

Entering into Everlasting Service

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Date: 07 June 2015

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn to our Bible reading now this morning, which you will find in the Gospel of Luke. If you have one of our visitors' Bibles, it is page 877.

And we're continuing our studies in Luke's Gospel reading this morning from chapter 18 at verse 15 through to chapter 19 at verse 27.

And a long reading, but a section that all very much hangs together, as I hope we will try to see a little later. Luke 18 at verse 15.

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.

For to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God, like a little child, shall not enter it. And a ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[1 : 07] And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

Honor your father and mother. And he said, All these I have kept from my youth. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, One thing you still lack.

Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come and follow me. But when he heard these things, he became very sad.

For he was extremely rich. Jesus, looking at him with sadness, said, How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Those who heard it said, Then who can be saved? But he said, What is impossible with men is possible with God.

[2 : 09] Peter said, See, we have left our homes and followed you. And he said to them, Truly I say to you, There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.

And taking the twelve, he said to them, We are going to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him. And on the third day he will rise.

But they understood none of these things. The saying was hidden from them. And they did not grasp what was said. As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And he cried out, Son of David, have mercy on me. And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

[3 : 23] But he cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped. He commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, What do you want me to do for you?

He said, Lord, let me recover my sight. And Jesus said to him, Recover your sight. Your faith has saved you. Again, as in verse, chapter 17, with the lepers.

That's really what Jesus is saying here. That's the word. Your faith has saved you. And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God.

And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

And he was seeking to see who Jesus was. But on account of the crowd, he could not because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree to see him.

[4 : 26] For he was about to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down, for I must stay at your house today.

So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. He's gone to be the guest of a man who's a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

And if I've defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

He said, therefore, A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, ten pounds, or three months wages, it says in the footnote.

[5 : 40] He gave them ten minas and said to them, Engage in business until I return. But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, We do not want this man to reign over us.

When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he'd given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.

And he said to him, Well done, good servant. Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, your mina has made five minas.

And he said to him, And you are to be over five cities. Then another came, saying, Lord, here's your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief.

For I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and you reap what you did not sow. He said to him, I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant.

[6 : 50] You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank? And at my coming, I might have collected it with interest. And he said to those who stood by, Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has ten minas.

And he said to him, Lord, he has ten minas. And I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

But as for those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here, and slaughter them before me.

Amen. May God bless to us. This is word. Well, would you turn with me to the scripture there that we read together in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18.

Are you prepared for the coming glory of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? That's the question that Luke is confronting us with in these chapters as Jesus nears the end of his long journey to Jerusalem.

[8 : 12] And as the time draws near for him to be taken up into that glory that he announced way back at the end of chapter 9. And all along the journey, Jesus has been teaching about his coming kingdom.

And so naturally, expectations were arising about when that glory would at last be seen. Some, as we saw in the reading in verse 11 of chapter 19, thought that it would come immediately.

Others were asking what the signs would be. And there was a lot of blindness about what that kingdom Jesus was talking about really meant. And what the salvation he spoke of really was all about.

And so that's Jesus' focus here as he leads up to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It's the vital and the right preparation for his coming kingdom.

It's all about learning to see properly. Real salvation, according to Jesus, is having your blind eyes open to see the reality that Jesus really is the king who will surely come to judge the whole world.

[9 : 20] This gospel of salvation is about announcing escape. Escape from everlasting separation from the king and from his kingdom.

We saw that last time and it's described in that awesome judgment scene at the end of chapter 17. And the true faith that saves, the faith that delivers from that everlasting death is a faith that sees, that truly perceives the issues of eternity and that perseveres to the end like the widow with her prayers and that trusts in the infinite mercy of God alone to sinners.

God be merciful to me, a sinner. That's what the tax collector said in the parable. And we need to have eyes open to see that reality that Jesus Christ is the judge.

That he comes to separate all mankind in a judgment that will face all without exception. That's what lies at the heart of the New Testament gospel, isn't it?

He is the one appointed to be the judge of the living and the dead. It's a solemn message. But Jesus also declares, of course, that he is the king come now in advance of that day to offer salvation to all without distinction and to make clear that that salvation is not merely to escape everlasting separation from his kingdom, but that it is to enter into the everlasting service of the king and his kingdom and to share in his glorious reign as its king.

[11 : 00] That is the ultimate joy of the message of the gospel for those who are his. And that, in fact, is the real focus of our passage today. Salvation in Jesus is not just deliverance from everlasting death, but it's deliverance into everlasting life.

True life, life in all its fullness, is to share in the wonder of service to our king and to do so forever. But you see, the only way to prepare for that coming in glory and for sharing in that service is by entering into that everlasting life of service to the king now.

And that's what real faith grasps. And that's what finding real salvation means now in this world for you and me.

Who then can be saved? That's a question that lies at the heart of this whole passage as the disciples ask it. Well, the first thing that Luke points us to in verses 15 to 34 is to look at the real recipients of this kingdom.

And Jesus is very clear in these verses. His kingdom is for all, for the great and the small, for the lofty and the lowly, for the powerful and for the powerless, for the influential, the impressive and the important, yes, but also for the impotent, for the insignificant, and even for the inarticulate.

[12 : 32] And it is so for all because it is a kingdom that must be received by all as a gift of God's grace that can only come through the transforming touch of the Lord Jesus Christ upon your life.

Surely what verses 15 to 17 is telling us is that his kingdom is not beyond the reach even of the poorest and the humblest who have no status, who have nothing to offer and sometimes even have to be brought to Jesus by other people.

Whereas the Pharisees refused to see who Jesus was because they thought he wasn't important enough and impressive enough for them, here the disciples are making rather the same kind of mistake, aren't they?

The little ones are not important enough for Jesus. Go away. But the message is light and clear. No one is more important than anyone else to Jesus regardless of their status in this world.

And in that culture, children had no status at all. Not like today when we sentimentalize children and make them the absolute focus and the center of everything. It wasn't like that at all then. They really were the little ones of society, the unnoticed.

[13 : 44] But Jesus says do not hinder them. He rebukes them when they try to. And he teaches us two things. First in verse 16, it is a wonderful word for children and for the parents even of children, even of infants.

such are welcome in God's kingdom, says Jesus, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. And they're inarticulate, aren't they? They can't recite creeds and catechisms, but Jesus accepts them.

On what basis? Because they're brought to him in faith seeking his touch. That he should lay his hands on them and pray for them.

That's what Matthew says explicitly in his version. And Jesus' prayer can never be ineffectual, can it? We saw something very similar back in Luke chapter 5.

Do you remember with the friends who brought their impotent paralytic friend who couldn't come near Jesus and lowered him down through the roof right in front of Jesus. And we're told when Jesus saw their faith, he forgave this man's sins.

[14 : 52] That's why we pray for our friends and our loved ones, isn't it? They won't come to Jesus on their own. They don't want to. They're blind. But we bring them to him in prayer. We implore him, Lord, open their eyes, touch their lives.

And many of you have seen friends and loved ones come to faith just through your prayers like that. But what an encouragement even to every Christian parent here today, isn't it?

Jesus says that even our little ones are welcome in his kingdom. what an encouragement to our young ones too that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is for you also, not just for grown-ups, not just for the big ones.

Of course, little children play a little one's part in his kingdom, but it is a real part according to Jesus. There's no denying it. That's why we take the teaching and training of our children very seriously in church.

That's why we devote time and effort, even paid staff, to their ministry, not just the ministry of adults because the kingdom is theirs also, not just for the more articulate and the more mature.

[16 : 03] That's why we in this church also baptize our infants because we consider it very inconsistent if Jesus declares the blessings of belonging to his kingdom for children and little ones and we were to deny them the very sign of what it means to belong to Christ's family here on earth.

To such belong the kingdom of God. That's Jesus' first point. But you see, in verse 17, his second point is for all, isn't it? Everyone, in fact, must receive his kingdom like a little child, he says, if they're going to enter it at all.

It doesn't mean, of course, that somehow children are innocent. Sometimes you read that in commentary as honestly. Surely, the person writing that must never have had a child of their own or never even looked after a child of their own if they could possibly think such nonsense.

Now, of course, he doesn't mean that. What he means is that entry into his kingdom is something that we can only receive freely because we are impotent to gain it any other way.

A little one is utterly dependent. An infant can only receive what it's given by its mother to enrich their little life. It'd be helpless otherwise.

[17 : 17] Entry is by receiving and you receive simply by running into the arms of Jesus and seeking to come to him and bring others to him and seeing that as the most important thing in all of life for you and for others also.

That poses a question to us, doesn't it? Is that what we value? Do we value Jesus' touch upon our lives above all other things? not only for our children although that's a real question isn't it?

Is the touch of Jesus on our children's life more important than their academic achievement, their sporting achievement, their musical achievement, whatever it might be? It's a big question. But is it the most valuable thing in our own lives too?

See, there's great simplicity in the faith that prepares us for the Savior's coming glory but that simplicity also demands real sincerity. Hence, surely, verses 18 to 34 where Jesus is just a plain.

This is a kingdom for all. The lofty as well as the little. But they too must value it above all other things or else they will not be able to enter either.

[18 : 35] So here's a great one in verse 18 who now enters the stage. A ruler in stark contrast to the little ones. And he asks Jesus a question. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

I think it's an honest question. He's not wrong to ask about what he must do. Sometimes people slam him for that. But in fact, Jesus is always telling people to hear the word of God and do it if they want to belong to his family.

I think this man is just asking exactly what people asked John the Baptist back in Luke chapter 3. What shall we do? And they got specific answers about how they and their own lives and situations were to bear fruit in keeping with repentance whether they were soldiers or tax collectors or whoever they were.

I think it's just so here. Jesus' message to everybody was you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me. And he's just applying that very personally here to this particular man honestly and clearly.

But this particular man requires a great challenge from Jesus. Jesus says, you call me good and you know that only God is good so do you really recognize who I am then?

[19 : 52] If so, you see, you'll grasp, won't you, that to truly obey God now, to truly please God means that you must listen to me and you must submit to my word because I am the one that Moses and all the prophets was pointing to.

That's what he's saying. That's the great challenge all the way through Luke's gospel that we've seen, isn't it? It's what shows the true Israelite from the false whether you respond to Jesus and see that he is the Messiah, that he is the goal of fulfillment of all God's covenant promises.

That's what showed whether your devotion to God's law was really the heart obedience of faith, that it was for the love of God and God alone, or whether in fact it was just the obedience of works, just love of self, pursuing a law of righteousness not by faith but as if it were by works as Paul puts it in Romans 9 verse 32 and therefore stumbling over the stumbling stone that is Jesus Christ.

That was the elder brother back in chapter 15, wasn't it? He wasn't slaving for his father at all. He was exposed. He was slaving for himself. He was serving mammon as his master, not God.

And sadly, that is so it seems also here for this ruler. Look at verse 23. Who was his real master? It was his riches. Mammon.

[21 : 24] And so Jesus challenged him in verse 20, you see, with the fifth to the ninth commandments. But when he's answered him, he really hits him with the tenth commandment, thou shalt not covet. And that's what exposes his idolatry.

Remember Paul says in Colossians chapter 3 that covetousness is idolatry. And the truth about this man was he had another God. It was his riches. He wasn't willing to deny his God, which is really himself.

He wasn't willing to take up his cross and follow Jesus. But you can't serve two masters is what Jesus said.

You can't serve God and money. You have to choose. And he chose his riches. He wouldn't yield the independence that his wealth gave him and become utterly dependent like a little child.

And so he couldn't enter the kingdom. And Jesus was sad, says verse 24, but he would not lower the price for this man.

[22 : 31] Because to enter his kingdom, you must value his kingdom above all things. Do you remember chapter 14, verse 33? Whoever does not renounce all that he has can't be my disciple.

See friends, this world's riches, whether it's wealth or whether it's influence or power or whether it's opportunities or career or whatever it is. If these things preoccupy your life, Jesus is saying it will leave you unprepared for his coming judgment.

Like Lot's wife. Do you remember? Jesus points us to her. Longing and looking back with longing to keep those things. And if your life is filled with such things, then the joys of the kingdom also will seem somehow less attractive to you and not supremely valuable above all other things.

And then you see you'll want Christ's kingdom only if you don't have to lose all these other things as well. You'll only want Jesus if he doesn't make you give up your independence and your autonomy and your living life your way and living your lifestyle according to who you really are.

And that means that if you'll be involved with Jesus at all, well, you'll want to find a church, won't you, that'll be happy to ignore certain demands of Jesus so that you'll think you can serve God and mammon.

[24 : 04] But look at this chapter. The real Jesus won't let you do that, will he? The real Jesus will let you walk away rather than do that.

Or if a church itself is so thorough to its heritage and its history and perhaps its buildings, feeling these earthly things are so vital to its ministry, then it won't take a stand for truth of the gospel, will it?

For fear of losing those riches and those things. It'll seek a compromise, try and keep the things that it really values most. That's what one pastor told me last week.

His congregation was really doing. And so as Jesus says in verse 24, how difficult it is for those who have much to enter the kingdom of God.

It's very salutary when you put it in those terms, isn't it? And the disciples are shocked. See, they think if even those who seem to be clearly blessed by God in this world or even they can't enter the kingdom, then who on earth can?

[25 : 13] And Jesus' answer is, well, it's impossible. But God can and does do the impossible. God does change hearts and he does grant entrance to his kingdom.

but it's clearly nothing to boast about when he does, is it? Peter's remark in verse 28, I think, is genuine. They had left everything to go and follow Jesus.

But it's so easy, even for true followers of Jesus, somehow to feel a bit superior, isn't it? And that's why Jesus both commends and cautions his disciples in response.

First of all, he does commend Peter in verses 29 and 30. Yes, he says, you have left all to follow me and you are receiving even now what this ruler wanted but didn't want quite enough.

Someone has put it, they are receiving the regular dividends and the ultimate capital gain of the kingdom. Many times more, says Jesus, in this life, in terms of real homes and family among Christ's people, in this world and the ultimate joy of everlasting life.

[26 : 23] You will be rewarded, says Jesus, and greatly so. But you see in verses 31 to 34 how he also cautions them.

They still don't really grasp what kind of king he really is and how his glory will come for himself and also, therefore, for them who follow him. And so again, Jesus reiterates that his journey in this world must be one of suffering.

He reminds them of all that he has given up for their sake to serve them in order to save them. He will be mocked and spat upon and beaten and killed before he rises to the glory to come.

But still, they didn't grasp it. Do you see verse 34 three times we're told in effect they're blind? They didn't grasp it. It was hidden from them.

They didn't understand these things. That glory must come this way. That gain comes only through loss. That receiving comes only by giving up and by giving all away.

[27 : 33] That you enter glory only that way. They were blind. They couldn't see it. They didn't grasp that it must be so for Jesus and that it must therefore also be so for all who will follow him on that road.

We are going to Jerusalem, he says, do you notice? Not just me, you and me together. Christ's servants must accompany him and serve his kingdom by walking the earthly road of his kingdom his way.

Hence, I think, the next two stories from verses 35 onwards to chapter 19 verse 10. The kingdom is for all, says Jesus, from the greatest to the least because it must be received humbly from Jesus' hand alone.

But all who receive it must truly cherish it and embrace its ways and show that by responding to Jesus his way as servants of a servant king.

And these stories highlight for us the real response of his kingdom. The response of the real faith that truly does prepare for his coming glory. What for man is impossible and God makes possible, he can bring about a response of true saving faith in anyone.

[28 : 58] Both a poor man and a rich man are saved in these two stories. And their true faith is evident through their response as they leave their old lives behind as they come and truly follow Jesus.

One leaves a demeaning life of begging with very little and the other leaves an equally demeaning life of dishonesty amid great wealth. But both find salvation in entering the service of the Lord Jesus and his kingdom.

First we have the blind beggar in verse 35. And notice here first that the poor are not saved automatically. God shows no partiality. He doesn't make it easier for the poor man.

He needs salvation through Christ alone just as anybody else does. But you see the irony here. We're told in verse 34 that even Jesus' disciples are blind to the real truth about Jesus.

But here's a blind man who sees what so many others don't see. He's told that Jesus of Nazareth is coming and immediately verse 38 he cries out Son of David have mercy on me.

[30 : 06] He's saying you are the Messiah the Son of David. You're the one who fulfills all God's promises and brings his promised salvation. Everybody tells him to shut up but we're told he cries out all the more.

That word crying out is the same word Luke uses of the widow crying out for justice and he's just as persistent isn't he? Shut up they say he cries out all the more Son of David have mercy and he has answered more wonderfully than he knew.

He asks for his sight and he receives his sight but Jesus' words to him are much more than that. Your faith has saved you is what he says in verse 32 just as he said to the leper back in chapter 17.

Notice that when he recovers his physical sight he sees not a glorious Messiah King but just Jesus of Nazareth a normal looking man on a dusty old road on the way to Jerusalem to face much suffering not a glorious King come to reign the people of Nazareth you remember in the synagogue that's all they saw no more even when Jesus opened the scriptures and before their very eyes proclaimed himself as the fulfillment of all God's promises they were blind but this blind man saw in his heart truly who Jesus was and his faith saved him and because it was true saving faith even though Jesus didn't look like a king he followed him praising God we read he followed in the path of the servant king isn't that striking the rich ruler had everything and yet saw nothing even the disciples didn't grasp it properly but this blind beggar sees that

Jesus is the true Messiah and he follows him praising him and causing others to praise him also and that's the wonder of the gospel isn't it so often it is the unlikely people the unimportant the ordinary the little people who do because of a miracle of God's eye opening who see what escapes the wise the powerful those of noble birth as Paul says to the Corinthians so that none can boast because it is all of God's sovereign grace often those of course in humble circumstances are the most receptive to the message of gospel because they know their need they've already been humbled in life those with much so often don't see their need and that's why it's so hard for them to enter the kingdom that's why it's not our Scottish contemporaries friends who are flooding our

[33 : 13] Christianity explored courses that's why we have ten times as many Iranian immigrants doing Christianity explored as we have Scots they can see it and our compatriots are blind to it but praise God it's not not any of noble birth wise that Paul says who are saved it's not many that's why the counties of Huntington said I was saved by an M she was a noble woman and she was saved and Jesus has not only save the poor and the helpless those at the bottom but he also saves even those at the top as verses 1 to 10 of chapter 19 show us so vividly in the story of Zacchaeus the rich tax collector notice in verse 2 something I'd never noticed myself before he's not just a tax collector he's the chief tax collector he's the top of a wealthy pile he is a big man as the Africans would say but again notice the irony verse 3 he wants to see

Jesus but he can't see because although he's a big man he's a very small man of stature maybe he suffered from small man syndrome maybe that's what drove him you know sometimes people do to prove themselves big even though they're small by stature reading about president putin wrestling bears and all this with his bear chested things he's only 5 foot 4 well maybe that was Zacchaeus but Zacchaeus certainly had achieved the wealth he sought but with it he was hated and demonized he's someone who'd enriched himself and the hated Romans by defrauding Israelites and so in fact he was ostracized he was lost he was in real need of rescue but Jesus is on a rescue mission look at verse 10 he's come to seek and to save the lost he's on his way to Jerusalem to accomplish all that the prophets had spoken of salvation through ultimate judgment on sin and ultimate rescue of his own people by giving himself as the servant king for his people and on his way to Jerusalem he's showing that mercy and he's showing it at work in people's lives and Zacchaeus who was lost and can't see what he needs but knows he needs something he discovers that actually verse 5 it's Jesus who has found him he even knows his name there he is perched in a tree and he hears that

Jesus has already planned to come to his house that very day I must stay says Jesus today it's a sovereign necessity and notice the urgency Jesus says today it's now or never Jesus was never going that road ever again no one can delay when Jesus fixes them with his call not on that day and not today friends and Zacchaeus didn't delay and look his whole life was changed immediately his was a real response of true saving faith he received Jesus joyfully just like a little child and we see evidence of that change in his immediate transformation he stopped being a getter for himself and he became a giver for others well if your wallet is not opened for God it's very very unlikely isn't it that your heart has ever been opened to God isn't that right notice verse 8

Jesus didn't make it a condition of entry to the kingdom for this man because he didn't need to as he did with the ruler because this man had already received Jesus truly as the ruler hadn't and it had changed his identity completely he was a new man Jesus came into his life into his social isolation as a rich man but as a despised and a lonely man and Jesus came in and befriended him just as he was but he didn't leave him just as he was because when Jesus comes into your life look at verse 9 salvation comes and he's transformed he is now says Jesus a true son of Abraham who lift all the riches of his former life to trust and to follow the call of God and that's Zacchaeus and his true response of faith is seen in his life verse 8 repaying four times over all his fraudulent takings giving half of everything he had to the poor will we see the

FIFA bosses doing that do you think do you see what Jesus is showing us by so carefully putting this story alongside the story of the other penitent tax collector that we looked at last time and indeed the story of this blind beggar he's showing us isn't he the whole truth about saving faith in the other tax collector in chapter 18 we see so clearly that we're saved we're justified only by God's mercy received by penitent faith faith alone saves justice for the blind man but the faith that saves is never alone grace always demands and grace always enables a response and living faith always shows the living fruit of real repentance the blind beggar leaves the life of very little to follow Jesus but follow truly he does despite what his eyes now open do not see yet a glorious king son of

[39 : 12] David comes to reign but he follows him even though what he does not see matches up with what he knows about Jesus as the true king and the Messiah Zacchaeus on the other hand gives up a great deal but he gives everything over to serving Jesus and his people you see the gospel's call is for all for great and small for rich and poor for young and old to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Jesus now today in his world and it's a call to submit to Christ alone as the only king and master now even though it may not yet look in this world as though he is the king and ruler of this world and it's a call to serve him alone now in his kingdom and his people above all other things in our lives because you can't serve two masters you can't serve God and this world's game and the real joy of his kingdom the real reward of his kingdom is to be given a share in serving the glory of his kingdom even now when it might not look like very much that's what salvation meant for the blind man following

Jesus and glorifying God and causing others to and for Zacchaeus rejoicing to serve Christ by blessing his people now it begins now and it must begin now in order to prepare us for the ultimate reward of salvation which is to serve him forever in his eternal kingdom hence the parable you see that rounds off this section in verses 11 to 27 it makes a simple point about the real reward of Christ's kingdom the true faith that prepares for the saviour's coming glory gives all to prosper his kingdom now until that glory is finally revealed God must have a proper perspective according to Jesus on both our present life and on the world to come and Jesus is telling this story to precisely correct a wrong understanding verse 11 that the full glory of the kingdom was to appear immediately not so says

Jesus but nevertheless don't take your eye off that day because you are preparing for that glory right now that day will mean everlasting life for all who are Christ's true people but there's more than that the glory of the gospel as Paul says is that if we have died with him we will also live with him and if we endure we will also reign with him in glory but you see the responsibility received then in his everlasting glory will be dependent upon and in proportion to our submission to Christ's rule now and his service in his kingdom now because it will be the natural development you see of the fruit of faith which has grown out of lives of glad service now and that is what will fit us for greater service in the world to come that's what this vivid parable depicts for us it's glaringly obvious in the context that

Jesus means to represent himself in this one who goes away to receive a kingdom and to return it's very contemporary actually for his heroes that's exactly what happened when Herod Archelus was given the throne he went off to Rome to be made king but he was so unpopular that a delegation went after him to Caesar to say we don't want this man to be king over us so it's a very contemporary parable and Jesus says that's exactly so with me they'll say we don't want this man to reign over us verse 14 but many have echoed those words down the years since but some do profess to be Jesus servants and in this parable each of these servants is given the same charge do you see a big enough responsibility a minor about three months wages but not too much for anybody and each is told engage in business until I come seek to prosper my kingdom in my absence not rocket science to see what the message is is it's a challenge it's a challenge to Jesus foes the Pharisees and everyone since who has said we don't want this man's rule over us it's a challenge that Jesus is king and demands submission to him and just because he's absent from this world for a time don't think that you can rebel against him because he will return and when he does look at verse 27 there will be judgment swift and severe make no mistake about that this king demands submission from all but it's also a message for everyone who would be a follower of

Jesus Jesus is a king who requires service to his kingdom and he expects his servants to exercise fruitful stewardship in his kingdom now it's a great privilege that's been given to them to share some of the master's own wealth to share in his everlasting purposes and make no mistake the Lord gives resources to all and the Lord will require a reckoning from all according to this parable it's a little different from Matthew's parable in chapter 25 of his gospel where the servants are given different talents here do you notice everyone is given the same what differs seems to be the zeal and the dedication to service so one man we're told verse 16 has multiplied his 10 times and he gets great praise from the master another five times and he also is rewarded and just so the same deposit of the gospel is given to every single believer and every one of us bears responsibility for what's been entrusted to us guard the good deposit entrusted to you says

[45 : 40] Paul to Timothy and the reward for that faithful servant in what Jesus calls very little just our basic duty remembers what he called it back in chapter 17 the reward of faithful service is to receive further trust and responsibility serving Jesus on and on more and more and sharing in the glory of his kingdom over cities serving multitudes of his people forever see if loving and serving the Lord Jesus and his people is your joy in life is your crown in life now what could be a greater reward what could be a greater crown for you to receive eternally that having that joy forever and ever with all the the sorrow and the heartache removed from it and just the joy remaining what could be a greater reward for a servant of Jesus if salvation now has meant entering a life of joyful service to Jesus

Christ then what will full salvation be but entry into an everlasting life of service with abundant joy but what about verse 20 who is this person who wrapped up his miner in a handkerchief can you wrap up the gospel in that way so as to be fruitless what sort of servant of Jesus could that really be possibly with such a warped view of his master here's what someone says it's a man who's so concerned about purity of doctrine that he creates a closed shop of fellowship like a secret society it's a man who so cuts himself off from the outside world and evangelical huddles that he has no opportunity to witness to others and trade with his pound it's a man who hides his light under a bushel at the office or in the factory so that nobody could suspect him of being a

Christian it's a man who knows the truth and knows what he should be doing and doesn't do it for fear of the repercussions it's going to it's a man who includes in his belief the basic truth that prayer changes things but won't sacrifice his wedding evening's pressure to come and actually pray for God's work it's a man who pays lip service to the truth that the gospel matters supremely and yet trifles with every conceivable distraction rather than to take the gospel seriously and commit himself irrevocably and wholeheartedly to promoting it among others what kind of a servant of Jesus could such a one really be so fruitless of faith with such a false and warped view of the master himself as though he was out to defraud and steal and get from us rather than share with us scholars

I can tell you argue endlessly over whether this is a real believer who's distinguished from the enemies of verse 27 and so their punishment and so he's saved as just through the flames as it were with no reward and great loss in heaven or in fact whether he is like in Matthew's parable of the talents or in Luke 12 46 where actually he has found out to be an enemy I don't know but I can tell you I don't think Jesus told this parable in order to let scholars write PhDs one way or the other do you I think he told it so we would ask ourselves the real question where are you and where am I in that parable because however we take it friends there's only one good outcome isn't there there's no neutrality either you're found gladly and fruitfully aligned and serving with Christ and his kingdom or one way or another we're under a terrible word of rebuke be it for rebellion or just through faithfulness with what we were given and we've seen haven't we again and again through

Jesus teaching in these chapters that there will be shame on that great day not only for those who reject Jesus purposefully but also for those who have just neglected him presumptuously what is my life today what is my zeal and my joy in service to Christ's kingdom or or the lack of it what is it saying about how I really think of Jesus as my master and what kind of master he really is that's a question for me isn't it and for you the son of man is coming back with power and great glory having received his kingdom and that day is nearer today than when Jesus first spoke that parable and when Luke wrote these words so friends are you preparing now for everlasting service in his kingdom will

[51 : 07] Jesus know on that day that he can entrust his precious cities to you and to me will he that's the question let's pray heavenly father how we thank you that in your mercy you bring us the wonderful comfort you are a God who does the impossible and can save all without distinction and draw into your joyful service everyone great or small who loves you and who follows you help us Lord we pray to be those whose hearts go out to you as the hearts of these little ones in our story did and may we find today our joy and our crown in following you the servant king and in giving all to share in your joy and we ask it in

Jesus name Amen Amen