

Defining Relationships: 2. Material relationships and the Kingdom of Heaven

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to God's Word and to Matthew 19. And we were looking at the first half of this chapter last week, and we're going to be focusing on the second half this morning.

But again, we'll read the whole chapter. So Matthew chapter 19, and we'll read from verse 1. Matthew 19.

Now, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? Jesus answers, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to him, Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?

[1 : 29] He said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

The disciples said to him, If such is the case of a man with his wife, is it better not to marry? But he said to them, Not everyone can receive the saying, but only those to whom it is given.

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Let the one who is able to receive this receive it. Then children were brought to him, that he might lay his hands on them and pray.

The disciples rebuked the people. But Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and went away.

[2 : 41] And behold, a man came up to him saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And he said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good?

There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. And he said to Jesus, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The young man said to him, All these I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Come, follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

[4 : 01] When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said, With man, this is impossible.

But with God, all things are possible. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left house or brother, sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

But many who are first will be last and the last first. Amen. May God bless to us his word this morning.

And do turn with me, if you would, to Matthew's gospel in chapter 19. As Paul said, we're focusing particularly on the section beginning at verse 13.

[5 : 23] But we're asking the question that is being asked all through this chapter, what really is the defining relationship in your life.

That's a question that Jesus is asking his followers, a question that Matthew is posing to us, his readers, very graphically, in fact, as he shows us Jesus journeying on the road to Jerusalem and teaching his disciples as he does so, what it means to follow him.

And Jesus is on the final journey that will lead him to the new world that he talks about there in verse 28. That is the glory of his heavenly kingdom.

And that is a journey that means for him rejection by this world, scorn from this world, loss and suffering, ultimately death in this world.

But that is the only road to that final glory. And he said that several times already to his followers as we've seen.

[6 : 27] And he has been just as plain about that path for everyone who would follow him on the road to glory, to the new world of his kingdom.

Whoever would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Read that back in chapter 16, verse 24. That's the way, says Jesus, and that's the only way to the new world. So would-be followers of Jesus must decide which way is going to be theirs.

There can't be any dual citizenship. Only one world can really define your citizenship. Only one world can command your true allegiance.

So which relationship will really dictate the terms of your life? Your relationship with this passing world or your relationship with the new world?

[7 : 35] With the everlasting kingdom of life where Jesus Christ alone is king and lord? Do all the relationships that you have with the powerful forces of this world, do they really bow down to Jesus or does Jesus actually have to bow down to them and to their mastery of your life?

That's what he's asking. In other words, is your life really a life of true worship? Is it serving the living God alone as lord?

Or, it might outwardly be very Christian, very spiritual looking, is it actually idolatry? Is it loving and serving falsehoods?

Is it just serving and satisfying yourself? It's very stark, isn't it, to put it that way, but Jesus doesn't play trivial pursuit. Jesus cuts right to the chase because the stakes are so high.

He's dealing with issues of eternity. And we saw last time just how Jesus puts his spotlight on us to expose us, to expose which world actually we really do belong to by examining the relationships that we have and the attitudes that we have to God's creation and to his gift indeed of marriage.

[8 : 54] We saw that in verses 1 to 12. And it's no accident that three subjects are put together. Do you see in this chapter grouped together our relationships with marriage and sex, our relationships with children, and our relationships with our material wealth and power?

Because these are very powerful relationships, aren't they? And they can become very powerful and controlling gods in our lives that demand our allegiance so that our attitudes to these good gifts of God, they can easily become perverse attitudes that actually lead us away from God as our Savior and Lord and into a self-serving relationship just with these things.

And we think that we can use these things to give us what we really need in life, what we want in life. And we saw it, didn't we? Jesus exposed the Pharisees who had deceived others with their cloak of religious zeal and who had deceived themselves.

But Jesus said, no, you can't deceive God. See, the basic attitude of the man of this world, whether they're religious or indeed whether they're irreligious, the basic attitude is this, it's, I love me and I want to satisfy myself, I want to fulfill myself, I want to save myself by my experience of human marriage and sexual fulfillment or by my relationships and satisfaction with material wealth and power or whatever else it might be that we think we'll find salvation in.

Here's the thing, you see, Jesus says you can make these things look very spiritual, very religious, very concerned with morality, very concerned with God's laws, but in fact here just domesticating God's law.

[10 : 47] You're saying, oh yes, I'll do my part, I'll give God his share, all that God commands, but the rest, well, that's for me, that's mine. And you see, that's an attitude that limits God's lordship.

It tries to make God's law into our servant where we're the master really and we make these things buy down to serve us. And that is this world's real heart.

That's the spirituality of the human heart with man in control, with autonomy, me in control. But Jesus says if you really worship God and his word, and his word really is your master, because he is your master, and because you love him, because you really cherish your relationship with him, with God, then you gladly bow the knee to him, and you surrender willingly your autonomy to him.

You give it all to his authority, because you love him, because you trust him. In fact, you rejoice to be under God's gracious authority, because you know that it's in his service that perfect freedom is to be found, because you know that his yoke is easy, that his burden is light.

And you see, the evidence of that real worship isn't just in the command-keeping itself, not just in the outward act of obedience, but it's in the motivation of that obedience, because it's a love response to God himself.

[12 : 30] And if the real defining relationship in your life is the relationship with the living God in Jesus Christ, then you will have gladly surrendered all other relationships to him.

You'll have listened to him, you'll have come to him, you'll have given yourself to him, and you will be following in his way. So that all other relationships in this world and your attitudes to them and your valuation of their importance will all be defined by the overarching importance of your love for Jesus Christ and your valuation of the priceless pearl that you find already in his heavenly kingdom alone.

So we need to keep asking ourselves, is our attitude really the attitude of the new world or is it still just the attitude of this present world?

And once again, Jesus exposes the truth about our real attitudes by putting his finger on the issues at the very heart of all of our powerful, competing relationships within this world.

And in verses 16 to 30, if you look there, you'll see that he's addressing not marital relationships now, but the issue of material relationships and the kingdom of heaven. And it proves just as uncomfortable as the previous encounter that we saw with the Pharisees in verses 1 to 12.

[13 : 53] But this time, though, it's a question and answer series with a man, verse 16, who comes not to trap Jesus, but to ask a plain and a very vital question.

What good deed must I do to have eternal life? There's no suggestion of insincerity or hypocrisy. He's not testing Jesus. He really wants the truth from Jesus. Verse 20 tells us that he was a young man.

In Luke's gospel, chapter 18, we're told he's a ruler. We're told that he was extremely rich. That's why we call him the rich young ruler. And we need to be fair to him because he's serious about his question.

I expect most rich young men today, rich young heirs, are much more likely to be sunning themselves on their super yacht somewhere or perhaps trying to ride a rocket into space.

That's what billionaires seem to be up to these days, isn't it? Most of them are not really noted for their interest in theology, but this rich young man was. He's asking serious questions. He's searching for the truth.

[14 : 58] He wants to know and to experience this life that is eternal. And he wants the assurance now that he truly can have this life of God himself.

He is wanting assurance of salvation. That's what he longed for. Or at least so he thought. Because we discover that the truth is, is what he really longed for wasn't actually that at all.

what he was really seeking wasn't actually a real relationship with the one true and living God, but rather with a God of his own imagination.

And he was about to discover, meeting Jesus, that although he was earnest, he was in fact really quite self-deceived. He was deceived, in fact, by his own spirituality, his own religion.

Like so many people actually who even today think that they're seeking God, think that they want God in their life. Well, when this man actually encountered the real Jesus Christ, and therefore the real God of Scripture, well, he was exposed, wasn't he?

[16 : 13] Completely. Exposed as having another love altogether, another relationship, which was the one that really defined him.

And that so defined him, and owned him, and controlled him, that it actually made no real relationship with Jesus Christ possible at all. The encounter here, look, it revolves around the man's three questions, and Jesus' penetrating answers.

Let's look at the first questions there in verse 16, and it opens a conversation, and it gives us the first clue that this man's life is not really defined by a real relationship with God at all.

what good deed must I do to have eternal life? You see, the subject of the question is himself. What must I do so I can have life?

And the focus here is on religion, isn't it? It's on doing, rather than on a relationship. It's about what he does rather than what he actually is, and on the thing that he wants to get, that is life, rather than on whose life it actually is that this eternal life is all about.

[17 : 32] All the focus is on the commands, isn't it? But not on the commander. It's all about what must be done rather than for whom these things are to be done, and why they're to be done.

You see, how Jesus picks up on that in verse 17, and he turns the focus, doesn't he, from the commands to the commander. Why do you ask what is good? There's only one who is good, he says.

See, he turns the focus onto God himself, right away from religion, but onto real relationship straight away. And he says to him, if you'd enter life, well, keep the commands of this one who is good, just because they are the good commands of the God who is good, good.

Do you see? That's been the purpose of God's command all along, hasn't it? Right from the very beginning. God's commands reveal him, they reveal his nature, they reveal his character, they reveal his goodness.

God's commands show him to us in order to draw us to him, to desire him, to love him, to trust and obey him, in response to his revelation of his goodness and grace to us in his word.

[18 : 51] It's to totally misunderstand the whole of the Old Testament revelation, unless we see that, unless we see the real purpose of God's law, his commands. Jesus isn't turning this man or anybody else away from God's holy law, he's not turning him away from obedience to God as the way of life, as though faith was the opposite of keeping God's commands, no.

It's quite obviously the reverse, isn't it? He's telling him that real obedience to God has always been from the very start a matter of heart, faith, and trust in God, the giver, a matter of glad surrender in response to God's wonderful grace, and of hearts who love him because he has revealed himself as the God who first loved us.

Joyful obedience to God has always been the mark of true faith, it's always been the mark of true knowledge of God, true relationship with God. Remember way back to Exodus chapter 20 in the Ten Commandments at Sinai, what does God say first?

I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. I'm your savior, I'm your redeemer already. Therefore, you, my people, shall have no other gods before me.

You shall have no idols, you shall not profane my name. He's saying, I'm your God and savior, your liberator. Therefore, I'm your Lord and your ruler.

[20 : 28] You must live in obedience to faith to me and not to anybody else, no other god. Same in Deuteronomy chapter 6, the great command, hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one, and you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, and these words that I command you today shall be on your hearts to teach your children, to obey them, to surround your lives at home with your going out and your coming in and so on, in all of your life, always.

Do you see? I'm your Lord and savior. That's what defines you. So love and obey my words because you love and obey me. Same in Leviticus chapter 19, chapter full of commands including that great command that's mentioned here, love your neighbor as yourself.

That chapter begins, you my people will be holy because I'm holy. And it ends after all the commands that he gives with, I am the Lord who redeemed you out of Egypt.

And so you shall obey my statutes and rules. I'm the Lord. And Jesus, you see, is saying to this man here, yes, so it is. That's real living faith and it still is.

You submit to God's authority and joyful obedience because he is your Savior God. Live like that, live under his lordship and you have life already.

[21 : 58] And you'll go on having it eternally because it's his life, the life of the living God. But you see, the second question the man has in verse 18 exposes him, doesn't it, as never having really grasped this, not at all.

Never having grasped that real obedience is a matter of the heart. That it's a response of trusting abandon to God's supreme lordship, a response of faith.

So he asks, well, which commandments, which are the ones that will put the key of life that I want into my hands? Which are the ones that will get me those results that I want?

That's what he's asking. And that's the giveaway. It's the thinking of man. It's the thinking of the religion of this world. And the Pharisees, you see, of Jesus' day, they had turned God's liberating law into mere legalism and bondage.

And this man wants to justify himself. He wants to use God's law, not as a supreme rule to submit to gladly in all things, his savior, but rather just to bolster his own autonomy, his own sense of self-righteousness.

[23 : 14] What he means is, how can I limit what God asks of me so that I can conquer his commands at last and get what I want, justify myself to my own satisfaction, get that self-assurance that I'm after?

That's just a typical response, isn't it, of autonomous human nature. of hearts that are just determined to be in control of ourselves and our own destiny. It's another famous example, just the same, isn't there, in Luke chapter 10 with the man who comes to Jesus and says, well, who is my neighbor?

And Jesus tells him the story of the good Samaritan to show him that what he really wanted to know was who is not my neighbor, and I don't have to bother with. Jesus says, your whole thinking is utterly skewed. Well, Jesus replies here in verses 18 and 19, quoting to the man the fifth to the ninth commandments of the Decalogue.

And he adds in Leviticus 19 verse 18, love your neighbor as yourself. Why does he choose these ones here? Later on in chapter 22 verse 37, Jesus summarizes the law rather differently when somebody asks him.

He says, well, it's love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul and your mind. That's the first and the greatest commandment, and the second is love your neighbor as yourself. So why is it different here? Why doesn't he mention, for example, the first four commandments all about loving and honoring God himself before you get to this one about others?

[24 : 45] Well, I think it's probably because, well, it's quite easy, isn't it, to say, yes, I love God with all my heart. But it's much harder, isn't it, to show that that's really true by loving my neighbor truly as myself and by devoting my whole life willingly to living in every part a life that really honors God in every single relationship that I have in life, with my parents, in marriage, in business, and in society, and so on, as these very commands that call for.

Isn't that right? Of course, Jesus is looking for us to love God and to have faith and trust in him above all other things. But he's looking for real faith and love, not spurious faith, not just lip service, not a faith that just says, oh, Lord, Lord, as he says in chapter 7, but faith that is actually visible and tangible, faith that does the will of my Father in heaven.

And see, this man's very superficial understanding of God is exposed by his response. All these I've kept, he says. Not even a hint of self-doubt, is there?

But can anyone think that they could ever have exhausted the command to love your neighbor as yourself? Can you exhaust that command? Well, only with a continuous attitude that surrenders everything in this life constantly to a primary defining relationship with God himself, the God of love, the God of grace, the God of mercy, so that his grace and mercy and love will be continually flowing through you to others in a way that could never say, oh, I've done that bit now, that bit of the commandment, time to move on to the next one and tick that off of my list.

You see, that's totally foreign, isn't it, to the attitude that this man exhibits. that attitude of continuous showing of the grace and mercy and love of God through his life to others, that's exactly the thing he didn't have.

[27 : 09] That was his great lack. And you see, Jesus exposes him in his answer to his third question. What then do I still lack? And he hits him right in the solar plexus there in verse 21 with the tenth commandment, the one that he'd left out until now.

You shall not covet. Because that's the force of his words, isn't it? Go and sell what you possess. And immediately, the real truth is exposed.

Because his heart is full of that idolatry. That's what covetousness is, isn't it? The apostle Paul tells us that in Colossians chapter three. The truth is that this man is worshiping his possessions.

And they are his real God, his real savior. They are his true satisfier. They are his idol. Verse 22, he had great possessions.

But you see, what Jesus shows is that the truth is that they are possessing him. And he is defined by his material possessions in this world and not by a real and living relationship with the Lord of heaven.

[28 : 29] And Jesus exposes that. Sell it all and give it to the poor. And suddenly it's clear. All his law keeping actually was for himself.

Seeking his own reward. It wasn't for God. It wasn't for God's pleasure. And his idea of eternal life was simply perpetuating his own comfortable autonomous self-serving life forever and ever.

Which I think sadly is what many professing Christians idea of eternal life is still. true eternal life. But true eternal life.

Real new world kingdom life is all about sharing God's life. Which means losing our life to him.

It's a life of repentance. It's a life of putting this world behind me and having the cross of Jesus before me always. Jesus command to him follow me as he invites this man to the only true law keeping that there is which is submission and obedience to the son of God just because he is God and just because we love and we cherish him.

[29 : 45] And that means total surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord of all as the commander of our life. Indeed the obedience that does lead to eternal life can come only from Jesus.

Only by his gracious enabling and his gift. He says in verse 26 it's impossible with man on his own like trying to fit a huge camel through the eye of a needle.

It is not possible. But it's not impossible with God through Jesus Christ. Come to me as Jesus elsewhere.

Because my yoke is easy my burden is light. So verse 21 he says follow me. Listen to me. Obey my words and you will be perfect.

You'll be complete. You'll be all that I want you to be. But you see that means for this man as for everyone a complete renunciation of this world's controlling relationships.

[30 : 52] And that is very hard. Look at verses 23 to 26 which go on to expound verse 22 really. Jesus is telling us about the terrifying power of material relationships in this world.

The power of riches. We shouldn't think it's just monetary wealth he's speaking about but all privilege, all power, all possessions, all status.

there's so many relationships aren't there which are deep in our hearts and which so easily we actually treat as the saviors in our lives and the masters of our lives.

They really do become the lord and master. It's not necessarily greed as such but it's all the things that we look to to satisfy us, to bring us peace, to bring us safety, to bring us satisfaction.

And that's worth pondering isn't it especially in the wake of a pandemic. And it's natural that we do seek these things, peace, safety and so on. But the question is where do we really seek them?

[32 : 03] Isn't it true that all too often like this privileged man we also are seeking them in, well, in the material relationships in this world?

Remember Jesus says whoever would save his life by this world's relationships will lose it, will lose eternal life.

Because all of these things, you see, are idols, they're false gods. They only deceive us. We can think they satisfy us, we can think they'll make us complete, but in reality, here's the truth Jesus is teaching, the only power they have, and they do have power, is a power to keep us out of the kingdom of God.

Verse 23, Jesus says it's so hard. Indeed, verse 24, it is impossible for such idolatrous hearts, hearts that are in love with this world, impossible to enter the kingdom of God, just as a camel cannot fit through a needle.

And verse 22 is clear, isn't it? This man's defining relationship was with earthly things. And that defining relationship with his possessions owned him and possessed his soul and led him away.

[33 : 26] Look at verse 22. led him away from the Son of God and the kingdom of God. Could be many things, of course, besides material comforts, but we shouldn't be too quick, should we, to forget the very real danger of being ruled by our possessions.

One scholar says this, that Jesus did not command all his followers to sell all their possessions gives comfort only, only to the kind of people to whom he would issue exactly that command.

It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, someone of wealth, someone of privilege, of intellect, a professional high flyer, an achiever, a person of power, a person of influence.

Easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for that person to enter the kingdom of God. Indeed, it is impossible unless God should act and intervene to make it possible.

God must lay his hand upon you, Jesus says. But he does, and he will, if you will make a relationship with him the defining relationship of your life.

[34 : 59] If you will listen to him, if you will come to him, if you will follow him, whoever you are. And you see, it's a wonderful example of exactly that, that we see right in the middle of this chapter here, in this little interlude, verses 13 to 15, where we see parents resolutely bringing their little ones to Jesus.

No accident that it follows immediately on Jesus' words about marriage because the attitude that dominates your marriage will also likely dominate your desire for your children.

And it's no accident that it's sandwiched between this discussion of marital relationships and material relationships and the potential to idolize them because, and this is certainly true in our own day, the desire we have for children and our thinking about children can be powerfully idolatrous.

And Jesus knows that. Of course, it's right that we have powerful feelings and desires for our children, but there is also a very great temptation, isn't there, for those desires to be this worldly and for our desires and our priorities for their lives as children to just reflect our own worldly desires and our own hearts.

So here's a wonderful example right in the middle of this chapter about defining relationships, a wonderful example of true priorities for our children. To make their relationship with Jesus the defining relationship of their lives right from the very start.

[36 : 40] Despite opposition, despite a humiliation from the world and indeed from the worldly church, the disciples here, verse 13, they rebuked them.

Literally, it says they rebuked them. They rebuked the children as well as their parents for coming to Jesus. But no, whoever comes to Jesus or is brought to Jesus out of faith and devotion, wanting him to be the defining relationship in their life and in the life of their family, like here with these little infants who still don't have any understanding yet of their own.

When that is the case, he will bless because he loves to bless that attitude. This isn't just an illustration of those that Jesus blesses, though it is a great illustration, it's a great example and contrast, isn't it, to all the rest of the chapter.

But we're told here that Jesus actually laid his hands on these very little ones, verse 15. He blessed them and he says, yes, to such belong the kingdom of God.

He received these very children, just as he receives all who come to him or who are brought to him, whoever they are, however unlikely it may seem that he should receive them.

[38 : 02] He received the sick who came to him, as we saw back in verse 2 at the beginning of the chapter, they were healed. The disciples, here in verse 27, says, we have followed him, yes, and he rewarded them.

The blind in chapter 20 who come to him, chapter 21, the blind and the lame and the children who come to him and say, Hosanna, save us, son of David. He receives all who come to him and are brought to him.

So don't miss the wonderful encouragement that there is here for Christian parents who bring their children to him and commit them to him in faith and in real trust right from the very outside of their lives, making Jesus the defining relationship in their life.

Don't miss the encouragement if you're a parent. Whatever the hostility of the world, whatever the hostility of the world, the church even, to make a defining relationship with Jesus the most important thing in their life.

The Lord Jesus will not allow that kind of attitude and desire to be hindered or prevented. So you can take great courage in that. not only as you bring your little ones to him right at the outset and bring them publicly as we do in the church in baptism and entrust them to him, but as you trust him for their lives from the very beginning and nurture them in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[39 : 28] And as you bring them up, as you make your decisions for them, as you set priorities for them in their lives as it unfolds throughout your years of their stewardship. Make Jesus the defining relationship in their lives right from the very start.

It's a great, great encouragement. It's also a challenge, isn't it? A great responsibility. Because that does mean a real and a total surrender of our children's lives to Jesus.

Jesus isn't offering a cheap insurance policy here. We're not to live as though this world's gain was really what mattered for our children, as though we just wanted them to have the best of both worlds.

We want to have all the success, all the glory of this world like everybody else, but at the end, a safety net, an insurance policy that will get them to heaven. You know, that's sadly how far too many Christians today can think about their children.

That's actually just to be like the rich man here in chapter 19, isn't it? That's to totally misunderstand Jesus' meaning. To surrender our children to Jesus, just as we surrender ourselves to Jesus.

[40 : 50] That means to surrender them also to the road of the cross with Jesus at odds with this world. Teaching them the way of losing their life in this world for the gain of the true life that's in Christ, and that's hard.

That means that we as parents might have to surrender many things for them on their behalf. Turning our backs for them on many worldly relationships.

Teaching them what it really means for Jesus and for his kingdom to be the defining relationship in their life and in our life. more important than many of the competing relationships all around them that have a powerful pull on youngsters and that can pull them so easily away from Jesus.

Might be sporting relationships. Might be certain social relationships. Might be certain material things. Certain entertainments. Might be education, which is a huge idol for many parents.

who just teach that idolatry and inculcate it in their children. But friends, it's true discipleship, not a sort of foot-in-both-camps Christianity that Jesus blesses, that Jesus lays his hands on for us, but also for our children.

[42 : 15] He calls us, and he calls our children with us, to walk on the road to the cross. Not to using Jesus as a lucky charm, not treating him as an insurance policy to keep us out of hell.

Well, we need to leave nothing in the meantime of this charmed earthly life. No. That's this world's thinking, you see, isn't it? That's not kingdom thinking. And we mustn't deceive ourselves.

God is not mocked, says the apostle Paul to the Galatians. Whatever one sows, also you will reap. And if what we sow in our family's lives as parents is just worldly lives with a veneer of respectable Christianity, don't expect your children when they grow up even to retain that outward veneer anymore.

Don't be fooled. But, Jesus says, you don't have to fear for yourselves or for your children if you make Jesus the truly defining relationship of your life and your family's life in this world.

You'll never be a loser if that is what you do, even though this whole world will tell you very often that you are. And even though, parents, sometimes your children will try to tell you that you are.

[43 : 36] You'll be truly free. Free from that slavery to yourself. Free from slavery to the useless idols of this world.

And liberated for the glory of the everlasting kingdom of God. Now, that's the great irony of this chapter. That's a great twist in this last verse, verse 30.

Look at it. You see, what this world can't see, but what we must see. We can invest so much in this world's relationships. We can think that they repay us so much that they serve us.

But, the reality is that we are just serving them. And yet, they're utterly impotent to deliver any sort of lasting satisfaction. We seek what the world offers.

We seek autonomy. We seek satisfaction. We seek security. We strive to be first. But, in the end, Jesus says, you will lose everything if that is your focus in life.

[44 : 37] Even the first, in this world's eyes, will be last, he says. Cling to the relationships of this world, be defined by all the relationships there in verse 29.

Property, family, power over lands, and so on. And it leads ultimately to nothing. Total loss. The first shall be last.

But, by contrast, surrender all these things to Jesus. Be content to be last in the world's eyes. And that, he says, is to receive in abundance.

To give up for him the most precious relationships that this world affords. All the things there in verse 29. That, in fact, is to receive, says Jesus, a hundredfold.

Even now, in this life, from Jesus. It's to know abundant richness of fulfillment that is totally unknown to this world's thinking.

[45 : 42] And, look, eternal life. Real life. Life in abundance. Life in abundance. For the last, in this world's eyes, Jesus says, will be first.

Seeking first, you see, the relationships of this world, in reality, is all about deceiving and being deceived by this world. Seeking first the relationships of the kingdom of heaven is about receiving and being received by the new world.

By the king of glory, Jesus himself, who is Lord of all. So, friends, take heart. Listen to Jesus. Come to Jesus.

Bring your family to Jesus. Jesus. And follow Jesus together, always. You'll never be a loser with Jesus Christ.

Not in this world. And certainly not in the new world. Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

[47 : 12] But many who are first will be last. And the last first. Amen.

Let's pray together. O God, who has prepared for them that love thee such good things as past man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward thee that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises which exceed all that we can desire.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.