which really perceives the meaning of Christ's eternal kingdom.

[10 : 18] He's speaking about real spiritual sight, real spiritual perception of these things here. And as Luke often does, it's Luke's manner of teaching very often to give first a vivid picture of what Jesus is doing in teaching people to see the truth.

The plain teaching comes from verse 20. That's the message preached very plainly. But let's look first at verses 11 to 19 because what Luke's giving us here, first of all, is the message pictured. And it's pictured in the story of these ten lepers who are healed by Jesus. Look at verse 11. Notice that Luke tells us exactly where this incident happens, between Samaria and Galilee. Why does he do that? Luke doesn't usually give us geographical details like that, place names. So it must be significant. Well, he is reminding us, isn't he, that this is foreign territory. Samaritans were separated from Israel and from Israel's temple and from privileged access to God's revelation. They were a half-breed, hybrid people despised by the Jews. And verse 10. Here are ten lepers who likewise are people separated. Separated from society.

[11 : 31] Actually separated also from Jesus here. Do you see they stand at a distance? They see Jesus. They know he's the master. But they can't come near him. All they can do from a distance is cry out for mercy.

Have mercy on us, they shout. And look at verse 14. Jesus replies. He gives them a word. Very simple. Go and show yourself to the priests. And they respond to him. What he's saying to them is, Do as I say, and you will be cleansed. And the priests will verify that according to the commands of the law. That's what had to happen. And as they obeyed and went, look, they were cleansed. Verse 14. Notice that word. Cleansed. It doesn't say healed. Cleansed. Because leprosy was a picture of uncleanness. The uncleanness of sin. The thing that can only be cleansed by God himself. And they were cleansed. But one of them, notice verse 15, When he saw, notice the word, When he perceived what had happened, Turning back and praising God, He went and fell at Jesus' feet.

[12 : 40] He fell at his feet, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. A foreigner. That's what Jesus says in verse 17.

Where are all the rest? Presumably not foreigners, but Jews. Who didn't see, it seems, what this foreigner did see. That this healing was far, far more. It was God's gracious word given to them in his mercy, In order to point them to Jesus. In order that they would see who Jesus really was. And then find in him far, far greater cleansing. The cleansing that alone could, Not only bring them out of separation in today's world, But save them from the eternal separation from God, That they otherwise faced because of their sins. But this Samaritan realized, The privilege of God's mercy to him in Christ. And he received salvation.

[13 : 43] That's what verse 19 says. Literally, see it in the footnote. Jesus himself promised, Your faith has saved you. He didn't take God's temporal blessings, The physical healing, For granted. But he was full of thankfulness to God. And he realized that all of this, Was to drive him back to the feet, Of none other than Jesus Christ. And to worship him. What a contrast to the other nine. What a contrast to so many Israelites. Because they had the privilege, didn't they? Of all God's revelation. What does Paul say in Romans 9? They have the covenants, The law, The promises, The patriarchs. And yet, What does Paul say? It's the Gentiles, Who attain a righteousness by faith in God. But Israel, Says Paul, Israel who had all of that, They did not see it. Because they did not pursue it by faith. They stumbled, he says, Over the stumbling.

[14 : 47] So in Jesus Christ himself. They did not see, What all God's blessings to them, Were meant to make them see. To lead them.

To see that all the fulfillment, Of God's promises are in Christ, And in the kingdom. The everlasting kingdom, That he proclaims. They had a very different idea, Of the kingdom of God, And what it was to be like. Ideas that made them proud, Instead of penitent, And humble like this Samaritan leper. And made them impatient, Focusing always on the temporal, On the present, Instead of, Patiently looking, To what was everlasting. And so they were, Utterly lacking in perception. They did not see, What was of real, And ultimate importance. They did not see, The greatest spiritual priorities, Of all. They had no understanding, Of the fact that one day, The only thing that will matter, For all eternity, Is whether during your life, You have responded, To the revelation, That God has sent, In the gospel of his son, Jesus Christ.

[16:00] And therefore come, To bow in worship, At his feet. So as not to be left, Separated from him forever, On the day when he returns, In power and glory to judge.

And of course, What so many, In Jesus' generation then, Were blind to, So many in our generation, Are just as blind to today. Despite all the privileges, That our nation, And our culture has had, Through many, Many generations, Of having the open Bible, And having a gospel, That is meant to send all, With hearts full of thanksgiving, To praise God, Through Jesus Christ, To worship him alone.

Only that, Only the response, Of real faith, In Christ's true gospel, Brings salvation. Only that, Faith saves you. And only that, Can see, What real salvation, Is actually all about, As Jesus proclaims it. And so you see, What Jesus goes on to, To proclaim, To explain, And to teach, To that generation, To make them understand, The momentous reality, That his coming proclaims, From the Lord, It is just as important, For us to hear today, In our society.

So let's look at, What he goes on now, To teach very plainly, About the real faith, That saves for eternity, And about what his salvation, What his coming kingdom, Really means.

[17:31] He goes on, From the message pictured, And in verse 20, And following, We have the message, Preached plainly, As he unfolds, What the real faith, That does prepare, For his coming in glory, Is like.

In verses 20 to 37, You see we're told plainly, That true saving faith, It sees, It perceives the meaning, Of his coming eternal kingdom, It sees like that one leper saw, And understands, What he understood, What the gospel revelation, Is really ultimately all about, It sees, What salvation really means, And it's something far, Far, far bigger than anything, In just this world, The kingdom of God, Is not just about this world, It's about an eternal world, And salvation is about, Far, far more, Than mere healing in this world, It's about deliverance, From a coming judgment, It's about deliverance, From an eternal separation, From God, That can only possibly be described, As everlasting death, And friends, Unless we understand that, We will never understand, What the mission, Of the Christian church really is, It is not just about, Healing lepers, It's about rescuing people, From everlasting hell, Now notice here in verse 20, Jesus speaks first, To the Pharisees, Because like many today, They were seeing, And seeking a completely wrong idea, Of the kingdom, In the here and now, In this world, They vastly, Vastly underestimated, The cosmic scale, Of the real problems, Of this world, Which are due to the curse of sin, That's the universal problem, Of human beings, Who don't grasp, Just how real and terrible sin, And its consequences are, That's why people think, That it's within humanity's power, And gift, To really save this world, Or to really save ourselves, Whether it's through religion, Or whether it's through, Some other things, That is our world's thinking today, People think that they can find salvation, Bring in the kingdom, In all sorts of visible ways, They might not use that language, Actually people do use that language often, They talk don't they, About saving the planet, That has been the language, Of the extinction rebellion protesters, Just these last weeks, It's the language of the green manifesto, To save our planet, People talk about saving humanity, Through medical advances and so on, Or scientific advances, Or even through political, Or economic advances, Or social change, Or the sexual revolution, Whatever it is, These are the things, People are looking to, To save, To make better, To make as we want it to be, The world, And the real danger, Can be that the church, Can think like that too, Alas it very often does, It uses that language, Building the kingdom, Talks about mission, In terms of just, Healing bodies, Or helping the poor, Or helping the environment, And so on, Now these things, May be good in themselves, But look at verse 20, Jesus says plainly, The kingdom of God, Is not coming, That way, The fullness of, Of his kingdom, And the full salvation, Of this world, Under the curse, Can only come, Through a totally, Cataclysmic, Cosmic, Transformation, When God, Finally, Finally purges, This world, Through judgment, Of all, Its corruption, And evil, And when he brings, About out of that, A complete, And utter new creation, And that means, A whole new age, For this world, Jesus is explicit, Here in verse 20, The kingdom of God, Is not coming, In this age, With signs, To be observed, In this age, The kingdom of God, Is a spiritual reality, It is spiritually perceived, It is spiritually seen, That doesn't mean, It's not real, It is real, Jesus says that, And he says, It has begun, Already,

[21:50] In this world, In the person, Of Jesus Christ, The kingdom, He says to them, In verse 21, Is where? It's right in the midst of you, Right this minute, Why? Because, The king of the world, Is right in the midst of you, Right this minute, Just as he said, Back in chapter 11, That Jesus works, Represented the kingdom of God, Coming upon, That generation, Were his words, Or when he sent

revealed, Says Jesus, Twice, Verse 26, And again there, In verse 30, Now those ancient days, If you read, Genesis 6 and 7, If you read, Genesis 19 and so on, Those ancient days, Were days of great wickedness, When society, In God's eyes, Was flagrantly wicked, And friends, It's not without note, That when you read, Those chapters, What you find is, That the cardinal signs, In those societies, The cardinal signs, Of man's rebellion, Against God, Was expressed, In a promiscuous, And a perverse, Sexuality, Go back, And read those chapters, And look around us today, It's incredibly ironic, That the rainbow symbol, Which is so beloved, Of our woke generation, The rainbow actually, Calls to mind, The memory of God's, Terrible judgment, On wickedness, Especially, Sexual wickedness, But in those days,

[29 : 44] Just like today, There was no thought, That anything was amiss, Normal life went on, Unblinking, Verse 27, They were eating, They were drinking, They were marrying, They were selling, They were planting, They were building, As if nothing would ever change, And they were singing along, Things can only get better, Until the day, Verse 27, When the flood came, And destroyed them all, And verse 29, When fire and sulfur, Rained down from heaven, Notice, And destroyed them all, Except that is, Those who escaped, Because they heeded, God's warnings, They listened, And responded, To God's gospel of salvation, And Jesus says, So it will be, On the day, When the son of man, Is revealed, A great, Great surprise, To a godless world, And so third, Notice it will be, Sudden and swift,

Says verse 31 to 33, On that day, Let the one who is, On the house stop, With his goods in the house, Not come down, And take them away, And likewise, Let the one who is in the field, Not turn back, Remember Lot's wife, Whoever seeks, To preserve his life, Will lose it, There will be no time, Says Jesus, To make preparations, To be ready, Then, For the world to come, Everything you have, Will be left behind, And everything, Will depend, Upon what you have become, Through what you really, Have treasured, In this life, Remember Lot's wife, What she really treasured, Was this world's things, And so even when judgment, When judgment was imminent, When she was being urged, To run, To flee from the disaster, She was looking back, With longing, At her worldly life, And longing to preserve it, And Jesus says, And Jesus says, Very plainly, Look at verse 33, You can't do that,

Or you will lose, The only life that matters, You will lose eternal life, You can lose everything, In this life, But don't risk, Losing the real life, The true life, The life that you were made for, By God, Friends, We need that warning, Even today, In the 15 years or so, That I've been here, In this church, I've seen, Too many times, People who've sat here, Among us, On Sunday mornings, Pulled back, Into this world, Because of the lure, Of this world's praise, Of this world's prizes, Of this world's empty promises, Again and again, The desires, The passions, The relationships, The things that cause people, To begin to look back, Are the things, That cause people to turn back, And Jesus says, Therefore to miss out, On the great joy,

Of his everlasting kingdom, Don't think that you can, Do that says Jesus, And that there will be time, Later, To sort things out, With Jesus one day, No, His coming will be sudden, And swift, On the last day, Just it can be sudden, And swift, For our individual human lives, As we know, And then it will be too late, Because fourth, Notice, What will be sudden, And swift, Will be a separation, Forever, For those who are unprepared, From those who are prepared, For his coming, Look at verses 34 and 35, And that night, There will be two in one bed, One will be taken, Sweat away, Out of God's kingdom, And the other left, There will be two women, Grinding corn together, One will be taken, And the other, Left, Just as the flood, Took all away,

And so cleansed, The earth of evil, Just as the, As the sulfur, Sweat away, And buried, The wickedness, Of the cities of the plain, So at his coming, Those who are unprepared, Says Jesus, Will be taken away, They'll be separated, For eternity, Those who have shared, The same bed, The same household, The same workplace, The same friends, And family, The same city, Even, The same church, As far as the eye could see, And so Jesus says, Fifth and finally, The consequences of his coming, Will be serious, Deadly serious, Verse 37, They said to him, Where Lord?

[34 : 35] He said to them, Where the corpse is, Where death is, The vultures were gathered, It's an enigmatic statement, Isn't it?

It's hard, To know exactly, To what Jesus is referring, But what is absolutely plain, Is that it's a picture, Of grim seriousness, It's a picture of death, That is what this separation means, Death, Death as the antithesis, Of the everlasting life, Of his kingdom, That he's been talking about, One writer says this, The son of man's return, Means, Massive, Judgment, It will be final, It will carry the

stench of death, The return will be deadly serious, You should not be on the wrong side, When it comes, And Jesus is saying to us friends, Very, Very plainly, That judgment will be universal, And it will be permanent, And it will be as unmissable, And obvious to all, As the circling of vultures in the sky, Unmistakably point, To the place, And to the presence,

Of death, That's what my kingdom is really all about, Says Jesus, It's coming, And when it does come, To finally be established, Over this world, It will bring both, Everlasting life, And also, We can't avoid it, Everlasting death, This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, In his own words, And real faith, You see, He is telling us, The faith that prepares you, For that day, It perceives that, Now it sees, What the gospel is really all about, What the stakes really are, And it grasps hold of it, As the greatest possible priority, Over every other thing in this world, Both to believe this gospel now, With all your heart, But also to proclaim this gospel, And none other, To the whole world, Because this is what, The kingdom mission of the Christian church, Is all about, And nothing,

Nothing in this whole world, Could possibly ever be more important, Not ever, I think you can see, Can't you, That this is Jesus' Absolutely plain message here, So let me ask you, Do you see it? Do you see this truth? Do you perceive yourself, The meaning of Christ's eternal kingdom? And if you do, When you breathe your last, Where are you going to go?

[37 : 18] Are you preparing for eternity, For that day, When the son of man is going to be revealed? And if we are, Are we preparing others, For that day, With absolute priority?

That is the, Important question, Isn't it? For every Christian church, For every Christian person, Because friends, Here's the truth, People will love, A church, That only ever talks about, Healing lepers, And all kinds of other, Ills, Physical, Ills, Social, Ills, Environmental, Ills, People will love a church, That will go on endless marches, To change the climate, But a church, That warns people, About a coming judgment, A church that calls people, To repent, And be saved, By bowing down, In worship, To the Lord Jesus Christ alone, By obeying his command, Over your life, Whoever you are, A church like that, Is going to be hated, In our world, And Christians like that, Are going to be hated, In our world, Go and ask Israel Folau, In Australia, But only a church like that, And only Christians like that, Are preparing people, For Christ's coming, In glory, Only people like that, Are preparing others, For eternity, Because the real Jesus, Who is coming in glory, To judge the world, And to rule it forever, He prepared his generation, As verse 25 says, Through his gospel, And what happened, He was rejected, By his generation, Just as Noah before him, Was rejected by his generation, And every prophet, Who spoke the truth, Was rejected, By his generation, And just as we will be rejected, In our generation, If we likewise, Seek to open people's eyes, To what real Christian faith, Is all about, People will hate you, If that is the gospel, That you proclaim, But you will be preparing, Those with eyes to see, For the coming of the Lord, Jesus, And you will be preparing them, To be saved, From everlasting destruction, And from that terrible separation, For all eternity, That Jesus himself, Warns us about here, So we need to ask ourselves, Friends, We need to ask one another, All the time, Is this the gospel, That you are believing, And is this the gospel, That we are proclaiming, Or are we in danger, Of the lure, The very attractive lure, That just focus people's eyes, And their longings, Merely on this present world, Which is a passing world, Luke writes his whole gospel, He tells us in the first opening sentences, So that we will have certainty, About the truth of the gospel, We have been taught, By Christ and his apostles, And so that we'll go on, Preaching that true gospel, To others, So let's all keep seeing, Truly, Christ's eternal kingdom, And live always, Preparing, For eternity, Amen, Let's pray, Lord your words to us are clear, They are, Somber, And sobering, But your warnings, Come from your great grace, And mercy, You are the God, Who desires that none should perish, But that all should come, To our knowledge of the truth, Should come to see, The glory, Of the kingdom, You came, In order that his gates, Might be opened to us, Even sinners, To help us Lord, To love and to cherish, The truth of your gospel, And may our eyes, And our hearts, Be opened, Through faith, To see, To see for eternity, For we ask it in Jesus name, Amen, Amen.