

The Economy of Grace

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Date: 23 February 2025

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[0 : 01] Well, we are going to turn to our Bibles now, and our Bible reading this morning is in Luke chapter 14. We should have had the pleasure of Josh preaching to us this morning, but while I've got a runny nose, I won't tell you what Josh's problem is, but you may be able to guess.

He's laid aside in his bed, and so you're stuck with me this morning. So we'll do our best with Luke chapter 14, and we're going to read together the whole chapter. We read the first paragraph last week, but we'll read it again and the rest of the chapter this morning, beginning at Luke chapter 1. If you haven't got a Bible, there's some Bibles, red Bibles at the front, at the sides, and pick up one of those. You'll find it's on page 873, I think, in those Bibles.

Luke chapter 14. One Sabbath, when Jesus went 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 Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

[1 : 08] But they remained silent. Then 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 a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?

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

Saying to them, When you're invited by someone to a wedding feast, don't sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him. And he who invited you both will come and say to you, Give your place to this person.

And then you'll begin with shame to take the lower 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.

And then you'll 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.

[2 : 14] 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.

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'll be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, He said to them, Blessed is everyone who 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've bought a field. I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. And another said, I've bought five yoke of oxen and I have to go and examine them.

[3 : 23] 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.

And then the master of the house became angry and said to the 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.

And the servant said, Sir, what you've commanded has been done. And still there's room. And 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 these 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, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

[4 : 29] For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost? Whether is he enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he's laid a foundation and he's 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, well, the other is yet a great way off. He sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

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's thrown away, cast away.

He who has ears, let him hear. Well, amen. And may God bless to us.

[5 : 45] This is word. We'll do turn with me then again to Luke chapter 14. And we're going to look at this together this morning.

These chapters, as Josh reminded us last week, are all about feasting, about banquets. And these banquets represent the perfection of the coming glory of our Savior, when at last his kingdom is fully manifest.

And there will be great joy, great celebration. But you see, Jesus is preparing his hearers for that day now. Entry to that kingdom, entry to all of that coming glory is now.

So back in chapter 13, verse 24, he says, strive, that means now, to enter by the narrow door. That is, before it's too late, before you'll find you can't do so any longer, even if you want to.

And Josh showed us last time in chapter 13, the wide open door of Christ's kingdom. There will be plenty of room. Verse 29 there of chapter 13, people will flock, he says, from east and west, north and south, from all over the world, to join this feast.

[7 : 02] And some who seem to be last in this world, will be first, will find a great place of honor at God's table. But others, of course, even those who seem to be first in everything in our world, they'll be last.

And some, Jesus says at the end there, in chapter 13, verse 28, some will be cast out. Often to their great surprise, their shock.

Either because of their conscious rejection of Jesus, or just because of their unconscious neglect of His call. But it will all be the same in the end.

They would not respond to Him, he says, in verse 34 there. He would have wooed them like a mother hen, with the chicks, but they would not.

It's a very solemn message. And chapter 14, you see, continues that same theme. And the particular focus here is on, on the honors granted to those who will inherit, the coming glory of Jesus.

[8 : 04] It's about to whom, these kingdom honors are given. And it's about how, these honors, can and can't be possessed. And therefore, it's about critical choices, and critical costs that are involved, for all of those who would, who would aspire to share the glory of Jesus.

And as Luke often does, he first gives us a sign, and then he gives us a sermon. First a picture, that illustrates his message. And then if you like the preaching, that it applies it, and drives it home, very powerfully, very directly.

And the picture is given in verses 1 to 6. We looked at that at the end of the service last time, with Josh. But in verses 1 to 6, we get from Luke a sign. And it pictures the perfect honor, of Christ's coming kingdom.

You see this helpless man, who's drowning in, in the fluid building up in his body. And he's rescued, he's restored, to the honor of true humanity, by the Lord Jesus himself.

So here are some of the very people mentioned, in chapter 13, verse 26, who ate and drank, in the presence of Jesus.

[9 : 16] Who hear his teaching. But who actually weren't, really with him, in all the senses that really matter. Here's a Sabbath day feast.

A society, Sunday lunch, if you like. But these very religious Pharisees are there, with a very, very wrong motive. These are people, who are coming along to church, in their Sunday best.

Carrying their very big, fat black Bible. But actually, they've got a very wrong attitude, in their heart. They've come just, waiting to find fault, with people.

Waiting to find fault, with the preacher. Waiting to find fault, with something that's said, and done, that's unsound, in their eyes. It's not so uncommon, actually, is it? So, verse 1 says, they're watching Jesus carefully.

And they're doing that, because, as Josh pointed out, in verse 2 last time, they've planted, in the midst, the man with dropsy. That is heart failure. His body's filling up with fluid, because his heart and kidneys are failing.

[10:21] And it was a life-threatening condition. It is, even today, but certainly then, before diuretics, and other drugs, and so on. So, this is a man, a man who's desperately, needing healing. Healing that could only, possibly come, from the power of Jesus.

And everybody knew that. But it was the Sabbath. And so, work, was forbidden. And that's true, of course. The Sabbath is a joyous gift, from God, of rest, from all the burdensome toil, the sweat of our labor.

It's a day of rest, of renewal, of release, to remember that, that as God's people, we are people who've been released, been redeemed, into His everlasting rest. But how utterly perverse, then, to consider the rescue, the release, of a helpless, dying man, as burdensome toil, as something that was evil, something against, what God, the great Redeemer, the great Restorer, wants.

But you see, that was their attitude, and they openly challenged Jesus, by putting this man, right into his path. And Jesus responded to them, you can see verse 3, with a question, that silenced them.

Is it lawful? That is, does it delight God, to bring healing, and restoration, on the Sabbath day, the day of rest, and restoration? Does it?

[11:41] Or not? And He floors them, doesn't He? And in their silence, He just shows them, exactly what God, the great lawgiver, loves. And what He does, by exercising that divine power, to release this man.

And so they must have been seething, but what could they say? They're like so many people, you know, back then, but also ever since, who want a Christ, who want a Messiah, very different, from the real Jesus, the real Jesus, of the Scriptures.

The one who revealed to them, what God is actually like. That they hated a Jesus, who didn't fit their ideas, of what God, ought to be like.

That makes you, ask the question, doesn't it? Why would, the master of the house, ever open his door, to their knocking? And would they ever, be really happy, at a banquet, where this Christ, really is the master of the house?

If you read, C.S. Lewis's book, *The Great Divorce*, that's the point he's making, in it. It's a fiction, about people, who are in hell, who actually get a chance, to go on a trip, a day trip to heaven.

[12:56] And what they find, when they get there, is they absolutely hate, everything about it. They can't wait, to get away again. Because you see, if you hate, the real Jesus Christ, if you can't abide, the real Son of God, how could you possibly stand, being in his presence forever?

It would be torment, wouldn't it? And it was, painfully uncomfortable, even then, for these Pharisees. Jesus exposes, their sheer inhumanity.

In other words, he exposes, their sheer ungodliness, their unholiness. Because, if you hate man, who is made in the image of God, well, it shows you hate God also. To so pervert, the Sabbath, which was made for man, to bless man, so as to prevent, the bodily help, and healing of man, that is to utterly, dehumanize holiness, altogether.

But real holiness, is true humanity. It's being the image of God, in human flesh. It was Jesus, who showed us that, so perfectly.

Not these religious men, they were the opposite. Jesus, turns human religion, and religious thinking, utterly upside down, doesn't he? And he exposes, their hypocrisy in verse 5.

[14:20] You see, they'll save an ox, quickly enough, of their own, or their own son, on the Sabbath. Why? Because it would be lost, to themselves, obviously, if they didn't. But it's no loss to them, if this man, shouldn't be healed, or helped, so, they don't want him, to be healed.

The drowning ox, yes, if it belongs to me, but not a drowning man. In other words, far from loving God, with all their heart, and their soul, and their mind, and strength, and loving their neighbors, themselves, what do they love?

They love themselves, with heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and hate their neighbor. They make themselves, number one, in life's calculations.

They put others, they last. They exalt themselves, they denigrate others. They see others, especially, the insignificant, the non-entities.

They see them as dishonorable, they see themselves, as the one worthy, of real honor. But you see, in Jesus' kingdom, true and abiding, honors come not to those, who think themselves first, but to those, who actually think themselves last, who are humbled, who are helpless.

[15 : 34] It's these ones, isn't it, that the Lord Jesus loves, to bring up, to the places of highest honor, in his grace. And you see, Jesus' miracle, is both a fulfillment, in front of our eyes, of everything that, the Sabbath institution, signifies.

It's a sign as well, isn't it, of his gospel, of his kingdom. It's a gospel, that brings healing, that brings wholeness, that brings restoration, that brings renewal, and true life, back to those, who by nature, are helpless, are hopeless.

They'll so often, be reduced, to the very lowest place. This man, you see, wasn't even a guest, at this dinner party. He's just there, as a prop. He's just being used, by these people.

He's just an object, of derision. That's why, when Jesus heals him, he sends him away, get away from these people. And yet, he's the one, that Jesus has lifted, in their midst, to the highest place.

In fact, what he discovers, is that his, is actually the highest place, already. Not at the table, of religion, but at the table, right in front, of the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world, the God of glory.

[16 : 46] And Jesus, the wonderful Savior, re-humanizes, this pathetic man, whom all these pious, religious men, had utterly dehumanized.

And it's a picture, isn't it, of the great clash, of the true gospel, the true gospel, of Christ's kingdom, that it always has, with religion, with the religious ideas, of man.

People who think, that if there is a heaven, or if there is a God, and there are honors to begin, well, it's all about what we do. It's all about what we are. And then God will be obliged, to honor us, for what we are, and what we do.

No, says Jesus, it's the opposite. It's all about, what we receive from God. It's about the release, it's about the restoration, that comes to us, from the God of Sabbath healing, from the God of grace.

And you see, that's exactly, what Jesus now goes on, to explain, in verses 7 to 35. Where, after this picture, after this sign, we have a sermon, that preaches, about these honors, of Christ's coming kingdom.

[17 : 52] And Jesus' words, describe how, this, heavenly restoration, brings honor, to true humanity. And how it can be found, by those, creatures, who are made, in God's image.

And his message, is structured, around the responses, you see, that Jesus makes, to these various people, at the dinner party, that speak to him. And it falls basically, into two main parts, of verses 7 to 14.

And verses, 15 to the end. So first of all, look at verses 7 to 14, you see, it's a challenge here, isn't it, to pride religion. He's saying, that Jesus' kingdom honors, cannot be bought, with any earthly gain, or influence.

No, Christ's grace, can only be received. Received freely, as a gift. And that's so clear, in this first parable, in verses 7 to 11. Where Jesus says, grace comes to the humble.

It comes not, to the proud, who think themselves, above other people. So, he noticed, verse 7, how people scramble, to get to places of honor. You see, some people's satisfaction, comes, doesn't it, from displaying, their imagined, sense of position, their distinction, their honor.

[19 : 06] And they only enjoy, the occasion, if everybody else, sees them, in the important place, because they need, so much to be noticed. Well, we see it in space, don't we, at international events, diplomatic events, when the photographs, are being taken.

Everybody wants to be, beside the big person. It's hilarious, isn't it now? All these billionaires, in America, who were desperate, to be seen with Obama, desperate to be photographed, with Joe Biden.

Now, they're all desperate, to be at Mar-a-Lago, and playing golf, with Mr. Trump. So, nothing changes. Then, when the world's watching, you want the best seat, that you can get. You want the place of honor, not the place of dishonor.

And so, it is in life, isn't it? But Jesus says, in verse 9, be careful, because, it's he who invites you, who's in charge, it's not you. And you may find, that your ambitions, lead in fact, to very public

demotion, very public shame.

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

[20 : 12] He's talking, isn't he, about profound spiritual truth. And the truth is, that real honor, in his eternal kingdom, comes to those, who know their own unworthiness.

Who know they have, no claim on God. No claim to demand, honors from God. But they know, that God's honors, are bestowed, only by free, and utterly, unmerited favor.

And to press, for that kind of honor, as though you deserve it, that displays to everybody, that in fact, you are dishonorable, you see. And that needs to be said, doesn't it?

Because, spiritual pride, and spiritual snobbery, is a very real thing, in the human heart. Sadly, it's, too often, a very real thing, in the professing, Christian church. But the, call of, Christ's kingdom, grace, challenges us, not to be self-seeking, but to be content, to humbly receive, from Jesus' hand, what we can't ever, possibly, procure for ourselves.

Just like this man, from, with the heart failure, with the drops he had done. Could do nothing himself, but he received, freely from Jesus. And when we've really, understood the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of grace, of grace, then we'll rejoice, to receive it freely.

[21 : 37] Because, look at verse 11, we've understood, haven't we, the truth, that in this kingdom, everyone who exalts himself, will be humbled, it's he who humbles himself, who will be exalted.

Christ's kingdom, is an upside down kingdom, to the world. As far as, human nature is concerned. He told us that, in chapter 13, verse 30, the last shall be first, the first will be last.

And so, those who really understand, those who have come to love, Christ's true kingdom, they rejoice, to freely receive, his grace. And therefore, they also rejoice, to freely give.

And that's verses 12 to 14, you see, grace, comes to the humble, but also to the honest, according to Jesus. Not to, not to those who use people, for their own ulterior motives.

Because, you see, for some, giving an invitation, to dinner, is a sort of, quid pro quo, because you're expecting, something in return. You're giving, in order to put others, in your debt, so they must now, do something for you.

[22 : 47] It's very hard to enjoy, even being at something, like that, isn't it? Because, because you know, you're going to have to, reciprocate. The apparent gift, that's being given to you, is actually a burden, being put on you.

I'm so glad, we're long past the stage, of children's parties, but, when I hear people, talking about, children's parties today, they seem to be becoming, even more ridiculous, and extravagant events, aren't they? Even more, gift lists, and all the rest.

I've even heard about, children's parties, giving out gift lists, just like people give out, wedding gift lists. Oh my goodness. Poor parents, must groan, when little Johnny, gets another invitation, to a party.

Oh my goodness, what on earth, are we going to do? How are we going to match, this party, when Johnny, when our little Johnny's, party comes up? And so the apparent gift, of giving that children's party, is just laying a huge burden, on all the other parents, who are there.

Or sometimes, it's the friend, who comes to see you, and every time, they come and visit you, they lavish, extravagant presents on you. It just gives you, enormous stress, because you think, oh my goodness, we'll have to do that, when we go and see them.

[23 : 50] And so what you do, you end up not going to see them, because you can't manage, the stress of all of that. Because giving, you see, is actually, a bane to you, it's not a blessing to you. And Jesus is saying here, in verse 12, don't be like that, don't be like that, don't be mercenary, in your relationships, with others.

Now of course, he's not saying, don't ever have your family, or your friends, running to eat, don't spend time, with the people, you actually enjoy, feasting with, and all our dinner guests today, I may be very clear, we want you to come, for our meals, not because we're, considering you, waifs and strays, and the poor, and the outcasts, and so on.

No, it's plain, what Jesus is saying. He's saying, don't be dishonest, don't be dishonorable, in pretending, you're giving generously, to others, when in fact, what you're really trying to do, is just gain from others.

Inviting your rich neighbors, verse 12, do you see? Because that's actually, gain for you, isn't it? You can crow, about all the important people, that you know, the important people, you've

entertained.

You know, the sort of thing, oh, you like this painting, isn't that funny? That's the painting, Sir John really liked, when he came to our party, recently. You do know Sir John, don't you? Yes, we're going to their Christmas party, at the castle quite soon, it's always such a great affair, isn't it?

[25 : 08] Isn't it? Oh, oh, you haven't actually been, oh, I'm sorry. But you know, Christians can do that, Christian name dropping, it's just as nose-eating, isn't it?

It's amazing how some people, think it's very impressive, to constantly tell you that, oh, I talked with so and so, and last week, I was at so and so's, conference, you know, and that Christian celebrity, you do know them, do you? Oh, oh, oh no.

You know, we can do that, can't we? We can be, giving, giving, things, or information, or whatever to people, but actually, it's about gaining kudos for ourselves.

And Jesus, here is addressing this whole principle, isn't he, of using people for our own selfish ends, seeming to give, but actually, just trying to get.

And it's a very easy thing to do. You get friendly with someone, but really, you're only getting friendly with them, because you want access, to something else, or to someone else.

[26 : 08] It's a, it's a way into something, or someone that's attractive to you, and something that you want. You can get friendly with a person, thinking that you're, you're trying to be friendly with them, and that's what they think, but actually, perhaps you've got a bit of a romantic fancy, for the person that they live with.

Or it's very easy, isn't it, in a church context too, to, to offer to serve in some area. But actually, you're not really wanting to serve, you're coveting the status, the position that goes with that thing. That's very easy, isn't it, to do that. But you see, the call of, the kingdom grace of the Lord Jesus, challenges us not to self gain, but to self giving.

Like Jesus, who gave himself, genuinely, and generously, gave himself to those, who had absolutely nothing, to offer back to him. And those who truly understand, and belong to his kingdom of grace, they also will rejoice to give, freely.

Giving without, without seeking any return. Verse 13, to the crippled, to the lame, to the blind, those who have nothing to offer back. They rejoice to honor those, that God rejoices to honor.

[27 : 30] And they do it gratuitously, because they too, have been given the grace, and the honor, and the mercy of his kingdom, to show grace, to show generosity, that reflects the God, of generous grace, who is a great, and free giver, not a duplicitous getter.

You see, that kind of honor, true heavenly honor, that can't be bought, can't be bought, by any kind of earthly wealth, or power, or influence. It's something that grows, supernaturally, isn't it?

Only in the soil, of hearts, that have been truly touched, by God's grace, to become gracious, and giving themselves. And we can't fool God, can we?

Remember the story, of Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts 5? They wanted, didn't they? They wanted the honor, of being seen to be generous, like generous Barnabas, who'd sold a large property, and given all the proceeds, to the work of the kingdom.

They wanted that honor, without actually being generous, like Barnabas. They wanted the reputation, in the church of that, without the root, of the thing.

[28 : 37] The true generosity, of heart, that really marks out, the recipient, of God's grace. That gives, for the sake of generosity, for the sake of Christ, not for the potential gain, that we can get back, from our giving.

Those who have, truly understood, the kingdom of grace, having received, freely, will be those, who give freely, and give everything, for the kingdom.

And you see, that is what leads, to Jesus' second thrust, in his sermon, in verses 15 to 35, where the challenge, is to these, well apparently, very passionately, responsive people, responding to his invitation.

And to them, you see, his message, is equally clear. Yes, Jesus' kingdom honors, can't be bought, but they must, be valued. And they must, be valued, above every other, earthly gain, or influence, or every other relationship.

Because there's no such thing, as cheap grace. God's grace does cost, and it costs everything.

See, the remark, in verse 15, from one of the guests, shows that he admires, what Jesus has said, about God's, being one, who values, humility, and who values, honesty.

[29 : 54] So he's applauding Jesus. But, Jesus is saying, it's not just enough, to have admiration, for the idea, of such a kingdom. He's saying, you can do that, but you can actually, at the same time, refuse to embrace it, refuse to enter it yourself.

Because, the cost of doing that, the cost of commitment, is just too great. See, it's very possible, to admire Jesus, to admire the gospel, of Jesus, to desire, the honors of his kingdom, and yet, to miss out, because, you don't actually, value it highly enough.

And that's why, there's this parable, in verses 15 to 24, where, Jesus is saying so clearly, no, a choice must be made, do you see. A choice about, what you really do value, as best of all. And the parable, addresses what, what really lies, behind the choices, that people make, in entering, or in refusing, his kingdom. And in each case, what keeps people out, is what they value. And they value, something in their present life, more highly, than they value, the kingdom of the world, to come. So, verses 16 and 17, describe the lavish glory, that is still to come, in his kingdom.

[31 : 13] It is a great banquet. And of course, that means, it's not just food, but it's a great occasion, it's a great occasion, of celebration, of joy, of honor. It's to be a great banquet, it's to be for many.

And the guests, in the end, as verse 21 tell us, will be those, who have been very conscious, throughout their lives, of a great longing, for true fulfillment, but unrealized, in this life. But they will find joy, in great abundance, on that great, banqueting day.

But, just like in chapter 13, Jesus says, some will miss out. And here, it's not so much, because of unthinking neglect, but it is, it is conscious, rejection of the offer.

Verse 18, all alike made, excuses. Excuses. And that is because, in each case, what was offered, was not, to them, valuable enough, to be worth losing out, on some present possession, some present preoccupation, whether it's a field, or whether it's oxen, or a wife.

We might say, earthly prosperity, in the term of real estate, earthly possessions, in terms of livestock, or earthly passions, in terms of a love relationship. And there's nothing wrong, with any of these, is there?

[32 : 26] Each one of them, in fact, is a blessing from God. But the call, of Christ's kingdom, is to prioritize, his kingdom. Prioritize, his honor, above all such, earthly things.

Remember chapter 12, verse 31, is that seek first, his kingdom, and the treasures, that will never, fade or fail. And trust God, for all the needs, that you have, in this earthly life.

But so often, we won't do that, you see. And if we don't, in the end, Jesus says, it will, imperil, our entry, into the great, heavenly banquet, when Jesus returns.

And remember, he tells us frequently, that those, who are excluded, on that day, will often be very, shocked. So that last time, in chapter 13, verse 26. But they shouldn't be, because Jesus is very plain here.

He is telling us, exactly why, it happens. And it is because, their earthly horizons, are so full of what they have, and what they want now, that it eclipses, all that is truly lasting.

[33 : 37] Jesus said, back in chapter 8, didn't he, in Luke's gospel, that, that's a real danger, for many, who seem, passionately, responsive, to the gospel, but if they don't, make clear, and decisive choices, now, there is a real danger, their faith, will just fade, and fizzle.

Some hear the word, and receive it with joy, he said, in the parable, but they have no root, and in time of testing, they fall away, or they are choked, by the cares, by the riches, and by the pleasures, of life.

That's what he's saying here. And you know friends, when I think back, there are so many of those, that I knew, during my time at university, many who were in the Christian union, with me at university, that has been true.

Many of them are nowhere today, spiritually. And it's not entirely, unpredictable, because many of them, went to churches, then, where all the real focus was, on the here and now, on gifts, on blessings, on prosperity, now.

Not, not on the glory, that is everlasting, the glory that is still to come. So, friends, don't be naive, Jesus knows our hearts. He knows, what will keep us, from his kingdom, on the last day.

[34 : 57] And it will be these things, it will be properties, won't it? Often, it is, the holiday home, out in the country, that keeps people, more and more and more, away from fellowship, with the Christian church, that they belong to, at weekends.

Or often, it's possessions, isn't it? It's not just money, but it's that possession, of that place, on the professional ladder, that you so aspire to. And how often, it's these kind of ambitions, isn't it, that put more and more strain, on marriages, and on family life, and above all, on spiritual life. And it goes in, and spreads down, to the next generation, when parents so, idolize, their children's education, being in the best school, that's going to give them, the best start, to get to the best university, to get to the best job.

And all of these things, crowd out, the needs of their eternal future. And there's no time, for them to be part of church, or part of, Tron Youth, or part of, whatever group it is, that their children need, at that time.

And it's the same, with passions, isn't it? Jesus, is so down to earth, so often, is it a marriage? Perhaps, to someone, who's a great catch, humanly speaking, but turns out, to be far from a great match, spiritually speaking.

[36 : 23] These are the things, aren't they, that can anesthetize us, so easily, from the call, of the kingdom, of our Lord Jesus Christ. But friends, be very clear, Jesus is saying, that in the end, these, these are the very things, that can preclude us, from sharing in, the eternal honors, of his kingdom.

Because, if his coming kingdom, really is, truly valued by us, then, choices will have, to be made. And that can be, very hard, can't it?

Even, especially, when by God's goodness, we do, perhaps have an abundance, of things in our lives now. That's why Jesus says, how hard it is, for those who have much, to enter the kingdom of God.

But our choices now, will reveal, our true priorities, they will tell us, what we value most. So, when you take a job, or a promotion, do you think about, the spiritual implications, for you, for your family, for your children?

What will it mean, for a family, finding a real, place of fellowship, in a real church, a real sphere of service? I bet you'll think, about your salary, you'll think about, the schools, you'll think about, your pension, you'll think about, the house, but what about, those things?

[37 : 44] Or when you're thinking, about perhaps going away, and going off to university, are you thinking, about where you will, root yourself, in your spiritual life? Will there be a church, a true church, where you can serve, and grow?

So many questions, so many choices. But if you truly value, the kingdom of Jesus, and according to Jesus himself, in our life, in this world, choices must be made.

And those choices, can exclude us, he says, from that kingdom, in the end. And sometimes, those choices are very hard, they're very painful, they're very costly. But that's what Jesus, is saying in chapter, in verses 25 to 35, he's saying, that cost, however hard, must be borne.

Now notice again, how we're told, great crowds, are coming with him. They're passionately, responsive to his message. But Jesus will offer them, absolutely no cheap grace. He tells them, there's cost, there's great cost, to following him.

The owners of his kingdom, they're unmerited, they're unearned, but they are not, unconditional. In the sense of, demanding nothing of it. No, absolutely the opposite. Jesus says, my kingdom demands, everything.

[39 : 02] If honor in his kingdom, demands humbling now, so feasting in his kingdom, comes to those, who will endure much fasting. Now, look at verse 26. 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, in a literistic, and wooden way.

Jesus, Jesus, is not, a radical recruiter, of suicide bombers, and terrorists, who literally hate, and destroy loved ones.

Of course not. But he does use this language, very bluntly, so that we cannot blunt, the challenge of his call. He does mean, that we can love no one, no one, more than him.

In the parallel passage, of Matthew 10, verse 37, he puts it exactly that way. What he is saying is, to be his true disciple, means being second place, putting everything else in life, in second place.

[40 : 13] Even, he says, our own lives. To join his banquet, then these things, these people, these properties, these possessions, these passions, all, verse 33, must be renounced, he says, put firmly behind us, in second place, in our lives.

Now again, he doesn't literalistically, mean we must give away, absolutely everything we have, including giving away, our spouses, and our children, much as some people, might think that would be, a good thing at times. But he does mean, doesn't he, he does mean, that even the nearest, and dearest relationships, that we have, must be surrendered to him.

Must be surrendered, to his sovereign lordship, for his direction, for his control. And the reason, he focuses in, verse 26, on these closest relationships, is precisely because, it is in these conflicts of love, isn't it, that the costliest choices, have to be made.

Is it easy, to tell your family, that you're going to go away, and live in a far away town, or a far away country, even a far away continent, because that is where, the Lord's work for you, is going to be, and where he wants you to be.

Not easy, is it? Is it easy to go, is it easy to stay, in a ministry, in a service, that you feel, is where you'd much rather, not be, with all the privations, that you have to face, far away from, from friends, from family, from all sorts of other things.

[41 : 57] No, that's not easy either. These choices, are very, very costly. Often, often because, they're not, choices between, what is black and white, what is good and evil.

Often, it's because, we're having to choose, between things, that are good, and lovely, and beautiful, over against, things, which are the very best, of all, because of God's, call on our life. And things, whose reward, will only be known, as verse 14 says, at the last, at the great day, of resurrection. But Jesus is honest, isn't he, with his would-be followers?

There's no soft sell, with Jesus. He says, it's costly, at the start, and it's costly, all the way through, the real life, of Christian discipleship, and service, and ministry. That's why he says, in verse 28, you need to count the cost, right at the start, just as you would, with a building project.

So you don't start something, and then crash out, and end up with, egg all over your face, in enormous shame. But friends, how much more terrible, would it be, to hear these words, of verse 30, proclaimed to all, in heaven and earth, by the angels of God, on the great day of judgment, about you, and about your, would-be Christian profession?

[43 : 15] He'd never finish the course. You need to count the cost, of following me, Jesus says. But also, and this is what he says there, in verses 31 and 32, count the cost, of not following Jesus.

Count the cost, of not making your peace, with God, and bowing, to his call on your life. Don't think for a minute, you really can, get the better, of almighty God, as if you were, somehow more powerful, than he, as though, you could put yourself, against his call, on your life, and overcome him, don't be a fool.

Count the cost, of that, just like, a king, who has an army, half the size, of his opponent, has to count the cost, and make a wise decision, and submit. Far less costly, in the end, to sue for peace, now, on his terms, than, than, ultimately, to face ruin, as verse 35, puts it, thrown away, cast away, forever, exactly the same words, as Jesus used, in chapter 13, verse 28, about being cast out, of the kingdom of God.

See what he's saying, it's so clear, isn't it, just as, as salt, that has no taste, of saltiness, none of the, the properties of salt, it's no use for anything, no point even calling it, salt anymore, well, so it is, with the disciple, who doesn't follow Jesus, his way, putting all things, as less valuable, than his kingdom, and gladly bearing his cross, gladly following in Jesus' road, well, if he won't do any, of these things, you can't even call him, a disciple, can you?

He's not a nominal Christian, he's not a backslidden Christian, he's not a sort of Christian, he's not a Christian, he's not a Christian at all, three times, Jesus says it so plainly, he cannot be my disciple, and that means, well, verse 24, he shall not taste, of my banquet, the only possible outcome, is for him to be cast away, no use even on the manure pile, in the coming kingdom, do you get the message friends, it's a, it's a solemn message, isn't it, for all of us, but how can we not get the message, loud and clear here, the honors, of the kingdom, of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be bought, not by anything we have, not by any gain, not by any influence, in this world, they come by grace, but these kingdom honors, they must be valued, valued above, every earthly love, valued above life itself, there is a price to be paid, for fruitfulness, for faithfulness, in spiritual life, and the cost is the same, you see, whether you're great or small, whether you're rich or poor, whether you're gifted, marvellously, whether you're just plain old Joe, whether you're in the pew, whether you're in the pulpit, wherever you are, there is a cost, and it's the same cost, for everyone, look at verse 33, it costs everything, any one of you, who does not renounce, everything, can't be my disciples, and so Jesus says to us, all this morning, hear his ears, let him hear, he's saying to us,

