

Real Kingdom Reward: Seeing and Serving the Real Jesus

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn up to God's Word, shall we, and to Matthew chapter 20. And Willie is continuing his series here in Matthew's Gospel. So do please turn to Matthew chapter 20, and we're reading from verse 1 to verse 28.
- So do turn your own Bibles there. Matthew chapter 20. I'm reading from verse 1. Jesus is speaking here to his disciples.
- So they went. Going out again, about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.
- And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, Why do you stand here idle all day? They said to him, Because no one has hired us.
- He said to them, You go into the vineyard too. And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first.
- [1 : 34] And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius.
- And not receiving it, they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, and have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.
- But he replied to them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go.
- I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?
- So the last will be first, and the first last. And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside.
- [2 : 37] And on the way he said to them, See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, and flogged, and crucified.
- And he will be raised on the third day. Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked him for something.
- And he said to her, What do you want? She said to him, Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand, and one at your left, in your kingdom.
- Jesus answered, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink? They said to him, We are able.
- He said to them, You will drink my cup. But to sit at my right hand and at my left hand is not mine to grant. But it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.

[3 : 46] And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and their great ones exercised authority over them.

It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Amen. May God bless his word to us this morning. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 20.

It's all about teaching us the meaning of real kingdom reward. Often people have found this parable in the first half of Chapter 20 rather confusing.

But, of course, as always, the context is the key to the message. And the whole chapter hangs together and teaches a very clear lesson about what constitutes real kingdom reward.

[5 : 04] We've seen already from Chapter 19 that Jesus is on his final journey to Jerusalem. And he's teaching his disciples, as they go with him, that everyone who follows him must share in his road, which is the road, of course, to the cross.

Forsaking this world, losing the life that this world values, and finding the life of what he calls the new world. That's what he called it in Chapter 19, Verse 28.

And that's why there's a repeated call all the way through these chapters, follow me. If you want the real rewards of Jesus' kingdom, the new world, it means you must turn your back on the rewards of this world, the powerful relationships of this world that we seek our reward in.

We saw that in Chapter 19. Marriage and sex, children, material possessions, all these things that were addressed very starkly in Chapter 19.

But whatever precious earthly relationships are subordinated to Christ and his kingdom, as Jesus says, at the end of Chapter 19, there will be reward.

[6 : 18] There will be great reward. A hundredfold, he says, in Verse 29. Even in this world, and eternal life. You may appear to be last in the eyes of this world, but look at Verse 30.

The last shall be first in the kingdom of Jesus. God is no man's debtor. And Jesus assures us of that so wonderfully there.

But there is also a warning in his words, isn't there? Look at Verse 30 again there. Many who are first in this world and who think themselves first, they will be last, says Jesus.

So Jesus is saying to us, you need to beware lest your heart deceive you and lest the thoughts of this world and its rewards should beguile you and should ensnare you.

Your hearts are tempted to want to be first. Even in my kingdom, remember that that attitude will always be made last in the kingdom of heaven.

[7 : 26] Always. And so here you see in chapter 20, Jesus goes right on to warn against any attitude to reward and to glory among his people that betrays a spirit and a mentality not of the new world of his everlasting kingdom, but of this old, fallen, and corrupt world.

And he teaches his disciples by contrast how the values of the kingdom of heaven stand this world's way of thinking right upside down, right on its head.

And so he's saying to all would-be followers, Christians, that these values and this mentality must be ours. Otherwise, we will never understand. We will never be able to share in what is real kingdom reward, which is simply seeing and serving with the real Jesus.

So let's look, first of all, at verses 1 to 16. where Jesus is warning us and he's saying, if we're going to be his kingdom people, he's saying, don't have the mentality of this world's reward.

A mentality that will prevent us from enjoying the real rewards of God's kingdom because it hasn't understood the meaning of his grace. Don't have a mentality that grumbles at grace is what he's saying.

[8 : 50] And the parable just makes a simple point, but some of the details here are quite interesting, quite important. So let's look at it. First of all, you see, this landowner, this householder, this master is doing people a great service by hiring them, as is the laborers.

These are not secure employees. They don't have the security of being part of his household. These are people who work and get paid only if they're fortunate enough to be hired each day.

So they go out each morning and they stand in the marketplace and they're hoping for a hire because otherwise they won't have any pay that day, they won't be able to eat, won't be able to feed their families that night. So when the master, verse 1, comes out first thing in the morning, well, it's absolutely wonderful.

Wonderful. We're going to get a day's pay today, verse 2. So great, they'll be saying, thanks to this man, we won't go hungry today.

My family will eat. And off they go to the vineyard, very happy. Then, verse 3, as the day goes on, the master keeps reappearing in the marketplace at the third hour.

[10 : 04] That's about 9 o'clock in the morning. And then again, verse 5, at midday, the sixth hour. And then right up to the 11th hour, an hour just before darkness, about 5 in the afternoon, and every time he goes to the market, he sees men without work and therefore without money, without livelihood, without food for their families.

And so, although it seems very unlikely, really, doesn't it, that he needs all these workers, especially so late in the day at the 11th hour, he invites them all into his vineyard, into the place of privileged work, into the place that promises a living wage, food, and life.

And so then, verse 8, at sunset, it comes time to pay the wages. And what happens? Well, the last are up first.

and they'd only worked one hour. And yet, look at verse 9, each one of them receives a full day's pay, a denarius.

Very good wage. Wow, they must have been ecstatic, don't you think? And even bigger wow for all of those who are watching this, because they were thinking, well, my goodness, if they get that for just one hour's work, surely we're going to get a whole lot more.

[11 : 35] But then, verse 10, look, when their turn comes, they too receive one denarius, a very fair day's wage, very good wage.

They've been very happy to work for that in the morning. They got everything. They've been promised. They got everything they'd wanted. But, verse 11, they grumbled at the master of the house.

They're really angry with him. They resent what he's done. And their chief complaints there in verse 12, you've made them, these last ones, equal to us, who've toiled all day for you in the heat.

They hated that. They hated the principle that in this master's vineyard, the last should be made first. In other words, they resented the sovereign grace of their master to show great generosity to those who were least deserving.

They grumbled at grace. and Jesus makes it absolutely explicit in verse 15. Look, they resented his sovereign right to do as he wills.

[12 : 51] Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what is mine? And this attitude says, no, not if that puts others in front of me. Do you begrudge my generosity, he says?

And this attitude says, well, yes, I jolly well do. Certainly, it means if these who are last who ought to be behind me, somehow seem to be equal with me.

So what's Jesus' message to his followers? To those who had said what the disciples said back in chapter 19 verse 27, we've given up everything to follow you, Jesus. We've given up everything to work in your vineyard, so what will we have?

Well, it's pretty clear what his message is, isn't it? Don't have this attitude, don't have this mentality of this world's rewards.

Beware lest you, my people, be grumblers against God's grace, and thereby show that actually you don't really understand your master at all.

[14 : 01] You don't actually love him for what he is, a generous giving Lord. You see, to be like that, doesn't it, it betrays a totally back-to-front view of the values and the ways of God's new world kingdom.

The reality in the parable was that these grumbling men had received grace and mercy from the master. He'd called them out of many others. He'd called them into his vineyard.

It was a great privilege and they should have rejoiced to receive from him all that he'd promised them for their labor. But not only couldn't they see the value anymore of what they had received at his hand, more than a fair wage, the means of life in the place of lack and want and hunger, but neither could they stand the fact that others should also have what they received, others who they felt were far less deserving.

And Jesus, he's telling his followers, he's telling us, those that he's called into his kingdom, those he's called to serve in his vineyard, he's saying beware of the mentality of this world's rewards, because it can so easily seduce you, it can so easily poison your attitude to God, even as you already are laboring for him in his kingdom.

Because it's possible, isn't it, to give up everything and to follow Jesus, but to do it in such a way that in your heart of hearts, you're actually still harboring an attitude that grumbles at God's grace, and that festers in resentment against the master.

[15 : 56] Because as you look around at others, maybe others in the church, you can slide back into that thinking of the world, because you compare yourself with others, and you look at what you've been given compared with what others seem to have been given, or you look at what they seem to have compared with you, and what you do, all that you do in comparison with how much less they seem to do, and you grumble at God.

Deep down, of course, but you grumble because he doesn't seem to order things as they ought to be ordered, even in his church. Others who do far less than you often seem to go far further than you and get far more than you, maybe in terms of recognition in the church.

Or others who are definitely not as committed as you are, well, they seem to be blessed by God with all sorts of things, where what you have in your life is all kinds of struggles and hardships and difficult experiences in life.

And so you see, deep down, you maybe never say it, maybe hide it under an awful lot of martyr-like thinking about your duty and your service and so on, but deep down, what you really think is, that is not fair.

It's not fair. Why don't I have that recognition? for that position? Why don't I have that blessing? Why don't I have all those spiritual rewards for my service, for goodness sake?

[17 : 33] Do you see what that's really saying? That attitude is saying, I want the first to be first, and I want the last to be last. You see, you're spiritualizing it, of course, you're using all sorts of terminology that makes you think that you are dutifully serving the master, but the truth is that when we think like that, and we do often think like that, don't we?

The truth is, you see, then we're not really working for the master, are we? We're actually working for the reward that we want. And Jesus is showing us here that that attitude, that mentality, totally nullifies all these supposed sacrifices you think you're making, because the sacrifice isn't really for Jesus' namesake.

It's all really just for yourself. It's for your own namesake, isn't it? There's all the difference in the world between giving everything up for Jesus and just giving it up for the sake of the reward.

The one is true worship. It's serving Jesus for its own sake. It's serving Jesus with joy because you recognize everything that you've received from him. And you recognize that you have a place in his vineyard that you could never have deserved.

And you rejoice. But you see, the other is just the opposite of that. It's just serving so as to receive a reward that now you actually feel, well, really, it's due to me.

[19 : 10] And that isn't true worship, is it? That's using God to serve you. That's making God your servant. It's what Jesus warned about actually so starkly back in chapter 19.

It's idolatry. It's the power of thinking of this world's rewards that seduce us away from the prize of the new world. But you see, here in this chapter, he's exposing something even more sinister, even more dangerous just because it's much more subtle.

He's saying that there's a deadly danger of idolatry lurking in our very Christian service itself. You see, it's so easy for the basic idolatry of the human heart to take us over again just because the ways and the values of the kingdom of heaven are so utterly upside down, so totally opposite to the ways of this world, into the basic human heart.

Just because the grace and the sheer generosity of our master are so alien to our human hearts. And we constantly just drift back, don't we, into the bondage of this world's mentality because our natural heart will always grumble at grace.

The natural heart always resents God's sovereign grace and mercy because the grace of God can make even those who are lost first.

[20 : 46] And so it's the great leveler. And we find that so offensive because it just deals a great blow, doesn't it, to all human pride. That's why we resist it.

That's why we drift from it at every single turn. But Jesus says, no, don't have a reward mentality of this world.

This world's rewards. If you do, he's saying you'll never be able to know and enjoy the real rewards of serving Jesus in his vineyard just because it's his, just because you're serving him.

I mean, that's true, don't we? As soon as we forget the grace and the privilege that's ours just at the hand of God, as soon as we begin to think with the mentality like that of this world's rewards, that's when we begin to resent God.

Isn't that right? We get angry, we get resentful when troubles and afflictions in life come. Or we get jealous of others who we feel are way behind us but actually seem to be out in front of us in some ways.

[21 : 55] And our service for Christ becomes a burden instead of a joy. In fact, we might get angry with the whole church because we just don't feel we get the recognition, we don't get the reward that we deserve.

For all that I do, which is so much more than so many others. You see what Jesus says to us then, look at verse 13, friend, he says, I'm doing you no wrong.

In verse 15 he says, do you begrudge me, my generosity? Have you so quickly forgotten my generosity to you, who otherwise would have been standing idle with no real purpose in life, had I not called you into my vineyard and given you the means of life?

And now you feel aggrieved, you say you're bearing the burden in the heat of the day. But tell me, who are you bearing that burden for? is it really for me?

For my namesake? Is it really? Because those who really serve me, they join in my joy, in my vineyard and its fruit, the joy of the master who is lavish in his grace and generosity and abundance to many, many people who don't deserve it.

[23 : 17] If you won't rejoice with me in that, well, I'm not sure you really are serving me, are you? Isn't that right?

Remember the parable of the two sons that Jesus tells in Luke chapter 15? All these years I've been slaving for you, said the older brother. But that wasn't true, was it?

He hadn't been slaving for his father, he'd been slaving for himself, for the rewards, for the recognition. He wanted the fatted calf, and now he was raging because his younger brother, the good for nothing, had got it.

He'd been slaving all those years to make himself first. It was all for this world's rewards. And Jesus says there, just as he says here, no, no, no, in my kingdom, that attitude will be put last, always.

Beware of the mentality that seeks this world's rewards. Well, the poor disciples are so slow to catch on, and Jesus has to be utterly explicit with them.

[24 : 23] Again, in verses 17 to 19, you see, showing them just how totally different his attitude was from theirs and from that of this world. See, we're going to Jerusalem, he says.

We're going to the cross. This is what I'm talking about. This is the attitude. This is the way of my kingdom. The way up is down.

The way to life is death. The way to be first and to be great is to be made last. It's to be humiliated in the eyes of this world. That's my way.

That's the way I'm calling you to follow with me. And yet, look at verse 20. The response from the disciples is just staggering.

And so, Jesus has to deal with this request about James and John here in verses 20 to 24. And in doing so, he's issuing a second warning, isn't he? We're not to have the mentality of this world's rewards, a mentality that wrongly grumbles at grace.

[25 : 26] Also, also here, he says, don't have the mentality of this world's rulers, a mentality that grasps at glory, wielding the authority of men and the world.

See, a mentality that hasn't understood the true meaning of God's glory, will not understand the true glory of real Christian discipleship and real Christian leadership.

This is important because, you see, at the end of chapter 19, Jesus had promised not just rewards to his disciples, a hundredfold and eternal life, but he'd also promised them authority and rule, hadn't he?

The twelve, he said, are going to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And so, here, you see, in verse 20, Mrs. Zebedee and her two sons decide to go for gold.

You know, those thrones, Jesus. We've been thinking a lot about those thrones, and we really feel that, you know, the two that are closest to you on the right and the left, they would suit James and John really very well indeed.

[26 : 29] What do you think? Obviously, Mrs. Zebedee was the original tiger mum. That's easy to be scornful, isn't it? But let's be fair, actually, they were right in a way to prize and to desire glory with Jesus because God had promised this to them.

They would be rulers with authority. They'd be apostles in his church. They'd be judges of his kingdom. But again, you see, the key question is what kind of glory are they to aspire to?

Is it just the glory of this world and this world's values or is it really the glory of Jesus and his heavenly kingdom? That's the question. And what kind of rulers and what kind of authority will occupy those thrones?

Is it this world's power that demands submission, that demands subjection, that puts the first first and the last in their place? or is it Jesus' kingdom power that manifests itself in fact in service to others and puts self last?

They didn't understand, did they, what they were asking for? Verse 22, Jesus says, can you drink the cup that I'm about to drink? What he's just spoken about in verses 18 to 20, the humiliation and death as a servant for others.

[28 : 00] Oh yes, we can, they answer. No doubt, very sincerely, but very naively and still without proper understanding. Because they hadn't yet grasped, had they, at all, the true glory of Jesus, which would come only after his suffering and death, but not only after it, only through his suffering and death.

In fact, his glory is his suffering and death for his people. And they were still clueless about that, as will the rest of the disciples. Verse 24 is clear, the rest were just the same.

They were angry, they were indignant at these two. They were just as grumbly, just as jealous, just like the vineyard workers, exactly the same reason. Because you see, if you don't truly understand and revere the grace of God, neither will you understand and reveal the true glory of God.

It's only when you come to terms with the truth about the cross of Jesus, what it really means, that you can begin to make any sense at all of God's wonderful grace, which is made known in Christ, and understand the fullness of his glory, which is made manifest above all, isn't it, in the death of Christ on the cross, when he himself became the servant of hopeless, lost sinners for our salvation.

And that's why, you see, amid these two warnings, not to have the mentality of this world's rewards that rejects grace, that seeks things instead the world's way, and not to have the mentality of this world's rulers that seeks glory, that seeks authority of this world's kinds, right in the midst of this, twice, Jesus points us to the total contrast of the true attitude that does belong to his heavenly kingdom with everything in the thinking of this world.

[30 : 01] You see that verses 17 to 19 and also again in verses 25 to 28. Jesus is showing us the contrast instead of what we must exhibit if we are truly to be his.

Do have, he is saying, do have the mentality of this world's redeemer. not the mentality that grumbles jealously at the free grace of God, not the mentality that grasps wrongly at the world's rule and at the world's glory in human terms, but have the mentality instead that stoops to serve.

Look at verse 17 again. You see the third time here Jesus repeats what he's already said in chapter 16 verse 21 and in chapter 17 verse 22 that his journey to the throne of glory in the new world is a journey in this world to the cross.

We are going to Jerusalem and there verse 18, he, the son of man, the king of glory, will be condemned, will be delivered to apostate pagans, will be mocked, will be flogged, will be killed in the most degrading way humanly known.

That is the mentality of this world's redeemer, says Jesus, who is speaking to you. This is the true glory of the living God seen on this earth.

[31 : 34] It's in the very action of Jesus self-giving in death. As the true grace of God, as the true mercy of God is poured out in the achievement of that death.

Look at verse 28. His self-giving service in death is as a ransom for many. It's as a death in the place of the many, to redeem many.

And he's echoing here so clearly, isn't he, the words of the prophet Isaiah, who promised a suffering Messiah, a suffering Messiah King, who would make many righteous through his suffering, because he would bear away their iniquities as he bears the sins of many.

You can read it in Isaiah chapter 53. And so he died for us because he who was first, first in the cosmos, ruler of all, because he made himself nothing.

He became last for the sake of the many. And Jesus is telling us, isn't he, that's the way of true grace, that's the way of true glory in my kingdom.

[32 : 46] It's a very antithesis of the way of this world. In this world, the first will always be first. And he'll keep firm hold, won't he, on their power and on their glory.

Man's view of power and glory, well, that's what makes so many people create their idea of God actually just in their own image, just as a huge version of ourselves.

And that's what all human religion does. But it's all wrong, isn't it? Because the true revelation of the one true God in Jesus Christ shows us one who is altogether different from every idea of this world.

It shows us one who stoops himself to serve his own creatures. That's why, of course, this true God is so offensive to our world, whether it's the secular world or the world of human religions.

No Jew could ever stomach Jesus' revelation of God. That's why they were against him. God Almighty stooping to serve on a cross, that was anathema. No Muslim today could stomach that idea of God because it speaks of weakness, not of strength.

[34 : 01] It speaks of something to be despised, not something to be glorified. Think about it. If Muhammad, a mere man, can't be ridiculed in any way at all, in the Muslim faith, how much less could God himself be found in human flesh, be humiliated, be crucified?

That is unthinkable to that conception of God. But behold, this is our God.

And this is the true glory of heaven manifest in this world. This is our God, the servant king, is what Matthew is telling us. God is not to worship the glory of God.

And yet, our world and man's religion cannot stomach this idea of God. It will always scorn his glory. It will always grumble at his grace and strive only for this world's kind of rewards.

But not so with you. Look at verse 26. Do you see? You are not to worship the glory of this world that puts the first first and the last last.

[35 : 09] No, as with the master, so for his servants. Verse 27. Whoever will be first among you must be your slave, must be last. You stoop to serve.

That's the mentality of the true people who belong to this world's redeemer. Because they understand that they embrace heaven's true glory. Because they understand, therefore, and cherish heaven's true grace.

See, the reason that so often in the church there's such a wrong view of spiritual rewards and of spiritual rule is that so often we harbor just a wrong view of God himself.

Because we're so religious at heart, we want to keep making God in our own image instead of seeing him as he really is. Holy other. from us. And Jesus sweeps aside all mere religion with the true light of heavenly revelation.

And he says, look at me. Open your eyes and see me because he who has seen me has seen the Father in all his grace, in all his glory.

[36 : 24] Chapter 9, 19 showed us that to have a right understanding of God's commands, we need a right understanding of the God whose commands they are. So it is here to have a right grasp of the true rewards and the true glory of heaven, we must have a right understanding of the true grace and generosity of the rewarder and of his kind of truly glorious rule, which is a giving glory, not a grasping glory.

glory. But even as believers, we slip back so often, don't we, into that natural religious idolatry because by nature we turn the truth of God into a lie and we exchange true revelation for self-made religion.

And that's why we grumble like the servants in verse 11, because we misunderstand at heart God's generosity and his grace. That's why we get indignant and jealous of others like the disciples did in verse 24, because we misunderstand his true glory and therefore what really means glory for all of us.

That's why we can also shut out those who seem insignificant in the church as the crowd did here in verse 31 with these blind people, because we underestimate Christ's love and compassion for those who need it most.

But you see, Jesus says, no, no, no, look at me. Listen to me. Understand the heart and mind of the one true God as you see it in me.

[38 : 04] And then follow me, follow me in the way of this world's redeemer. But we need to be very clear on this, you see, that Jesus that we see on earth and we see right here in the gospels, he's not different from the Jesus who's now enthroned in heaven's glory.

God's self-humbling, God's serving nature is not in contrast to his true nature. God as revealed in the flesh of Jesus Christ is the image, the very image of the unseen God.

He is the fullness of the glory of God Almighty. This is our God, the servant king. in all his meekness and in his majesty.

And he bids us, you see, to follow him, sharing his generous, gracious glory now and sharing that same unchanging nature of glory in his kingdom forever.

What now, as the hymn says, is forever in beauty glorified in our risen Lord Jesus is this glory of the world's redeemer. it's the glory of the one who came, as verse 28 says, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[39 : 25] You see, friends, it's loving this kind of God. It's rejoicing in his generosity, his compassion. It's gladly sharing in his glory, the glory that gives up everything, the glory that puts itself last in order to serve in his kingdom.

kingdom. It's that that tells us if we really will be near him forever in his kingdom. James and John did have, as I said, in a sense, a right desire, the highest desire to be near Jesus forever and ever.

But you see, if you're going to be near him then and like him then, sharing his true glory then, then we must be find near him now and like him now, sharing in his same kind of glory now in this world.

To have a share in his royal throne, we must also have a share in his redeeming cross. Our glory and our reward now will be to be near his cross now.

God is so good. Because that's how we share in his mind, in his heart. It's how we share a mentality that stoops to serve, the mentality of our Redeemer.

[40 : 47] It's so hard for us to see that, isn't it? It's so hard for us to live like that. Indeed, it is impossible with man, as we saw in chapter 19. Because God's so utterly other.

He turns all our thinking absolutely upside down. But it's not impossible with God, is it? For us to be turned upside down like that with him.

If only we'll ask him, he will open our eyes, he will open our hearts to see. That's the wonderful encouragement of this little epilogue at the very end of the chapter. Look at verses 29 to 34 at the end.

Why is it there? It's telling us the only ones who really do see it clearly are these two blind men. It's a sharp irony, isn't it? But it's just such a wonderful picture of God's sovereign grace.

These two blind men, verse 30, they cry out to Jesus as God's Messiah King. Have mercy on us, Son of David. And what do they find? They find a king who stoops to serve helpless begging men.

[41 : 59] And then you see in verse 34, after they've received grace, mercy from Jesus, all they want is to be near him. Not just in the glory to come, but right now on the road to the cross.

Immediately they recovered their sight and they followed him. They followed him. Because they grasped the wonder of his generous grace. And therefore they grasped the reward, the glory of true discipleship.

And while the poor disciples are still, it seems, just following Jesus in the hope of rewards to come, these blind beggars are the ones who understand that they've already received bounteous grace and mercy.

So that now they can follow him as their lord and their master. And that in itself is rich reward.

Their eyes open to see Jesus rejoicing in his grace and finding true glory simply in joining him, serving his kingdom now, being with him.

[43 : 10] It's so easy, isn't it? Not to be like those blind men. It's so easy just to be drifting back into the mentality of this world's rewards. And that is what stops us sharing in the joy of God's lavish grace to us and to others.

That's what will make us grumble about our own lot. That's what will make us grumble at God's grace. And it's so easy also, isn't it, to have the mentality of this world's rulers that just grasps at glory.

And that's what makes us bitter when others perhaps eclipse us in this world's terms. We need to learn, don't we, from these blind men.

We too need to be praying daily, don't we? Lord, open our eyes to see, to see this world's redeemer in all his glory who came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

To see him and so to follow him, longing to be like him and sharing and showing that mentality of this world's redeemer that stoops to serve.

[44 : 27] Seeing that is and serving the real Jesus and rejoicing in his real kingdom. For the last shall be first and the first last.

Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, even to give his life as a ransom for many.

Amen. Let's pray together. O God, who declarest thine almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace that we, running the way of thy commandments may obtain thy gracious promises and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.