

True SERVANTS of Christ's Eternal Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Back to more important things. We're going to turn to the Word of God and we're going to read together in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18. We've been looking, with a few weeks break, we've been looking at these chapters 17 to 19 in Luke's Gospel, which contain Jesus' final teaching before he ends the long journey that begins halfway through Luke's Gospel and enters Jerusalem in the triumphal entry. That's what you come to at chapter 19, verse 28. And halfway through Luke's Gospel at chapter 9, verse 51, Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem and sets his face upon the cross and the glory that is to come through his cross and only through his cross. And all the way along, the second half of Luke's Gospel, then all the way along that journey, he is teaching his disciples what that coming kingdom is all about. He's preparing them for the coming of his eternal kingdom, preparing them for eternity. And so that's what's at stake in these chapters here.

And so we come to chapter 18 and verse 15, which leads straight on from these words that Jesus says in verse 14, everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him saying, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child cannot enter it. And a ruler asked him, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? 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've kept from my youth.

When Jesus said, heard this, he said to him, one thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven and come follow me.

[2 : 39] When he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, looking at him with sadness, said how difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

For it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Those who heard it said, who then can be saved?

But he said, what's impossible with man is possible with God. 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.

But 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.

[3 : 57] And on the third day, he will rise. But they understood none of these things. This thing was hidden from them. And they did not grasp what was said.

Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word. Well, would you turn with me to the passage we read together in Luke's Gospel, chapter 18.

Where, as we said, Jesus is teaching in these final times with his disciples and publicly before he enters Jerusalem for the last time, what his kingdom really means and what real Christian faith is all about.

And the question is, are you prepared for eternity? Are you preparing yourself and preparing others for the coming glory of the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ?

That's the question that Luke is confronting his readers with in these chapters as Jesus comes to the end of his journey to Jerusalem. That journey, as I said, takes up the whole of the second half of Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, verse 51.

[5 : 13] And we're told that the time had drawn near for Jesus to be taken up to his glory. And therefore, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And all the way along that journey with his disciples, he's been teaching them about his coming kingdom.

And so naturally, there were questions arising. Indeed, there were great expectations arising for when the glory of this kingdom he's talking about would actually be seen. And we saw in chapter 17, verse 20, a few weeks ago that the Pharisees were asking that question directly.

When? When would the kingdom of God come? When you get to chapter 19, verse 11, you'll see that some clearly suppose that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

So they were asking questions. And people were asking what would be the signs of that coming kingdom of glory. And we saw in chapter 17 that Jesus is dealing with that and saying that there will not be signs in many of the ways that people are hoping for or thinking about.

But there was a great deal of blindness, misunderstanding about what God's kingdom really was all about. And about what the salvation that Jesus kept talking about was really all about.

[6 : 33] And you can see that even in the last verse of our reading this morning. Even the disciples, we're told in verse 34, did not grasp what he said. So it's these things that are very clearly in Jesus' mind and are the focus of his teaching here in these final stages in public before he enters Jerusalem for the last time.

And he is showing them and teaching them again and again and again the right way and the only way to prepare for his coming kingdom, to prepare for eternity.

And it's all about beginning to see properly. We've already seen that emphasis about having your eyes open to the real meaning of Christ's kingdom and what it means to find salvation.

Having your blind eyes opened by Jesus so that you perceive that Jesus is the king. The king who will surely come at last to judge the world in righteousness.

And so the gospel of salvation that Jesus is announcing is all about ensuring now that you will escape in that judgment.

[7 : 48] That you'll escape that final coming, eternal separation from Jesus and therefore from life itself. Escape that being swept away out of his kingdom of life.

We saw that, didn't we, in chapter 17, being swept away. He speaks about vividly like the flood, like the destruction of Sodom. And Jesus says that the true faith that saves on that day, that delivers from that awful everlasting destruction, is the faith that truly sees, the faith that really perceives the meaning of his eternal kingdom.

And therefore, as we saw, that it relentlessly pursues the mercy of that kingdom. Now, persevering in faith to the very end, like the persistent widow in the story in the first eight verses of chapter 18.

And persisting with real penitent faith. Faith that trusts only in the sheer mercy of God towards sinners. Like the tax collector Jesus goes on to talk about in verses 9 to 14 of chapter 18.

Who says, constantly, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And we all need to have our eyes opened to see that ultimate reality.

[9 : 05] To see that Jesus Christ is the judge of all the world. Who comes to separate, as he says, all mankind. In a judgment that will separate all people without exception, says Jesus.

And that, friends, is the truth at the very heart of the New Testament gospel. He is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead.

That's what Peter says in Acts 10.42. When the Roman centurion Cornelius says to him directly, Tell us, Peter, what it was that Jesus commanded you and the other apostles to preach to the whole world.

It's exactly the same as what the Apostle Paul told the wise, the intelligent philosophers in Athens at the Areopagus. He will judge the world in righteousness by a man he has appointed.

And of this, he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. Acts chapter 17, verse 31. That is the gospel.

[10 : 08] That's what the gospel of the risen Jesus proclaims. Jesus is coming to judge this world for eternity. For all people without exception. But of course, the Lord Jesus also declared in his own ministry, all through it, that he is also the king who has come now, in advance of that last day of judgment, to offer salvation now to all without distinction.

And to explain that salvation is more than merely avoiding that separation from life and from his kingdom on the last day, salvation is also to enter even now into the everlasting service of his kingdom.

It's to share in his glorious reign as king forever and ever. And that's the ultimate joy of the gospel message for everyone who will answer the call of Jesus.

And that very positive message is what becomes the focus here in the second half of chapter 18 and the first half of chapter 19. Salvation is not just delivering from everlasting death.

Salvation is for everlasting life. And that life, that life alone is human life in all its glorious fullness, is human life as it's meant to be.

[11 : 30] And it is to share in the wonder of serving our glorious king forever and ever. And that true service and what it looks like of Christ's kingdom is what's pictured in chapter 19.

We'll see that next time. But first of all, you see, Jesus shows us that we need to be clear that the only way to prepare for that glorious life of serving in his kingdom and serving Christ as king is by entering that service now.

It's by becoming true servants of his kingdom and of the king now in this life. And that's what real faith sees. That's what real faith perceives.

And that's what finding real salvation means now in this world. But the question then, you see, has to be the question in verse 26 of chapter 18 here. Who then can be saved to become a true servant of the king?

Who then can be saved to enter that everlasting service of his heavenly kingdom? And Jesus' answer is in these verses before us. And it's very clear indeed.

[12 : 39] His kingdom is a kingdom for all without distinction. It's a kingdom for the great and for the small. It's a kingdom for the lofty and for the lowly.

It's a kingdom for the powerful, yes, and also for the powerless. It is for the influential. It is for the impressive. It is for the important. But it is also for the impotent.

For the insignificant. For the inarticulate. And that is because, friends, it is a kingdom that can only be received.

Whoever you are. It can only be received as a sovereign gift of God's grace. Through the transforming touch of Jesus Christ, the Savior himself. No other way.

Real saving grace is sovereign grace. It can't be earned. It can't be won. It can't be bought. It can only be received as a gift of God in empty hands of humble faith.

[13 : 43] And only those whose eyes and whose hearts have been truly opened to that reality, therefore, can possibly be saved. And only those can become true servants of Christ's everlasting kingdom.

So who then can be saved? Well, Jesus shows us right here. He is telling us what true servants of his kingdom look like. And he's telling us what their faith, real faith, is actually characterized by.

So look at verses 15 to 17, first of all. Where he tells us that the real recipients of the kingdom of Christ include those whose faith is simple.

Even the lowliest who come with empty hands to Jesus. Or indeed here, who are brought empty-handed to Jesus. Surely what verses 15 to 17 tell us is that the kingdom of Christ is not beyond the reach of even the poorest and the humblest.

Of people who have absolutely no status. Who have absolutely nothing to offer. Who might even have to be brought to Jesus by others. You see, whereas the Pharisees fail to see who Jesus really is because he's not impressive enough for them.

[15 : 04] Well, the disciples here are making exactly the same kind of misjudgment. They're thinking that these little ones being brought to Jesus are not nearly important enough for Jesus. But the message is loud and clear here, isn't it?

No one is more important than any other. As far as Jesus is concerned, regardless of their status in the world. They were bringing even infants to him.

That he might touch them. When the disciples saw it, they rebuked him. But Jesus called them to him, saying, Let the children come to me. Don't hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God.

And truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child, Shall not enter it. He's teaching two things very clearly here.

And it's important that we understand that in that society and in that culture, The little ones really were nothings. They had no status in the eyes of the world around about it.

[16 : 04] It's very different from today when we idolize children. We sentimentalize children. We indulge children. Our society gives children enormous status constantly. But in that society, it was the very opposite.

Children, little ones, were nothings. But Jesus says, Do not hinder the nothings. And he is teaching two things, I think, very plainly.

First, verse 16 is a wonderful word for little children and for their parents. Because Jesus is saying that such as these are welcome in his kingdom. Indeed, it belongs to them, he says.

Now, these little ones who are being brought are inarticulate. They can't recite creeds. They can't recite catechisms. They can't express their faith in detail. But Jesus, nevertheless, accepts them.

He blesses them. Because that's what they're doing. They're bringing them to him in faith. Seeking his touch. And his touch means that he would lay his hands on him and bless them.

[17 : 03] That's very clear from Matthew's gospel. It makes that explicit. And, of course, Jesus' prayer is never ineffectual, is it? Otherwise, there's no hope for any one of us. That was the hope that he gave Peter.

The devil wants you, but I've prayed for you, Peter. We see something very similar to this back in chapter 5 of Luke's gospel. Where a group of friends, remember, brought a totally helpless man to Jesus.

They had to dig a hole in the roof and let him down right in front of Jesus. Because he was paralyzed. And what we're told there is a wonderful thing. When Jesus saw their faith, he forgave that man's sins.

That's why we pray for our friends, for our loved ones, isn't it? They might not want to come to Jesus because they're blind. They're spiritually blind. But we can bring them to him in prayer.

And we can bring them to hear about Jesus. And we can implore the Lord to open their lives and their hearts by his transforming grace. And praise God, he does very often. But what an encouragement to every Christian parent here today.

[18 : 07] Jesus says to us that our little ones are important to his kingdom. They're an important part of it. What an encouragement to older children as well. That the church is not just for grown-ups.

It's for you. Not just for adults. It belongs to you. Of course, little ones only play a little one's part. But Jesus is the real part.

There's no sense denying that. That's why we take the teaching and the training of our children and our youngsters so seriously in church. We devote time to it. We devote effort to it. We devote staff to it and leaders to it.

Not just to the adults. Why? Well, because the kingdom is theirs also. It's not just for those who are already articulate and already mature and already theologically advanced.

That's why in this church we also baptize our infants. Some disagree with that. But it just seems to us very inconsistent for Jesus to declare these as belonging to his kingdom.

[19 : 06] And for us to deny them the mark of belonging to the earthly family of the Lord Jesus. But to such belongs the kingdom of God. That's Jesus' first point here.

He receives even infants. And that is no empty gesture from the Lord Jesus. But you see in verse 17 he is applying this to all people.

And he's saying, in fact, everyone must receive the kingdom like a little child if they're to enter it at all. Of course, Jesus does not mean here everyone's got to be innocent like a little child.

It's astonishing how many commentaries you read with that sort of nonsense of it. You can only assume that they were written by people who have no children themselves or who have never even looked after children for half a day. To think children are innocent.

Goodness me. Of course he doesn't mean that. What he means is that entry to his kingdom is something that nobody can ever have unless they receive it freely as a gift of God's grace into their own helpless hands.

[20 : 11] As though they were just a little infant. Because it's impossible to gain his kingdom any other way. A little one is utterly dependent. A little one can only be fed what its mother feeds it.

It can be given what the mother gives to enrich, to make that little helpless life live. An entry into the kingdom of God is by receiving.

That's what Jesus is saying. You receive. And you receive by running into the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. By coming to him and by bringing others to him.

And seeing, being in his arms and having his touch upon your life as the most important priority in life. But that poses a question, doesn't it?

Do we really value Jesus and his touch upon our lives as the most important thing in our life? Not just for our children, although that's a very real question, isn't it? In our day.

[21 : 12] Is Jesus' touch upon our child's life more important to us than their advancements in education or in sport or their music lessons?

Or all the other things that we want for our children? Is it? It's a real question. But also for ourselves. You see, there's great simplicity, isn't there, about this? About the real faith that truly prepares for the Savior's coming in glory.

That puts Jesus and his person before every other thing in life. And that simplicity, though, you see, it demands sincerity.

And that's what verses 18 to 30 are all about, aren't they? That Christ's kingdom belongs to those whose faith is not just truly simple, but it's also truly sincere.

His kingdom is for all, he says. It's for the lofty as well as for the little ones. But they too must value the kingdom of Jesus Christ above all other things.

[22 : 16] Or they too will be unable to enter. Because you must come with empty hands to Jesus to receive his kingdom.

So here we are in verse 18. After these little ones, we have a great one who enters the stage. A ruler. A stark contrast. And he asks Jesus a question.

Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Now, that's an honest question he's asking. It's not wrong to ask, what must I do to enter eternal life?

Again, writers and commentators sometimes slam him for that. As always saying, oh, he's asking about works religion. He's asking about what works he can do to enter the kingdom. No, no, no. He's just been listening to Jesus.

Jesus is always saying, you mustn't just hear my words. You must do them. If you're going to enter the kingdom of heaven. And this man is just asking what the people asked John the Baptist.

[23 : 11] Right back in Luke's gospel chapter 3. John the Baptist, remember, said to them. You've got to bear fruit in keeping with real repentance. And people came to him and said, well, what does that mean for me?

And he would say to them, well, if you're a soldier, you must do this. If you're a tax collector, you must do this. If you're such and such, you must do that. That's what it looks like for you to follow Jesus. And it's just so here. Jesus' message was the same to absolutely everybody, wasn't it?

Again and again. What does it mean to follow him? You deny yourself. You take up your cross. And you follow me. What he's doing here is just applying that word very specifically to this particular man.

And it requires a challenge for this particular man. Because he's a great man. A rich man. So verse 19.

You call me good. And you know, don't you, that only God is good. So what are you saying? Are you recognizing that I really am God incarnate? Because if so, you'll grasp, won't you, that to truly obey God, to please God, means you must listen to me.

[24 : 20] You must obey my word. That I'm the one who all the law and the prophets pointed to. That's what Jesus is saying to this man, you see. That's the great question that's posed all the way through the Gospels in Jesus' ministry.

That's what shows the true Israelite from the false Israelite. That shows whether you're living according to God's law out of real obedience and love for God.

Or whether in fact you're living just out of love for yourself. That's what shows whether your heart obedience to God was true and genuine.

Or whether in fact it is just love of self. Whether in fact, as Paul says in Romans chapter 9, you're pursuing a law of righteousness as if it were by works.

Because if you're doing that, says Paul, you stumble over the stumbling stone, which is Christ himself. But if you really love God, you recognize the person of God and the person of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 20] You bow before him and you follow him. Remember the elder brother back in Luke chapter 15. He said, I've slaved for you all my life to his father. But he wasn't slaving for his father, was he?

He was slaving for himself and what he could get. He was serving mammon as his God and not God himself. And sadly, that's what turns out to be true here in verse 23.

Who was this man's real master? Was it God or was it mammon? Well, it was his riches, wasn't it? And so Jesus challenges him in verse 20.

That's why he gives him all these commandments, the fifth to the ninth. But when the man answers him and says, well, yes, since my youth I've kept all of these, Jesus really hits him in verse 22 with the tenth commandment, doesn't he?

The one that sums up all the others. You shall not covet. And that exposes him. It exposes his idolatry because that's what covetousness is, according to the apostle Paul.

[26 : 22] It's idolatry. And this man has another God, doesn't he? The riches that he's unwilling to give up. And he won't deny his true God, that is his riches, in order to take up his cross and follow Jesus.

Jesus is saying to him, put following me before following your money. Why? Because you can't serve two masters. You can only serve God or money.

You've got to choose. And very sadly, verse 23, look, this man chose his money. When he heard these things, he became very sad because he was extremely rich.

He wouldn't yield the independence and the autonomy and the identity that his wealth gave him in order to become utterly dependent like a little child.

And so he couldn't enter the kingdom of Christ. And the Lord Jesus was very sad, verse 24. He looked at him with sadness. But notice he would not lower the price.

[27 : 32] Because to enter his kingdom, you must value it above all other things. Remember what he said back in chapter 14? Whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot, cannot be my disciple.

See, what he's saying is that if this world's riches really preoccupy your life, whether it's wealth or whether it's power or whether it's education, whether it's a career or a particular relationship, whatever it is that you hold on to, if these things preoccupy your life, then it will leave you unprepared for judgment.

It'll leave you like Lot's wife back in chapter 17 that we saw, who was always looking back with longing, trying to keep hold of those things. And therefore in the end, losing absolutely everything that mattered in the end.

And if your life is full of those kind of things, then Jesus is being plain. He's saying that the truth is that the joys and the treasures of the kingdom will seem less attractive to you.

They will not seem supremely valuable to you above all other things. And that means you'll only want the kingdom of Christ, if you can have it, while holding on to all of these things at the same time.

[28 : 50] So you'll want a Jesus who won't make you give up your independence, who won't make you give up your autonomy, living your way with my lifestyle, who won't make you give up your identity, saying this is who I am and this is how I behave.

And that means if you'll be involved with Jesus at all, you'll find a church that's very happy to ignore certain of the demands of Jesus, miss out a whole lot of the teaching of Jesus.

So that you'll think you can serve both God and mammon. But look, the real Jesus won't do that, will he? He'll be sad, but he will let you walk away.

He must do that, otherwise he will be denying the value of his own eternal kingdom. Or if a church fellowship is so thorough to its heritage, to its history, to its buildings perhaps, that thinks these earthly things are so vitally important for its identity, for its ministry, these things may prevent it making a stand for the truth and the gospel.

Because it'll be fearful of losing these riches. So it'll want to seek a compromise to allow it to keep those things that really it values more than the kingdom of God.

[30 : 13] That's why Jesus says in verse 24, how difficult it is for those who have much to really enter the kingdom of God and his service. Very salutary, isn't it, when he puts it in those terms.

And the disciples are clearly shocked in verse 26. They look at this man and they say, even if somebody who seems so clearly blessed by God is so much on earth, even they can't enter the kingdom, then who on earth can?

Well, the answer, says Jesus in verse 27, is that God can do and God does do the impossible. He changes hearts. And he grants entrance to his kingdom.

But you see, if it's God that does that and not us, then when he does do that, there's clearly nothing for us to boast about, is there? See, Peter's statement in verse 28 is quite genuine.

They had literally done what this man would not do. They had left their homes in order to follow Jesus. But you see, it's easy, isn't it? Even for followers of Jesus, therefore having done that, to somehow feel themselves superior.

[31 : 23] Because I've become a Christian and done that, I deserve a pat on the back. And that's why Jesus here goes on very quickly, both to commend and also to caution his disciples.

So first of all, he commends Peter in verses 29 and 30. Yes, no one who has left all of these things to follow me will lose out.

In fact, they will receive many times more in this time and eternal life. You're right. You have left all to follow me and you are already receiving even now what this ruler wanted, but didn't want quite badly enough.

As someone's put it, you're receiving the regular dividends and the ultimate capital gain of the kingdom. You're receiving the ongoing blessing now of many times more in terms of real homes and family and fellowship among Christ's people all around the world.

That is the blessing of belonging to Jesus in this age. The real joy of Christian fellowship and family. And you're also receiving the ultimate joy of life everlasting.

[32 : 33] You will be rewarded, says Jesus. Greatly rewarded. But, in verses 31 to 34, very quickly he goes on to caution the disciples, doesn't he?

Because his kingdom will be only for those with real faith. And that real faith, yes, is simple. Yes, is sincere. Coming to Jesus with empty hands regarding his kingdom as above all things.

But that real faith, that genuine faith, is faith that must walk with Jesus now in this earthly life.

And Jesus is very plain in these verses, isn't he? That real faith will be the faith that suffers. Every true believer has to walk with Jesus, the road to glory.

And the only road to glory is the road to the cross. The disciples, you see, still didn't grasp it, did they? What kind of king he really was.

[33 : 33] They didn't understand how that glorious reward was going to come to him. And therefore, they didn't understand how it was going to come only to all who follow him. And so again, here, Jesus reiterates that his journey in this world must be one of suffering.

And he reminds them all of how much he has given up for their sake. He has become their servant in order to save them. Verse 32, he is going to be mocked, spit upon, flogged, killed before he rises to the glory that's to come.

And yet, still, they couldn't grasp it. Verse 34, you see, three times we're told again, in effect, they are blind, their eyes are not opened. It was hidden from them. They understood none of these things.

They did not grasp what was said. That glory comes to the servant king and therefore to all his true servants only that way.

Gain coming only through loss in this world's terms. Receiving but only by giving up and giving away in this world's terms.

[34 : 50] They didn't grasp that it must be so for Jesus and they didn't grasp that they too in following Jesus had to follow his road.

You see, in verse 31, Jesus says, we, we are going to Jerusalem, you and me together, to the place of ultimate sacrifice. And true servants, Luke is telling us, of Jesus Christ must accompany him and serve his kingdom by walking his earthly road in his way.

Because only to such belongs the kingdom of God. So who are the true recipients of Christ's kingdom of glory who are prepared for his coming, prepared for eternity?

Well, true servants, says Jesus, are those whose faith is simple, who come with empty hands as nobodies to Jesus. Whose faith is sincere, even the greatest in this world's term, humbling themselves, being willing to put everything else away simply to have the Lord Jesus.

And it's a faith that suffers, that's proved true by walking Jesus' road in his way. Well, let me ask, are we, are we servants like that?

[36 : 13] Are we true servants of Christ's eternal kingdom? Are we preparing for eternity? Are we preparing others for that everlasting service to Christ the King?

Well, the way you prepare for that is by being a true servant of Christ and his kingdom now. We're not going to suddenly discover, are we, what it means to be a true and faithful servant on the last day.

It's something we're learning now as we trust the Lord Jesus with the simplicity, yes, of a childlike faith. Faith that does come with empty hands.

Faith that knows that coming to him and bringing others to him is the greatest need, is the greatest priority of all. And we learn it as we seek him with sincerity, as we turn away constantly from the things that we do love and treasure naturally in this world.

And as we find in him and in him alone that real treasure, as we find in him our identity, our real fulfillment in life, burying our autonomy, our desire for independence in sheer dependence on Jesus.

[37 : 28] And we learn that and as we live like that, we will suffer with him. I suspect not for many of us will be flogging and martyrdom.

But increasingly, friends, I can tell you it will be so for us in our culture that those who follow the real Jesus and the real gospel will be mocked and will be shamefully treated and yes, probably will be spit upon for Christ's sake.

And that's not fun. It won't be easy. That will be hard. But that's the faith that is really serving Christ and his kingdom now. And therefore, that is the faith that will go on and be prepared to serve him for all eternity.

That's the faith alone that really saves. And I think that Luke preserves these words of Jesus because all of us need both Jesus' caution and also his words of great commendation.

We need his caution. We need his warning. Just as the first disciples did. because many whose faith begins with that holy simplicity and sincerity, well, they can falter, can't they?

[38 : 41] We've all seen it. Especially in the face of suffering and just in the face of the lure of this world's riches. Mammon. As Jesus said in the parable of the sower, becoming choked by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of life.

Often it's the simplicity of our children's faith that actually puts us to shame as adults, isn't it? It's interesting, I think, in verse 21 that the rich young ruler looks back to his youthful obedience to God.

But something in his life changed. And as life goes on, the cares, the pleasures, the riches of life do powerfully affect us. And the truth is, and here's a challenge for us as adults and especially as Christian parents, the things that affect us will affect our children too.

Even youngsters brought up in Christian homes, in a church family, they will learn to value what they see their parents valuing, what they see other grown-ups valuing. And young ones are sharp.

They see what we do as well as what we say. They see the reality of life in private as much as they see what's said and done in public. It's a caution, isn't it?

[39 : 58] If we don't want our children to grow out of obedience to the Lord God and into somebody like the rich young ruler, we'd better learn not to love those kind of ways ourselves, hadn't we?

It's a warning to all of us whether we have children or not, all of us as we grow older because youthful zeal can so easily become quenched by worldly things. that's what Jesus says plainly here.

So we need to heed him. As we grow out of being childish in our faith, which of course we must do, we must become mature, but we're not to leave behind that childlike, wholehearted trust, simple, sincere, following Jesus.

We need his caution. But we also, also just as much need his commendation and his great encouragement. That's where I want us to end this morning. Look again at verses 29 and 30.

Take that message to heart. They speak of real riches, of something that is much, much more, of real blessing, even in this life, even for people who have lost much in this world's term, even who have lost everything for the sake of Jesus.

[41 : 11] No one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.

It was Jim Elliot, the young missionary killed by the Arca Indians in South America to whom he'd gone to preach the gospel. It was he who said this, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Yes, says Jesus, that's true. No one who loses earthly things, even all earthly things for the Lord Jesus will lose out, not in this time even and certainly not in the age to come.

So friends, let's help one another to be true servants of Christ's eternal kingdom. now so that we'll be true servants of his eternal kingdom forever when he comes.

Well, let's pray. Our God and our Father, how we thank you for your great generosity of grace to us who are worthy of none, who have to come to you so simply in the empty hands of faith.

[42 : 35] help us, we pray, for that faith to be in our hearts utterly sincere, loving you more than all other earthly things, even rejoicing when we must suffer for your name's sake because we believe and trust your word.

that he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose at your hand.

Help us and help us to help one another as we love and serve you for Jesus' sake. Amen.