

Service and the Coming Kingdom

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our reading, and Josh is picking up his series in Luke's Gospel.! So please turn to Luke. If you don't have a Bible with you, we have plenty of Vista Bibles at the side or the back.

Please do grab a Bible. And Luke chapter 18, page 877. So Luke 18, and we're picking up at verse 15.

So Luke 18, verse 15. Now they were bringing even infants to Jesus, that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

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

[1 : 17] 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, follow me. But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. For 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.

Those who heard it said, Then who can be saved? But he said, What is impossible with men is possible with God.

[2 : 24] And 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, See, we are going up 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.

This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what he 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 going by. And he cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

[3 : 39] But he cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped. And 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 made you well. 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 up into a sycamore tree, and to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and he said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

[4 : 46] So he hurried and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. He's gone on to be the guest of a man who's a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, 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 miners, and said to them, Engage in business until I come.

[5 : 53] 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 had 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 miner has made ten miners 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 miner has made five miners. And he said to him, And you are to be over five cities.

Then another came, saying, Lord, here is your miner, 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 reap what you did not sow.

He said to him, I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant. You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit, or reaping what I did not sow.

[7 : 03] Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming, I might collect it with interest? And he said to those who stood by, Take the miner from him, and give it to the one who has ten miners.

And they said to him, Lord, he has ten miners. 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 these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here, and slaughter them before me. Amen.

Amen. And may God bless his word to us. Amen. We'll do have Luke's gospel open once again, to chapter 18, and follow along.

What takes place when someone comes to Jesus, what takes place as faith is birthed within someone, is nothing short of a total transfer of identity and purpose.

[8 : 14] Yes, Jesus is returning to judge the world. And yes, it matters a great deal that where we will be on the day of great separation.

Will we be cut off, separated completely and forever from God and his glorious and gracious kingdom? Or will we be gathered to him? But salvation, but salvation, Jesus' coming kingdom, isn't just about deliverance, about redemption, about avoiding this terrible separation.

Jesus' coming kingdom is also about deployment, repurposing, here and now, for service. A service that begins in this age and will continue even more fruitfully into eternity.

Salvation in God's kingdom isn't just rescue from grim separation, but it is also rescue to gratifying service. Paul describes the momentousness of belonging to Jesus by saying, God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

And that reality begins now. And with it comes a total transfer of identity and purpose. So that what matters to us changes, not just a little tweak here or there, so that what drives us changes fundamentally, so that our very purpose as people is unhitched from this world and now hitched to the priorities of Jesus' kingdom.

[9 : 58] We saw last time that this section of Luke's gospel from 1711 through to 1927 revolves around the coming of God's kingdom. 1720, the question is asked, when will it come?

When will it come? 1911, some seem to think that the kingdom of God would appear immediately, imminently. And we saw at the last time that Jesus said the kingdom will come in flash of lightning. He cautions his followers to be prepared for it. It will be apparent to all when it arrives. It will come abruptly. It will bring alienation to those who are unprepared for it.

And so last time, Jesus was speaking very clearly about the coming of his kingdom and the great separation that will be present on that day. But in the second half of this section, we see the emphasis now turns from separation to service.

That's something that flows all through the verses that we've read this morning. We're going to spend a couple of weeks on these verses, focusing this morning on verses 15 to 34 of chapter 18, and then the rest next week.

[11:12] And notice, the rich ruler is beckoned to treasure heaven. And verse 22, called to follow Jesus, to walk Jesus' path after him.

And notice, the disciples make clear that they have, verse 28, left their homes to follow Jesus on his path. This is done why?

Verse 29, for the sake of the kingdom. Well, what is Jesus' path? Verse 32, his is to be delivered over, to be mocked, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogged, and killed before being raised, all for the sake of those who belong to his kingdom.

That's the path of Jesus' kingdom, here and now, in this world, being given over and given up in service of others. As for Jesus, so for his followers.

And notice, the blind man, verse 43, on being rescued by Jesus, he follows him, glorifying God.

[12:24] Or Zacchaeus, when touched by Jesus' hand, receiving salvation, he, 19, verse 8, turns his wealth over to the service of others.

The parable of the ten minas, all about serving the king. And listen to Jesus. 19, 17, to those who have given themselves to serve the kingdom here and now, Jesus says, well done, good servant. Because you've been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities. 19, 17, but, he says to those who begrudge a life of serving Jesus, who take what he's offered and given and sit on it and do nothing with it, who waste it, who turn his grace upside down, well, he says, 1922, I'll condemn you with your own words.

1926, even what you have will be taken away from you. And so, all throughout this section, Jesus wants us to see very clearly that the priorities of the coming kingdom are priorities now.

And the life that will be enjoyed gloriously and forever in Jesus' eternal kingdom is a life that begins now. It is a life marked by service, which in this age, yes, is tinged with suffering and hardship.

[13:52] It's a life that begins with serving in this age, but is also marked by greater service to come, glorious service to come, a service that's free from any and all frustration.

And so, throughout this section, Jesus wants to be clear about who can enter his kingdom and enter his service. And he wants to be clear about how to enter his kingdom.

And finally, he wants to make clear when entry to his kingdom happens and what it looks like. And so, with the rest of our time this morning, we're going to see what Jesus says about who can enter his kingdom and enter his service.

Entry to Jesus' kingdom is open to any and all who will humbly depend on Jesus alone. Verses 15 to 17, chapter 18. Entry into Jesus' kingdom is open to any and all who will humbly depend on Jesus alone.

Jesus' kingdom is not closed up, shut off to those who are the very lowest in this world. Jesus' kingdom is not exclusive in the sense that one has to be of a certain social standing or from the right family or with the right wealth and credentials or status.

[15:06] Jesus' kingdom. No, no. Any and all who will come to Jesus aware of their need, coming to receive from him, will taste of his glorious kingdom.

Look at verse 15 and notice there is a beautiful assumption in here. People are flocking to Jesus to see him, to meet him, to receive his touch upon their lives.

And notice that little phrase in there? Even infants were being brought to him. Now, we live in a very different world today than from Jesus' day, particularly so when it comes to thinking about children, we coo over them, we're prone to over-sentimentalize them.

In fact, very often today, children can be idolized. They can be damagingly put at the center of everything so that children dictate family life. They dictate their own education. All manner of things like this.

And that is a world away from the first century understanding of children, where they were at the bottom of the pile in terms of importance and standing. Back then, children were noobies, totally insignificant.

[16:21] And so, the disciples here have a sense of indignation about all these infants being brought to Jesus. But do you see the beautiful assumption? Jesus is one who's known to have time, to have compassion, to have interest in the little people.

Word had spread. Jesus' nature, his character was known so that even infants are brought to him. Verse 15 has no indication here of the children being invited to Jesus.

There's just this beautiful assumption that beautifully encapsulates Jesus. He isn't like the kings of this world, the rulers of this world who so often want to keep the little people at arm's length.

The elites in our world often have a sneering disregard for the little people, sometimes almost dismayed that little people can vote for them or not vote for them. But not so with Jesus.

This is a well-founded reputation, isn't it? He receives noobies. And as with the kings, so with his kingdom. Do you see? Jesus' tender concern for the noobies is simply the natural course of what his kingdom is like.

[17:34] And so Jesus rebukes the disciples. No, no. Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God.

It is reflective of this world, of the domain of darkness, that the important people are the only ones who are treasured. That's so true in this world that even Jesus wasn't really recognized for what he was, was he?

But not so in the kingdom of the beloved Son. No, Jesus is interested in even those that this world would have as nobodies. With Jesus, there is nobody who he deems isn't worthy of his time.

Nobody who needs to be moved along or avoided because they don't have the credentials because they don't have the credentials because there'll be an embarrassment. Not at all.

Not in his kingdom. Paul says similarly in 1 Corinthians, doesn't he? The church is actually weak looking. Its makeup is weak looking by design. He says, God choose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

[18:43] God choose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. By design. And Jesus is clear. He doesn't have a hierarchy based on standing in this world.

These aren't the things that matter to him. There aren't the significant people and the rest. And so Jesus rebukes his followers. No, don't hinder the little people.

Don't hinder the noobies. Don't keep the children away from me. And Jesus' kingdom, his church, is to reflect its Lord. Listen to the letter of James.

James says to the church, shoe new partiality. And he uses the example of a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing versus a man in shabby clothing. And he says to the church that to shoe fever to the rich man is to go against the royal law.

That's not the way it is in Jesus' kingdom. That has things to say about who and how we welcome folks, doesn't it? Into our midst. Jesus says, let the noobies come to me.

[19:52] He's not embarrassed of them. Jesus' people are to reflect him. No partiality, no favoritism to the wealthy or the powerful because it's not his character.

But what a word of grace that is for us. We live in a world that obsesses over credentials. There's constantly a jostling for position, for influence, for prestige.

But Jesus cuts through all that and says, I'm not interested. It's not what matters to me. He says, let the children come to me. Do not hinder even the infants, the little people, the noobies.

Part of the new identity that we receive in being transferred into the kingdom of the beloved son is that to Jesus we don't need to have great credentials. They're not a barrier to fellowship with him.

And so we don't need such pretense in the church, do we? Jesus isn't interested in it. His people shouldn't be either. Now, when Jesus says, verse 16, to let the little children come to him, that is truly a gracious word from Jesus to parents and their children, isn't it?

[21:03] Children are welcome in Jesus' kingdom. Not because they're great theologians, not because they've been thoroughly catechized. Why? Verse 15. They're welcome and not to be hindered when they're brought in faith by others to receive the touch of Jesus upon them.

We've already seen something similar in Luke's gospel. Back in chapter 5, there was a paralytic saved because the faith of his friends saw them act on his behalf.

His friends' faith moved them to bring him to Jesus, to lower him through the roof, and their faith brought Jesus' touch of salvation to him. That's similar with children, isn't it?

Jesus means what he's saying here. He doesn't lie, does he? He wants our children to be brought to him, to hear and receive from him. To them belongs the kingdom.

That's what Jesus says. That's what Jesus says to you, little ones. To you belongs my kingdom. We had one such little one last Sunday evening being baptized.

[22 : 11] That is bringing a child in faith to Jesus to receive his touch upon them, to receive a sign of belonging to his kingdom. And of course, as we said then, a little child can't understand all these things.

But Jesus' words stand. Let them come. Do not hinder them. And so yes, we are to take this very seriously as a church, as families.

Real investment in teaching and helping our children to grow up into church is such an important thing. That's why we have junior church. Not to pan them off, to hide them away, to get rid of them, but rather to take seriously not hindering them.

To recognize that we want them as they gather with us here as the church, we want them to receive teaching that will really let them come to Jesus. For to such belongs the kingdom.

And that extends too to them serving Jesus' kingdom, doesn't it? Of course, a little one will be limited in what they can do, but to such belongs the kingdom. And so as parents and as a church, we want to be helping our youngsters to step up in serving in appropriate ways.

[23 : 23] Not long ago, I was preaching at another church and I arrived and was greeted by a young child who was desperate to welcome me and show me around, show me his church.

Surely something that had been picked up from his parents, his church family. What a beautiful thing for such a little one to be learning to serve as a little one.

I wonder about what it might produce in a child in the long run if they're to come with their parents to clean on a Saturday over a sustained period of time to see, to participate in serving the kingdom.

What might that produce? Jesus says, to such belongs the kingdom. Now, Jesus' point here in using children is more than just that nobodies have a place in his kingdom.

Do you see verse 17? Children are a profound metaphor for faith. Jesus isn't meaning that children have some sort of unique innocence or virtue. No.

[24 : 26] It's all about posture. Jesus' point is that actually the any and all who can come to Jesus must all come in the same way.

The reason that there's no partiality, no favoritism, no important versus unimportant is because of how his kingdom is to be received. Now, being a brand new father to a newborn, I'm sure you can permit me at least one illustration in these early days.

And it's striking, so striking, that our little daughter is totally and utterly dependent on us as parents at every moment. all that she can do is cry out and cry out with gusto, but cry out is all that she has. Hungry, cry out. Needing to be comforted, cry out. Needing to be cleaned, cry out. Sat down for a minute, cry out.

She's small, weak, fragile, and totally helpless on her own, totally dependent on the love and care of another. But Jesus' point is that such a posture is the fertile ground from which faith is birthed.

[25 : 46] It is such a posture that allows us to throw ourselves completely upon the mercy of Jesus. A posture of total reliance and dependence upon another.

A posture of helplessness. that's what allows us to receive God's kingdom. I can't help myself. I need someone else to do it.

To receive grace poured out on those who are desperately needy. These short verses are very straightforward, but they do challenge us, don't they?

What place does the touch of Jesus upon our lives hold? What place does his kingdom have in our priorities? what might be hindering us from coming to Jesus?

Or perhaps if we are parents, is Jesus' touch upon our children that which is most dear to us, more dear than their academic excellence, more dear than belonging to whatever social groups, more dear than hobbies and sport and all those kinds of things.

[26 : 53] The touch of Jesus upon their lives. So there is a challenge in here, and it's a challenge picked up by Jesus in the next incident, where we see that entry to Jesus' kingdom is open to any and all whose hearts are devoted to Jesus above all else.

Verses 18 to 24, verses 18 to 27. Entry to Jesus' kingdom is open to any and all whose hearts are devoted to Jesus above all else.

And the incident of the rich ruler teaches us that God's kingdom is open to rich and poor alike as they value it above all else. Luke puts this incident of the rich ruler here to show that whilst Jesus shows no partiality owing to status, that this certainly doesn't exclude the rich.

But, but, for all people, whether rich or poor, the touch of Jesus upon your life has to be the thing of greatest value to you if you are to enter his kingdom.

And the reality is that that is often far harder for those who have lots in this world. Verse 18, along comes a ruler asking a question, a genuine question, I think.

[28 : 12] Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Sometimes people get caught up by the use of that word do, scorning this man for conceiving that a place in Jesus' kingdom might be earned?

Of course it can't. But it's still a real question, isn't it? When faced with the claims of Jesus, when confronted by his person, what will you do?

What must you do? And actually this young man isn't the first to ask such a question. John the Baptist, preaching all the way back in chapter 3, prompted the same question three times.

The crowds, in response to his preaching, what then shall we do? The tax collector is what then shall we do? The soldiers, same question. And interestingly, back in John's response, back in chapter 3, John's response isn't a million miles away from Jesus here.

John's response is to talk about money, material things. Well, look at what Jesus does say. Verse 19, slightly puzzling response at first, slightly enigmatic.

[29 : 19] Why do you call me good? God? Of course, we know Jesus isn't like a politician. He doesn't really answer the question. He doesn't provaricate and avoid a straight answer. Jesus is lining up very pointedly a challenge to this man.

Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. Jesus' response is, well, if you're going to call me good, if you come to me genuinely asking such a question, then calling me good is calling me God.

And so, will you really listen to my answer? An answer that comes with the very authority of God.

And then Jesus lists some of the law, the Ten Commandments. To be precise, he lists

Commandments 5 through 9.

They're not in order. Perhaps he leaves out Commandment 10 not to covet because this man, verse 23, was incredibly rich, extremely rich. And the ruler says, yes, I've kept all of these from my youth.

But then notice how Jesus lands this. One thing you lack. And it goes back to his initially enigmatic sounding response. There's something this ruler lacks, and it's ultimately the first commandment.

[30 : 37] When it comes to it, for this man, he's sought to live out God's law of love towards his neighbors, but not towards God himself. Do you see? Jesus says, only God is good.

By calling me good, you're calling me God. And so if that is the case, Jesus' command, his call is, come and follow me, verse 22, come and follow me. Or in the language of the first commandment, have no other gods before me.

And so that means holding your fortune very loosely, not placing it before me so loosely that you'd be prepared to give it all away, to have and keep Jesus, to follow him.

All right, we need to be clear, having riches in itself isn't wrong. Jesus is not a kind of anti-money hippie. But riches, whether financial or of other kinds in this world, cannot be on a par with God and what we value.

We like to think that that can be possible, don't we? Whether it be by thinking Jesus is sometimes perhaps hyperbolic, he doesn't really mean that he needs to be the absolute priority.

[31 : 52] Important, yes, of course, but not absolutely important. Or whether it be by wanting to have the lovely things in this world, to have the life that our colleagues and classmates have, to share with them in all the things right here and right now in this world, and then just have Jesus on top.

But Jesus has been so very clear that cannot be the case. If our treasure is ultimately in this world, then it cannot be in heaven. Back in chapter 12, that's what he said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

He's already said we cannot serve God and money. And now Jesus is saying there cannot be any God before me. ultimately, this ruler is shown to be caught up in idolatry.

When asked to hold his riches lightly, to instead hold Jesus tightly, he isn't able or willing to. And as with all who are ensnared in idolatry, look at what it prompts in this ruler, verse 23.

He became very sad, for he was extremely rich. His other God, and its tentacles deep in him.

[33 : 09] And Jesus sees that he was sad, very sad, and notice Jesus leaves him in a sadness.

We might think that Jesus is actually very insensitive here. This man's very sad.

Jesus leaves him like that. Listen to Ralph Davis on this. He says insensitivity is the unpardonable sin of our age, but Jesus makes him very sad and leaves him that way.

And yet, there were certain gifts that Jesus was offering him if only he could see. Making him sad was a gift. If, for once, he could see himself as he was, there might be hope.

So, truth was Jesus' gift. Jesus doesn't sugarcoat reality, and he will not bend or flex the realities of the kingdom.

He's the king who's coming to judge, and there is going to be a great separation, and his clarity on such things here is a kindness. It's not insensitive. Jesus is prepared to send this man away sad if only it might see this man saved in the long run.

[34 : 21] Jesus does not bend to the desires of his people. He won't shape his kingdom to fit us and what we want, but rather he will seek to reshape us for his kingdom.

And so I wonder what will you do if you have to encounter Jesus' insensitivity towards you? Well, Jesus is totally realistic, isn't he?

He's straightforward about how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter his kingdom. Far easier, he says, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Now, that's a preposterous image, isn't it? But at least that might be possible. Bear with me on this. If you're really determined and you're prepared to butcher a camel, to really mince it up and pound it down and mash it, you might just might be able to eventually get it threaded through the eye of a needle with great patience and time and wasting a lot of time.

Maybe, just maybe, you might be able to do that. But notice that preposterous image, that's easier than for a rich person to enter God's kingdom.

[35 : 38] Do you see? Because it's all the more difficult for someone who has everything in this world to see themselves as a helpless little child, crying, screeching, in desperation that they might have their helplessness answered with loving provision from someone else, someone upon whom they'll be totally dependent.

We like to think that great riches will be the answer to having independence, to having security, but no. According to Jesus, great riches can be a great snare. In fact, great riches might be the very thing that won't allow us to be prepared for his coming.

thing. They can be the thing that makes us cling to and yearn for and live for this world and all that it offers instead of living for the world to come for Jesus' glorious kingdom.

Well, what does that mean then for those who are massively wealthy in this world? Or, verse 26, as the crowd asks, who then can be saved? Is it possible that something else could so grip a heart that riches, that vast riches in this world could be let go of for something else?

Is that possible? Maybe you're asking that question. Maybe deep down you wonder the same thing. You like lots about Jesus. Maybe you've professed to be a Christian for a long time, but really there's a deep tugging at your heart by the material things of this world.

[37 : 14] Can that really be a trade that's worth it, to let go of all of that for him? Is it even something that has to be done quite so starkly? Maybe you on some level conclude that it isn't possible.

It just doesn't seem rational. Well, look, Jesus agrees. Jesus himself, as much as says, it is impossible. Verse 27, impossible.

It is possible with man. But, it is possible with God. And we'll see this in more detail next week, but do turn over to chapter 19, where we meet Zacchaeus.

19, verse 2, he wasn't just a tax collector, he was the chief tax collector, a bigwig. And notice he was rich. 19, verse 6, Zacchaeus answers Jesus' call with joy.

And what happens? 19, 8, he pours out his wealth, half of it, towards the poor, and then also from the rest, he makes restitution with interest, fourfold, for any wrongdoing.

[38 : 31] Do you see? The touch of Jesus upon our lives is capable of doing what would otherwise be impossible. The touch of Jesus upon our lives enables us to see that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

That his coming kingdom is more valuable, infinitely more valuable than this one. His touch upon our lives enables a church to give over and above their regular giving, £65,000 to support a church's ministry, to support a partner church's ministry.

The touch of Jesus upon lives can and does enable profound generosity and powerful service for his kingdom.

It actually allows people to, verse 22, hold our riches lightly, to invest our riches in those who are in dire need materially and more importantly, those who are in dire need spiritually.

And his touch again, verse 22, enables us to have treasure in heaven and to come and to follow Jesus right here, right now, in this life, to follow him in costly ways.

[39 : 49] And that's what we see in these final verses. We see that any and all who are touched by Jesus are enabled to follow him in costly service. Jesus works the impossible in the lives of his people so that they really can give up this world for the world to come.

The disciples are stirred by Jesus' words, verse 28, we've left homes and followed you. It may be Peter saying, see, it is possible, we've done it, it may be Peter being proud of what they'd done. Regardless of Peter's motive, what he says is true. The disciples had given up homes to follow Jesus, leaving everything behind. And Jesus' response to them is both reassuring, but also challenging.

So notice the reassurance, verses 28 to 30. Jesus says that when all manner of things are given up for him, houses and families and all kinds of things like that and for his kingdom, then Jesus will not leave us short.

God is no man's debtor. Verse 30, those who do follow Jesus and leave behind all manner of things to do so, they will receive, notice, many times more in this life and in the age to come eternal life.

[41 : 21] So here's the economy of Jesus' kingdom. Belonging to Jesus is free. It's something that's simply received, like an infant receiving nourishment from their mother. It's free.

But also his kingdom will cost you everything. For everything needs to be left behind, held lightly in order to receive and follow him. But then also the economy of his kingdom says that there's great benefit both now and in eternity.

God is no man's debtor. His kingdom is experienced in some measure even here and now in this world. It's experienced in being able to follow after Jesus, to find joy in serving him, to take hold of our purpose, the purpose for which we were created, service of his kingdom.

That's what we were created for all the way back in Genesis, wasn't it? Created to work the garden, to fill the earth, to subdue it, to have dominion. That's our purpose. That's where we'll be fulfilled. Work and service are not punishments that get in the way of life.

We're made to work and in work there can be great satisfaction even in this world that suffers under the curse. Where work is made frustrating, there can still be glimpses of satisfaction at a job well done, at achieving things, at producing things.

[42 : 42] And whilst that is true for work in whatever kind, it's also true, perhaps even more true, of service of God's kingdom. Perhaps more true of the ministry we do.

All the ways we do serve Jesus, seen and unseen, teaching the Bible, with all that it takes to do so, caring for people, welcoming people, enabling others to worship God.

all these are and can be tinged with disappointments of ministering in a world under the rule of Satan. But also, they can give us glimpses of deep joy and satisfaction at seeing people brought into the joy of Jesus' presence right here in this world.

I wonder if you can remember a time when you had nothing to get out of bed for. When that is all that is ahead of you, it is deeply dissatisfying, isn't it?

Purpose is good for us. And we have that in spades when we belong to Jesus' kingdom. For we gain brothers and sisters and houses and all manner of things in the church that are opportunities to serve Jesus' purposes for His kingdom.

[43 : 53] In the church, we get to experience a shadow of life in His glorious kingdom through serving alongside brothers and sisters and sharing in their homes. But also, when we follow Jesus and treasure the kingdom of the beloved Son over the domain of darkness, we really will receive His eternal kingdom in all of its fullness.

That's the reassurance. Many times more now and eternal life. Jesus reassures his followers that God is no man's debtor.

But then notice the challenge in verses 31 to 34. Following Jesus is very truly walking His path after Him. Jesus makes very plain the route that He is to take and so the route that all His true followers must follow on.

Verse 31, Jesus explains to the disciples that it isn't just Jesus who's going to Jerusalem. And remember, this journey to Jerusalem is not simply geographical.

The journey to Jerusalem is the journey to and through Jerusalem and to and through the cross to be taken up in glory. And notice what Jesus says, we are going up to Jerusalem so that everything might be fulfilled and accomplished.

[45 : 12] what is Jesus' path? What is our path if we follow Him? It is verse 32, to be delivered over, to be mocked, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogged and killed before rising.

All for the sake of those who would belong to Jesus. That's the path of Jesus' kingdom, here and now in this world, being given over and given up in service of others. And the challenge here for the 12 was that they don't quite compute this, do they?

Verse 34. They don't quite get it. So yes, they have followed Jesus, they've left things behind, but they don't quite grasp it all yet. And what they haven't grasped fully was a very grave prospect.

But that is the challenge that Jesus lays down for those who would follow Him, for those who would enter His kingdom. The path for us is Jesus' path. It is to recognize our helplessness.

It's to hold this world lightly. It's to hold riches lightly. And instead, to be given in costly service to Jesus. And but for a supernatural work of God, that is more difficult than a camel going through the eye of a needle.

[46 : 30] Impossible, says Jesus, for man. entry into Jesus' kingdom, entry into His joyful service, is impossible with man.

But, through Jesus' touch, it's very possible indeed. You see, Jesus is the one who can turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

He's the one who can work a total transfer of identity and purpose within us. He can transfer us truly and really from the domain of darkness with all that it loves and cherishes into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Who then can be saved? What is impossible with man is possible with God. God, let's pray.

Lord God, we ask that you might indeed spoil this world for us, if that is what we need, so that no treasure on offer to us in this life might ever hinder us from beginning the life of service of you now, a life that will blossom into greater and sweeter service when your kingdom comes fully and finally.

[48 : 01] And so, Lord, grant us the grace we need to follow you, to plant our footsteps in Jesus' very own, to journey with Him through the cross and to the crown.

Help us, we ask, for we need it, like helpless little children. And we ask for it in Jesus' name. Amen.