

Escape from Everlasting Separation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 May 2015

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading this morning, which you'll find in Luke's Gospel at chapter 17. If you have one of our church visitors' Bibles, that's page 876.

And we're continuing our studies in Luke's Gospel. And a new little section that begins here with the familiar little words from Luke, verse 11, on the way to Jerusalem.

You'll see if you read through, we're drawing near indeed to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. And this is the final section of his teaching on that journey before he comes to enter the city.

And at chapter 19, verse 28, you'll see he goes ahead up to Jerusalem and enters the city in what we know as his triumphal entry. And from there on, it is very much and very rapidly the road to the cross.

And through the cross to his coming glory. So here's a last little section of Jesus' teaching. And we're going to read from verse 11 of chapter 17 down to verse 14 of chapter 18.

[1 : 0 8] On the way to Jerusalem, he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered the village, he was met by 10 lepers who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

When he saw them, he said to them, go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.

And he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, were not 10 cleansed?

Where are the nine? Was no one found to return to give praise to God except for this foreigner? And he said to him, rise, go on your way.

Your faith literally has saved you. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.

[2 : 1 6] Nor will they say, look, here it is or there. For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. And he said to his disciples, the days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.

And you will not see it. And they'll say to you, look there or look here. Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.

But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man.

They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

[3 : 26] On that day, let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in his house not come down to take them away. And likewise, let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed.

One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left. And they said to him, Where, Lord? He said to them, Where the corpses, there the vultures will gather.

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to lose heart. He said, In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.

And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary. For a while he refused. But afterward he said to himself, Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice.

[4 : 35] So that she will not beat me down by her continual coming. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night, even though he delay long over them?

I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Two men went up to the temple to pray.

One, a Pharisee, and the other, a despised tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[5 : 54] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Amen. Well, let's turn together to Luke's Gospel, chapter 17, at page 876.

876 in our church Bibles. The first verse of this new section here, verse 11, reminds us that Jesus and his followers are on the road to Jerusalem.

And indeed, as I said, they're nearing the end of this great journey. And this is the final section before Jesus' arrival and what we call the triumphal entry, as the king who comes in the name of the Lord, as they exclaim in chapter 19, verse 38.

And Jesus has been teaching along the way, and more and more as he goes on, about his coming kingdom and its glory. And so I guess it's not surprising that, as that happens, increasingly questions arise about when that promised kingdom was going to be seen, when all this glory was going to be revealed.

[7 : 29] And that's what the Pharisees asked directly, you'll see in verse 20. And in fact, that question is key to this whole section. It runs right through, as I've said, to chapter 19, verse 27.

And it's key to what Jesus is teaching here. You'll see the question again in chapter 19, verse 11. We're told they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

And so Jesus is therefore dealing with this whole question all the way through. And we can see how often he refers to the days of the Son of Man.

See it there in chapter 17, verse 22, and so on. Again, verse 30, the day when the Son of Man is to be revealed. So Jesus is answering these questions and is being very clear to correct their misunderstandings about when and how the kingdom of God comes.

And also their misunderstanding of what his salvation really is all about. You'll also notice how often that we find reference to salvation or to being saved in these couple of chapters.

[8 : 45] Six times at least that key word is used. Maybe remember back in chapter 7 and 8 of Luke's gospel, there was another cluster of words about salvation when Jesus in his miracles was demonstrating the wonders of his salvation.

You see it here in chapter 18, verse 26. Who then can be saved is the disciples' question. And the answer is, well, what's impossible with man is possible with God.

It's possible when he opens blind eyes to see what is hidden from men. That is the truth of the good news of the Savior himself, that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah.

We see that very graphically in chapter 18, when the blind beggar's eyes are opened, when he sees exactly that. And Jesus says to him in chapter 18, verse 42, your faith has saved you.

I don't know why our translation doesn't just use that word. That's what it says. And it's the very same thing that he says to the leper here in chapter 17, verse 19. Your faith has saved you. salvation comes to those whose eyes are opened to see who Jesus really is.

[9 : 59] It's the same for Zacchaeus in chapter 19. Salvation today has come to this house, says Jesus. And you remember, we'll come to this next time, that Zacchaeus was very short.

We're told he couldn't see Jesus over the crowd, so he climbed up a tree so that he could see who Jesus was. And he did see and understand who Jesus really was.

And so he found salvation. If you look through the whole chapter, it's about seeing and not seeing. The leper saw that he was healed, we see in verse 15.

And therefore he went to fall at Jesus' feet. The blind man saw what was hidden from many, that Jesus was the Messiah, who was the Son of David. And he followed Jesus, glorifying God in his newfound salvation.

And Jesus tells us that is faith. That's what saves. That's what prepares you for the coming glory of his kingdom.

[11 : 04] And so this whole section hangs together around this theme of salvation and of seeing and so being prepared. And as always, as we've seen with Luke, he is very deliberate and very careful in the way he orders his writing.

So it shouldn't surprise us that it begins with a story about 10 lepers and it ends with a story about 10 miners, the money that's given to the servants. And all the way through, we can see these clear themes coming again.

And Jesus repeats them to drive his point home. It's all about the real faith that alone prepares you for the coming glory of the kingdom of God.

By opening your eyes to seeing what his kingdom and his salvation really means and what it's all really about. And it means seeing, according to Jesus, that Jesus is the king who will come at last to judge the world.

And therefore that the gospel of salvation is truly about escaping now from that everlasting separation that will come for those who have not believed.

[12 : 19] And it's about seeing that Jesus is the king who has come now, therefore, to save. And that the gospel of salvation is about entering now into everlasting service of the king and his kingdom.

That's the second part that we'll see next time. But we're going to look today at the first half of this section in the passage that we read, where the focus is on salvation as escape from everlasting separation from Christ, the king of glory, and from the coming judgment and deliverance from everlasting death.

And that faith, that opening of eyes to clear sight, comes through crying out to Jesus for mercy, for him to save you, and for him to sustain you until that day.

So let's look then at the text. Once again, we find a very familiar pattern with Luke. We have the message pictured in a story about Jesus' actions. Then we have the message preached and driven home by Jesus himself.

So look first at verses 11 to 19. We've got the message pictured here in this story of ten lepers healed by Jesus. Notice Luke tells us exactly where this happens, between Samaria and Galilee.

[13 : 40] And normally on his journey, he hasn't named places. So it must be significant. And it's significant, of course, because Samaria is foreign territory. Samaritans were separated from Israel and from its temple, and therefore separated from privileged access to God's revelation.

And notice verse 12. Here are ten lepers who are utterly separated also from society and from Jesus. They stand, we're told, at a distance. They recognize him as master, verse 13, but they can't come near.

They can only cry out from a distance for mercy. Have mercy on us. And Jesus gives them a word, and as they obey that word, they're cleansed.

He's saying to them, do as I say and you'll be cleansed. The priests will verify it just as the law commands. And as they obeyed and went, they were cleansed.

Notice the word, by the way. Leprosy in the Old Testament was a picture, wasn't it, of uncleanness, picturing the uncleanness of sin that needed to be cleansed by God, not just healed.

[14 : 53] But one of them, look at verse 15, one of them, when he saw, note the word, when he saw what had happened, he turned back, praising God. And he went to find Jesus, and he fell on his feet, giving him thanks.

And he was a Samaritan, a foreigner. And Jesus says, well, where are the rest? Presumably not foreigners, presumably Jews.

Didn't they see what this foreigner did see? That this healing was God's gracious word given to them in mercy, not only to heal them, but to point them to who Jesus really was.

And so to see and to find in him the far greater cleansing that alone can let them escape, not just a separation from men, but an everlasting separation from God and his kingdom because of their sin.

But this Samaritan realized the privilege of God's mercy to him in Christ. And he received not only cleansing from his leprosy, but verse 19, he received salvation.

[16 : 03] Jesus promises him, your faith has saved you. That's what it says. See, he didn't take God's temporal blessings, the physical cleaning from leprosy.

He didn't take that for granted, but he was full of thankfulness to God. And he realized that all of this was to drive him to Jesus' feet. What a contrast to so many Israelites.

They had the privilege of all God's revelation, didn't they? They had, says Paul, the covenants, the law, the promises, the patriarchs. Patriarchs. And yet Paul goes on to say there in Romans chapter 9 that the Gentiles, the foreigners, attain a righteousness by faith.

But Israel, who had all these privileges, did not. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith. But they stumbled over the stumbling stone, who is Jesus Christ.

They did not see that all God's blessings to them were meant to make them see that the fulfillment of all God's promises to them would come in Christ, the true Lord and the true King that God had always promised.

[17 : 26] You see, they had very different ideas of what the kingdom of God was to be like. Ideas that made them proud instead of penitent and humble like this Samaritan.

Ideas that made them impatient and focused on the temporal, on the present instead of patient and looking to what is everlasting. And so they were utterly lacking in perception about what was really of ultimate importance.

They did not see the greatest spiritual priorities of all. And they had no understanding of the fact that one day the only thing that will matter for all eternity is whether during your life you have responded to the revelation God has sent in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And come therefore to fall down at his feet and give him thanks. So as to be not left separated from him forever on the day of his great return in power.

That was that generation's mistake. And of course, just as so many of Jesus' generation were blinded then, so many in our generation are just as blind, aren't they?

[18 : 43] Despite all the privileges that God has sent us, for so many generations of a gospel that is meant to send all with hearts full of thanksgiving to praise God through Jesus Christ and to fall at his feet.

Because only that, only that response of real faith to Christ's true gospel, only that can bring salvation.

And only that brings understanding as to what God's salvation really is as Jesus proclaims it. And so what Jesus goes on to explain and to teach to that generation, to make them understand the momentous reality that his coming proclaims to the world, it's just as important for our generation to hear.

But let's look at what Jesus says and what he teaches really plainly now in this passage about the faith that saves and about what salvation and about what his kingdom is really all about.

He goes from the message pictured here, from verse 20 onwards, to the message preached. As he unfolds, what real faith that prepares for his coming glory, what real faith is like.

[20 : 00] And first, in verses 20 to 37, he tells us that real faith, real saving faith is perceptive. That it sees and understands what the gospel revelation is really ultimately about and therefore what salvation really means.

That the kingdom of God is not just about this world. That it's about an eternal world. And that salvation is not just about healing in this world.

It's about deliverance from the coming judgment of everlasting separation from Christ. In what can only be described as an everlasting death.

Now you'll see Jesus speaks, verse 21, to the Pharisees who were seeking a completely wrong idea of what the kingdom of God was.

They wanted it here and now in this world. They vastly underestimated the cosmic scale of the problem of this world because of sin.

[21 : 01] That's the universal problem of human beings, isn't it? That's the universal problem of sin.

That's what we're saying. In fact, people do use that language, don't they? Talk about saving the planet through the latest green agenda or whatever it might be. Or saving humanity through the latest advances in medical science or other science or whatever.

Or politics or economics or social change or the sexual revolution or whatever it is. People are seeking salvation. Changing the world. And you see, friends, the real danger is that because we live in a world that thinks like that, that the church thinks like that too.

And alas, it often does. It starts to talk about kingdom building and mission as if it was about healing bodies. It's about helping the poor.

It's about improving the environment and a whole host of other things. But friends, although these things may be good in themselves, the kingdom of God is not coming that way.

[22 : 31] It's not. The fullness of the kingdom and the full salvation for this world, which is under the curse, can only come through a cataclysmic cosmic transformation.

When God finally purges all the evil from this world and brings it to a whole new creation. That's what the Bible teaches.

And Jesus is explicit in verse 20. Do you see? The kingdom of God is not coming in this age with signs to be observed. In this age, Jesus is clear.

It is a spiritual reality. It is something spiritually perceived. But it is nevertheless real, he says. And it has begun already in this age in the person of Jesus.

He is the king and he is already in the midst of them. And therefore the kingdom is in the midst of them because Jesus is standing right in front of them. Just as he said back in chapter 11 verse 20, Jesus works, represent the kingdom of God coming upon that generation.

[23 : 40] And the preaching of the gospel by his disciples meant that the kingdom has drawn near to people. As he puts it in chapter 10 verse 10.

And they must therefore respond. They must see it. They must perceive it. And they must respond now with real faith. Or else, says Jesus, they must be condemned.

And that response is urgent according to Jesus. Make no mistake. Because one day he says the kingdom will be visible. Unmistakably visible. When Jesus returns as promised to usher in the age to come.

To usher in the new age of everlasting glory. But that day, that day will mean the end of opportunity. And the unveiling of a great chasm that we saw in that parable before.

That is fixed between Christ and his kingdom. And those who have refused him and turned their back on him. And scorned him in this world.

[24 : 47] And so you see from verse 22 onwards. You see Jesus turns to the disciples. To make it absolutely clear to his church. That the call to faith in Christ.

Is all about a salvation from judgment on that day. Which will be an almighty cataclysm. For which the flood and the judgment of Sodom.

Were just a pale, pale preview. And Jesus makes five things. Abundantly clear. About his kingdom. And what it will mean at last.

In its coming glory. First of all he says. It will be seen. It will be a seismic event. Absolutely self-evident. And unmistakable.

It will be seen. By the whole world. Just as lightning lights up the sky. Verse 24. So will the son of man be. In that day.

[25 : 43] And so you see the message of verses 22 to 24. Are clear. Don't be fooled. The people claim. Look. The signs of the kingdom about to come.

Oh look here. Oh look here. The great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We've all longed for. Ushering in Christ's kingdom. Come and join our movement. Come and experience the fullness.

Of the kingdom. See Jesus is very real. Look at verse 22. He knows. He knows. That there will be a natural longing. Among his people. For the glory of his kingdom.

A longing. For an end to sin. An end to suffering. And sorrow. And when we long like that. It leads us so often. Doesn't it. Into wishful thinking. And that wishful thinking.

Is so easily exploited. That's why the prosperity gospel. Flourishes all throughout the world today. It plays on people's longing. For the glory to come. And many.

[26 : 40] Many. Many people are lured. With the promises of glory now. And healing now. And wealth now. And the kingdom now. Look.

Here are the signs of it. Jesus says. Don't. Go. And follow them. That's how many cults have been started. Of course.

Isn't it? Mormonism. Jehovah's Witnesses. All sorts of things. Here at last. Is the real Messiah. The ultimate revelation. That can teach you. The way of the kingdom. Which is imminent. Don't.

Go and follow them. Says Jesus. It's really actually the message. Isn't it? Of the Islamic State. Today. In a very different. Gruesome way. This is the kingdom. Coming. The paradise on earth.

Under Sharia law. That's what it is. To their twisted. Evil minds. Isn't it? No. No. No. Says Jesus. There will be no.

[27 : 37] Missing. The real glory. Of his kingdom. Every eye. Will see him. It will be seen. By all the earth. Unmistakably. But second.

Jesus says. It will be. A surprise. That's the message. Of verses 25 to 30. A surprise. To the secular society.

That has rejected. Jesus. He was rejected. Verse 25. By his generation. Who scoffed. At his claims. To be the son of God. And also. By virtually. Every generation since.

And our society. Even in the so-called. Christian West. Has largely ignored. Christ's first coming. Isn't it? It's largely. Rejected. His gospel. And so. Of course. It's got no thought.

Whatsoever. Of his second coming. And so. Says Jesus. Just as in the days. Of Noah. And Lot. When judgment. Came from God. With absolute surprise.

[28 : 33] To all but the few. So it will be. He says. On the day. The son of man. Is revealed. Now those ancient days. Were days of great wickedness.

You can read about it. In the book of Genesis. Society. In God's eyes. Was flagrantly wicked. By the way. It's not without note. Is it? That in both of those occasions. One of the evidences.

Of man's utter rebellion. In his heart. Against everything. That comes from the mouth of God. One of the clearest evidences. Was. That it was a very promiscuous. And perverse. Sexual society.

But the thing. That Jesus points to here. Is that nobody thought. Anything was amiss. Normal life. Went on. Just. As before. Verse 27. They were eating. And drinking.

They were marrying. They were selling. They were planting. They were building. As if nothing would ever change. As if things could only get better. Until.

[29 : 30] Verse 27. The day when the flood came. And destroyed them all. And verse 29. When fire and sulfur rained down from heaven.

And destroyed them all. Except those. Who had escaped. By heeding God's warnings. In his gospel of salvation.

And so. And so. It will be. Says Jesus. In verse 30. On the day. Of the son of man. Great surprise. To a godless world.

And third. Says Jesus. In verses 31 to 33. It will be. Sudden. And swift. With no time then. To make any preparation. For the world to come.

Everything you have. Will be left behind. And everything will depend. Upon what you have become. Through what you have treasured.

[30 : 25] In this life. Remember. Lot's wife. Says Jesus. Lot's wife. Really treasured. The things. Of this world.

Didn't she? And so. Even when judgment. Was imminent. Even when she was being. Urged. To run. And flee. And escape. From the disaster. Which she could see. She was looking back.

With longing. At the life. She was. Leaving behind. At the things. She treasured. In this life. Remember. Lot's wife. Says Jesus.

What she really. Treasured. Was this world's things. And so. Even. When it was imminent. She tried to preserve. Her life. And lost it. You can't do that.

Says Jesus. In verse 33. Or you will lose. The only life. That matters. Eternal life. You can lose everything. In this life. But don't risk. Losing real life.

[31 : 23] True life. The life. That you were made for. How greatly. We need that warning. We must need it. Mustn't we? Jesus.

Constantly. Is warning again. And again. Against all the things. Of this world. Our possessions. Our desires. Our relationships. The things. That cause us. To look back. And look over our shoulder.

And miss out. Potentially. On the coming glory. Of his kingdom. Don't. Think. That you can do that. Says Jesus. And that there will be time.

In the end. That you've got plenty. Of time now. To sort things out. With Jesus. One day. One day. No. His coming. Will be sudden. And swift. And then it will be too late.

Because fourth. What will be sudden. And what will be swift. Will be a separation. Says Jesus. Forever. Of those who are unprepared. And those who are prepared.

[32 : 28] For his coming glory. Look at verses 34 and 35. Just as the flood took all away. And so cleansed the earth. Of evil. And the sulfur. Swept away. And buried.

The wickedness of the cities of the plain. So at his coming. Says Jesus. They will be taken. Taken away. Separating. Even those who have shared the same bed.

Shared the same workplace. Shared the same friends and family. Shared. The same city. And so fifthly. And finally. The consequences of his coming.

Will be deadly serious. Whatever the enigmatic statement of verse 37 means. It's plain. Surely. That it is a picture of grim seriousness.

Of death. That is what this separation means. Says Jesus. Death. Death as the antithesis of life. Which is eternal life.

[33 : 25] And so this must be eternal death. As one writer put it. The son of man's return means massive. Judgment.

It will be final. And will carry the stench of death. The return will be deadly serious. You should not be on the wrong side.

When it comes. Judgment. Will be universal and permanent. And as unmissable. And as obvious to all.

As the circling vultures. Unmistakably point to the place. And the presence. Of death. That's what my kingdom.

Is all about. Says Jesus. It's coming. And when it does come. To finally be established over this world. It will bring both everlasting life.

[34 : 24] And. Everlasting death. And real faith. The faith. That prepares you for that coming. Perceives that.

It sees. What the gospel is really all about. And it grasps. Hold of that gospel. As the greatest priority. In this world.

Over every other thing. Both to believe that gospel. Now with all of your heart. And to proclaim. That gospel. That gospel.

And that gospel alone. To all the world. God. Because that. Is what Christ's kingdom mission. Is all about. And nothing.

Nothing in this world. Can possibly. Ever be more important. Than that. That is. Jesus. Plain. Plain message here. Friends. Real faith.

[35 : 19] Real faith is perceptive. It grasps. The ultimate realities. Of what Jesus. And his kingdom. And his gospel. Are really all about. God. But second.

In verses 1 to 8. Of chapter 18. We're told. That real faith. That prepares. For the coming of Christ. Is persistent. It perseveres. And doesn't give up. Hope. In the face. Even of. Perplexity.

And suffering. When God. Doesn't seem to be answering. Even the prayers. That God himself. Teaches us. To pray. For his kingdom. To come. Before the ungodly. For the faithless.

Jesus words. About his coming. In glory. Are a real warning. Aren't they? Of looming disaster. It will mean destruction. Of all the enemies. Of Christ. But by contrast.

For those of faith. Who in this world. Often are scoffed at. And mocked. And ill-treated. And often feel. Very weak. Very vulnerable. It's a wonderful word.

[36 : 15] Of comfort. For those people. Because it will mean. For them. Deliverance. From all enemies. All evil. Will at last. Be punished. And all wrongs.

At the same time. Will also be put right. That is real justice. Isn't it? So often in our world. What we call justice. Is only half justice. If a loved one of yours. Is murdered.

And the murderer. Is caught. And brought to justice. And given a sentence. That's not justice. Is it? Because the life. Of your loved one. Has not been restored. How we long. For true justice.

For all wrongs. To be put right again. As well as for evil. To be punished. Surely among Luke's first readers. There must have been many suffering. Many vulnerable.

Many persecuted. Longing. For relief. Crying out. How long oh Lord. Till we're delivered from our enemies. That's the cry of the faithful. All through history.

[37 : 13] That will be the cry. This very day. Friends. To many gatherings. Of Christians in the world. Gathering just like us. Under fear. Under threat. Under persecution. How long oh Lord. Until you give us justice.

In a lesser way. We also find ourselves. Feeling like that so often. Don't we? And praying that. How long oh Lord. Why don't you bring to an end. This relentless struggle.

That I'm having. Struggles in a fallen world. Under the curse. Struggles. That mean that my work. Is as you've said.

By the sweat of my brow. Full of stress. And pain. Or the struggles that I have. Constantly. With my own sin. With my great adversary.

The devil. Who pulls me down. All the time. How long oh Lord. Till we see justice. We're saved in hope.

[38 : 12] Aren't we? According to the apostle Paul. That means. Even when he's talking. In that great victory chapter. In Romans chapter 8. What does he say? In these bodies. And in this life. We groan.

Constantly. With the whole creation. Longing for our full redemption. And because of that. So often. We feel like giving up. Don't we?

Because we start to think. God isn't answering my prayer. He teaches us to pray. Thy kingdom come. We sang it. The reign of Jesus. Curse ended.

Death defeated. But where is it? He's so slow to answer. Is it only me who thinks like that? I think we all think like that.

But not so. Do you remember what Peter says in his letter? God is not slow. To fulfill his promise. As some think. He is patient. Towards you.

[39 : 14] Because he doesn't want people to perish. He wants them to repent. He wants them to have faith. So that they are prepared. For the day of his coming. Because when he does come.

In the end. As we've seen. It's too late for mercy. He's patient. He's merciful. He's not slack. But he will.

Answer. He will come. He will. Bring deliverance. He will bring. Absolute justice. So don't. Give up. That's what Jesus is saying here.

By telling this parable to us. If an unjust judge. If a wicked judge. Will give justice. To this widow's persistent cry for justice. For all the wrong reasons. Because in Glasgow speak.

That old woman's day in my heathen. How much more. How much more. Will our God. Our loving father.

[40 : 12] Give justice. To his elect. His precious people. Chosen in Christ. Before all worlds. It's like back in chapter 11.

Do you remember where he says. If even you. Who are evil. As fathers. Know how to give good gifts. To your children. How much more. Will your perfect father. Hear in heaven. It may seem.

As verse 7 says here. It may seem. That he is delaying long. But no. He is merciful. And he will answer.

And speedily. Just. As fast. As his vast. And patient mercy. Will allow. That's a word of great comfort.

Isn't it? And a great encouragement. Not to give up. Not to lose heart. Not to lose faith. In the promise of God.

[41 : 09] To keep praying. Thy kingdom come. Prayer is just the audible form of faith. Isn't it? To keep praying.

Just means to keep trusting Jesus. Real faith is persistent. Perseveres. To the end. He who endures.

To the end. Will be saved. Said Jesus. And we can. Because we know. He won't let us. Down. And if he delays.

It is. Because he is merciful. But as Hebrews 10 says. We need endurance. So that when we've done. The will of God. We may receive.

What is promised. And it's a challenge. Isn't it? Jesus says that. In verse 8. Will he find. Such persistent. Faith. When he comes. But it's such a comfort.

[42 : 04] And a spirit. Of faith and prayer. Because Jesus promises. He will. Give justice. To his elect. And we can trust him. And we can have rock.

Solid. Assurance. That our coming salvation. Is real. Even in the darkest days. Real faith. Is persistent. It perseveres.

To the end. Because it trusts. That the Lord Jesus. Will never lie to us. And will never let us down. But we do need to be careful.

Don't we? Because. Assurance. Is not arrogance. Assurance. And there's a great difference. between. Between. The assurance. Of persistent prayer.

That arises. Out of righteous faith. And the arrogance. Of presumptuous prayer. That comes from self-righteous unbelief. And so Jesus signs a warning.

[43 : 02] Against such arrogance. In verses 9 to 14. And tells this. Parable. To those who trust in themselves. That they're righteous. And it's a stark reminder.

To all of us. That real faith. Can never harbor such pride. No real faith. The faith that alone. Prepares for the coming of Christ. Is always.

According to Jesus. Penitent faith. Humbly penitent. Even as it persists. To the very end. See when we. When we cry to God.

For justice. Even when others have wronged us. Tends to make us feel. Doesn't it? That we're in the right. That we're naturally superior. To those who have wronged us.

And often that may be so. Because. If you're not a thief. And a burglar. Repeatedly. Steals from you. Then relative. To you. He is.

[43 : 55] Evil. And you very much. Are. A better man. But the trouble is. To be a better man. Or a more righteous man. Compare yourself to him. May not actually be saying very much.

And that way of thinking. Can blind us. Can't it? To something far more important. To God's measure of goodness. Which is very. Very different from ours. And you see.

If we're blind. To that vital matter. Then we're in very. Very great danger. Because the sinner. Who is in the greatest danger. Is the one who does not repent.

Because he doesn't think. He needs to repent. And that's what this parable. Drives home to us. You see. Two men went up to pray. Says Jesus. Well. You see. Many people pray. Even persistently.

Don't they? But it's not the motion of prayer. But the message. That our prayer reveals. About the truth in our hearts.

[44 : 52] That really matters. This Pharisee. No doubt. Was a good man. Verse 11. He wasn't. An extortioner. He wasn't unjust. He wasn't an adulterer. Worst of all. He was not like one of these.

Thieving. Dishonest. Tax collectors. They were scurrilous people. We would not like them. And probably. He'd been fleeced. By that very man. Many times. That's why he knew. What he did.

He was probably harboring. Great resentment. Even to see him. In the temple. And he judged himself. You see. By looking down. On the tax collector. So of course.

He came out well. He trusted in himself. That he was. Much more righteous. Than that man. But the tax collector. Verse 13.

Stood. A far off. Notice the phrase. At a distance. Just like the lepers. And he couldn't look up. Because you see.

- [45 : 45] He saw himself. Not. Against the standard. Of other men. But in relation. To God's standard. And he knew. Where that left him. He was beating his breast.
- Which vividly. Just says. I have nothing. To plead. Nothing. To my credit. Nothing. To claim. For a place. In your kingdom.
- Only my sin. Which is real. And which I know. Must condemn me. Have. Mercy. On me. Oh God. Be merciful. To me.
- A sinner. And Jesus says. An astonishing thing. I tell you. This man. Went down. To his house. Justified.
- Assured. Of vindication. On the coming day. Of God's judgment. This man. Went down. Justified. Not the other. Both were sinners.
- [46 : 43] And very likely. This man was a worse sinner. In moral terms. Than the other one. But the one. Was proud. Trusted in himself. And the other was penitent.
- And threw himself on the mercy of God. And so. Only he. Could be saved. Both needed forgiveness. But only one could receive it.
- Because he really understood. That he needed it. You see. Proud hearts. And proud hands. Cannot. Take hold. Of God's forgiveness. Only penitent hands.
- And penitent hearts. And so. Jesus says. Once again. Everyone who exalts himself. Will be humbled. Which in this context.
- Must mean. Taken away. Destroyed. Separated forever. From the presence of the king. But the one who humbles himself. Will be exalted.
- [47 : 45] Vindicated. On that great day. When the son of man is revealed. Real faith. You see. That alone. Can prepare you. For that day. Must be penitent faith.
- Faith. Whose persistent prayer is. God be merciful. To me. A sinner. Jesus. Master. Have mercy. On me.
- So friends. Jesus question. Is this. When. He comes. Will he find. Faith. That faith. Here.
- In this church. Faith. That perceives. Just how great. The issues of. Eternity. Really are. And what salvation. Really is. That it really is.
- About escape. From the horror. Of everlasting. Separation. From Christ. And from life itself. A faith. That is truly. Penitent.
- [48 : 46] Humbled. By the weight of sin. And yet. Heartened. By the mercy. Of God. In Christ. And so. Faith. That is persistent. Longing.
- Longing. For his. Appearing. And praying. Thy kingdom come. Even as we proclaim. Far and wide. The mercy. Of he who desires.
- That none should perish. But that all. Should rather repent. And find life. And be prepared. For that great day.
- That's coming. Are you prepared. Today. For the coming of the son of man. Let's pray.
- God our father. Father. We thank you. That you're a God. Who speaks.
- [49 : 46] And who speaks truth. And who brings. Clearly. To our eyes. The issues. Of ultimate. Importance.
- So Lord. Drive out of our hearts. This morning. Anything. That would prevent us. From hearing. And seeing. And taking in.
- And making our own. Your gracious word of mercy. Spoken to us. In Jesus Christ. Your son. For we ask it in his name.
- Amen.