

Matthew Ch18v1-14 - Greatness in the Kingdom

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Preacher: Jason Harrison

[0 : 00] Jason, do you want to come up? Come a bit closer and you'll just have to speak up. Hopefully he'll get there. Sounds good. Well, just to give you all a warm welcome again, it's great to have you with us today. And if you're visiting, a special welcome and a reminder to all of our tea and coffee time afterwards where we can catch up with one another. Two visitors we have today is Jason and Krista who's here.

So I'm just going to ask a little bit. Jason's going to be preaching this morning and he comes from the U.S. and he's part of a partner church in Minnesota.

So Jason, you're here with Krista. Tell us a little bit about your family back home. Yeah, so Krista, my wife, and then myself.

[1 : 27] And then we have two little ones right now. A three-year-old who's a lot of fun and then a one-and-a-half-year-old that's wandering around and super smiley.

And then we're expecting a third in September. And that one's a boy. So I have two girls and there's a boy coming. We're getting ready. Good. So tell us, how did you become a follower of Christ? Did you grow up in a home where you were taught or was it through some other means? Yep, I grew up in a home where my parents were believers. And so I heard the gospel.

And actually my dad was in ministry. He worked for a camp. And so I actually heard the gospel from speakers, all sorts of different kinds of speakers coming in, preaching the gospel. And it was through that.

I didn't believe until I was probably 13 that I placed my faith in Jesus. But it was primarily through my parents. Okay. And now we'll find out a bit more about what you do.

[2 : 29] But you're now working in Redeemer Bible Church in Minnesota. It's a little bit different than this, but it's the same. So what's different and what's the same?

Yeah, well, very like-minded. You know, our services would be very similar. The songs we sing would be the same songs. In fact, I was just talking to Jonathan.

The gospel project is what we use for our Sunday school as well. And so it would be very similar. Our difference would mainly probably be that we have a building.

And that's mainly the only difference, probably. That's good. So you're followers of Jesus Christ.

Yes. That's good to know. Yeah. And like-minded, yes, followers of Jesus Christ.

Like-minded, expository preaching. We'd be preaching through Exodus right now. Okay. Very good.

And what do you do at Redeemer? What's your role? Yeah, so I'm a pastor. That's my role.

[3 : 28] Okay. And in any particular area? You said that I shouldn't talk about my role. You can keep going. I'm a pastor. No. Yeah, I serve primarily with youth, so teens.

And then I'm the pastor. I oversee administration for the whole church. And a lot of that I delegate. Okay. Yeah. Thanks. So Jason will be speaking in just a moment.

Before he comes to do that, we're going to read from Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 18, following on in our series together. So Matthew, Chapter 18.

And we're going to read the first 14 verses of Matthew 18.

Amen.

[5 : 42] Gouge it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. It's happier than the one sheep and about the 99 that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

I'm going to pray and then Jason is going to come and speak. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Father God, we thank you for the gathering of this church here.

And we thank you for our partner church at Redeemer as they gather later on today. As we pray for your blessing and your Holy Spirit to be at work among us, we pray the same for our brothers and sisters there in Redeemer.

[7 : 43] Amen. And we ask for your special help to Jason and to us that we may learn from your word and may come to love Jesus more.

So teach us, Father, be gracious to us, build us up and bless. For it's in your name we pray all these things.

Amen. Well, it has been great to be with you.

And we've had a wonderful time since coming in on Wednesday and going to home group, Krista visiting Polo, and then the time with the Senior Rock and Rooted on Friday night was glorious.

And then I've enjoyed all the conversations, meeting many of you and having a chance to fellowship in the gospel. And our hearts are full. And I want to thank Johnny and the other elders for giving me the opportunity to open God's word with you from Matthew 18.

[8 : 56] Matthew 18. I remember hearing a conversation of a son with his dad. And the conversation led to a question where the son asked the dad, when did you realize you were normal and wouldn't do anything great?

Well, first I thought, man, I can't wait for the day that my kids ask me those great questions. But also the son makes assumptions that often we have also about greatness.

Whether it's assumptions about status or accomplishments or self-reliance or power or wealth. Yet greatness is something we all desire.

And in the eyes of the world, there are very few that actually find it. Our text this morning lays out something of a roundabout, which the big roundabouts here still scare me to death when we go around them.

But it's something of a 180 or a reversal on what we would instinctively think in our natural selves about greatness. Jesus doesn't rebuke the disciples for their desire for greatness.

[10 : 21] But instead, what he does is he redirects it by picturing what kingdom life is like. Or what true greatness before God actually is.

And so that's what I want to consider this morning. An upside down kingdom. An upside down from what the world out there assumes about greatness.

Jesus is going to correct that. He's going to correct kind of the son's assumption in his question to his dad. And assumptions that we often think. So I think everyone's there.

Matthew 18. If you're not there, I invite you to find it again in your Bibles. We're going to look at the first 14 verses. So let's read verse 1 again and then consider the context.

At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, Who then is the greatest in the kingdom? So here we have Jesus and what we would probably think is the 12, the 12 disciples, asking about kingdom greatness.

[11 : 24] What is it like? Who is the greatest? And I think it's important for us to consider first, how do we think about this question in its context? We know from parallel Gospels, other Gospels, that Jesus has addressed this in some form before.

If you remember Mark 9, he overhears the disciples arguing amongst themselves. And he asks them, What are you arguing about? And like any good children, they don't say anything.

They're silent. And then he goes on to teach about what greatness is in the kingdom. Now, in our passage, I don't think this question comes out of nowhere.

And I think it flows out of the context. So if you flip over a page or so to Matthew 16, and then you look down at verses 13 through 16.

So let's read those. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked the disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? They replied, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

[12 : 37] But what about you? He asked. Who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

So here we have Peter's confession, which I think you looked at last week. Peter represents the disciples' emerging understanding about who Jesus is, but they're not quite there.

In fact, Acts 1, 6, even after Jesus rose from the dead, they still have a little bit of confusion about the kingdom. They ask, Lord, at this time, are you going to restore the kingdom?

So in their minds, they're thinking more political than necessarily the spiritual aspect of the kingdom that we are in today. So they're still emerging into that idea.

And Jesus' prediction of his death confuses them, both in chapter 16 and in chapter 17. The next few verses are going to seem to put Peter in kind of an elevated place.

[13:37] Look at what he says in verse 17 and 18. He says, Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

And I tell you, Peter, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. The gates of Hades will not overcome it. So you can understand the question.

Who do you think is the greatest in the kingdom? If here he is addressing Peter in this way, it seems to think Peter is the greatest. And at the beginning of chapter 17, we have the transfiguration, which takes up three disciples, which maybe perhaps is the inner ring.

Look there, it says, Jesus took with him, verse 1, Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. And so there seems to be this inner ring that Jesus takes on, this great experience, on the mountain, the transfiguration.

So then you come back to our passage, and that's where we have the question, who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

[14:53] So what I want us to see this morning is how Jesus answers this question. But before we do that, we should consider what he does in verses 2 and 3.

And that is, verse 2, he called, so our chapter again, Matthew 18, verse 2, he called a little child to him. You can kind of picture it, and he placed the child among them, in the middle of all of them. So Jesus places this child, and then he says something that is truly unexpected, verse 3. And he said, truly I tell you, unless you change and become like this little child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

See what Jesus does? He says, this is really important for you to get. Consider what I'm going to say. And Jesus starts with entering, with the beginning.

It's almost as if he says, you're thinking about the kingdom as entirely wrong, you haven't got it yet. To even enter the kingdom, you need to humble yourself, become like a child.

[16:01] Why? Because without this humility, you will never enter it. Which is a very negative way to say it.

He uses a strong, the strongest way, never enter the kingdom. He says, only the humble find their way into the kingdom.

You see, the disciples wanted to be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus, on the other hand, wants them to consider if they're in the kingdom at all. It's like, you know, in a sport, you wondering if you made the all-star team.

And the coach is really concerned whether or not you're even on the team, you made the team at all. That's what Jesus does here. And he says, consider this unless you change.

Now, the word change has the idea of turning away. Maybe not the way that we think about change, but turn. And it's the essence of what it means to be a Christian.

[17:06] Every Christian has experienced this change. It's repentance. That is what turning means. And the word is passive, so we could translate it, unless you are changed, you will never enter the kingdom.

So we repent and God changes our hearts and we become like a child and we trust in the Father. So unless you experience this gospel producing change, you will not enter the kingdom.

and this means that we must admit that we are lost first. That we're lost sinners and we deserve, we have offended a holy God, we deserve death.

So if you're here and you're not a believer, if you're being honest, this is one of the things that catches us up. our hesitancy to embrace Christ because we still think deep down we have something to offer.

We're not quite desperate enough. But when you finally see that you cannot save yourself, you are dead in your sins, you are helpless, you are a beggar, there's nothing you can do to approach God.

[18:27] you are humbled. That's what Jesus is getting at. The surest mark commentator said on this of conversion, of belonging to Jesus is this humility.

The Christian faith is humbling. I heard a song that goes something like this, there is a mountain that only the lame can climb.

There is a table that only the hungry find. Only the beggar will have the currency when need is all you need. The precondition, the thing that you get before you come to Jesus, the realization you come to is that you are helpless and in need of a Savior.

And that's what Jesus says here for the disciples. Unless you become like this child, unless you realize your helplessness, you will never enter the kingdom.

Of course, they need to believe in Jesus. Of course, they need to embrace the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But he's saying there's a state in which you must come to, grips with who you are, that's truly humbling before you turn and trust this Jesus.

[19:46] Now that's all introduction. So this is, now we jump into what Jesus, I think, is going to start teaching the disciples. And it's this, that the criteria before you come into the kingdom is the same criteria for greatness within the kingdom.

And that is humility. So that's what our section, the rest of these verses are going to give us. And I think as people of God's kingdom, so we've been talking about the kingdom and now we're coming to life in the kingdom, so people, Christians, believers, as people of the kingdom, we walk in gospel humility.

And there's going to be three points that I want to draw out from what Jesus says this morning.

Three characteristics you could say of humility. Number one, childlike dependence.

Number two, radical devotion. And number three, heavenly delight. So I'll repeat those, but let's look at number one. Childlike dependence. So gospel humility, the humility that you had to have before coming and becoming a Christian and now a humility that should characterize all believers, it's characterized by childlike dependence, marked by that.

Verses four and five, let's read them. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

[21:16] So what is Jesus getting at? What is he saying to us? Well, he's not saying that you should be childish. You know, like how my daughters are very quick to lose focus on something and quickly jump to another thing.

No, he's not saying Christians should be absent-minded like children. We're not called to be like children in every way, but rather Jesus is calling the attention of the dependence of a child.

So again, the criteria for the need, the dependence of a child is a criteria before you enter the kingdom and here it is, also the way of the kingdom. And there's two words that Jesus gives us.

First, he gives us, oh, I forgot to hit this. There you go. The first word he gives us is lowly, lowly, and that's in verse 4. He says, whoever takes the lowly position of this child, so whoever humbles himself or herself like a child is the greatest.

Jesus says something similar in Mark 9, 35. Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all. The lowest position, lows of lows.

[22:31] And to illustrate this point, Jesus points to the child before them. So more so than today, society in Jesus' day would have not highly esteemed children.

Maybe our society is catching up a little bit, but scholars say that in that day, children didn't have a high place. They had a lower status. And you find that, remember, we're going to find it in chapter 19, when the disciples rebuke people for bringing who to Jesus?

Or, sorry, Jesus rebukes the disciples for bringing children to Him. He says, let the little children come to Me. Do not hinder them. So they were hindering them.

For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. The one biblical scholar wrote this, Jesus celebrates the humility that comes from the child's weakness, defenselessness, and vulnerability. The child can really do nothing for himself or herself and will die if left alone. It is this kind of humility that Jesus uses as this visual aid.

[23:42] You see, we don't, we, Krista and I came over here, we didn't just leave our kids in our house. You know, nobody's, one of the first questions is, you know, who's watching after your kids?

If we said, oh, no one, they're fine. They're just cooking their own meals. No, you wouldn't, you know that they're defenseless, they're helpless. That's what Jesus is getting at.

They're in a lowly position. He says, anyone who wants to be great must humble themselves like a child. Those who know they are helpless are actually the greatest in the Kingdom.

So take again my daughter Lily, for example. She does not care. about power or prestige right now. Meaning, if someone came up to her and started listing all their accomplishments about all the great

things they've done in their life, or if she met a prime minister or president or whoever, met someone, she wouldn't know who they are.

She wouldn't be in awe of their greatness. No, she would, unless it's Disney or something like that, I suppose, maybe perhaps, but she would be impartial. She would not be moved by these great accomplishments.

[25 : 01] Or think of it in terms of who she would play with. If you want to play with my daughter and you're willing to go play with her, she's more than willing to play with you. There isn't much she's going to look at as far as your status.

Or think in terms of children when it comes to believing what their parents say. Kids, little ones, trust their parents implicitly.

That's whatever mom says must be true. No, I think that's what Jesus is getting at here. A lowliness of a child. That's what he's talking about.

Childlike dependence on one's parents, on adults. Now, you say, well, I'm here and I don't need to be reminded about how low I am because I am low.

the Lord over the last few weeks or whatever maybe perhaps has brought you to a low point. I want to encourage you that lowliness is a path to a particular kind of joy.

[26 : 08] And it's all throughout the scriptures. I heard the song that says valleys fill first. And that's what it is. I talked with the students on Friday night about how sometimes when we humble ourselves it leads to an emptiness.

An emptiness that Christ can fill. Think about what James says. James says God gives more grace. Therefore, it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

It says humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. So there's a taking the position of a child is a humbling of oneself. You think what it says in Philippians 2.

It's Jesus' ministry. Though he was in the form of God didn't he account equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

A low position. Being born in the likeness of men being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on the cross.

[27 : 12] And we know that Jesus' lowly position on earth led to his exaltation which is where Paul in that passage goes to. So the point the truly great are those who are lowly.

That's the first word lowly. Second is welcome. Welcome. Verse 5 and we'll look at this quickly.

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. This is humility.

It's a humility that welcomes all those who have been humbled to. The word welcome is one of hospitality of accepting loving receiving the lowly. Now certainly I've had a great example Kristen and I have had a great example of this this past week.

It's really accepting people into your homes like you have us as one as family. It's like a new teammate that fits right in with the team.

Now I want you to notice that we who we are to welcome one such child. Now it's interesting I think what Jesus is doing here and I could be wrong but I think what Jesus is doing is he's actually starting to broaden the terms a little bit.

[28 : 19] So he's using a little different language and he's going to use little ones in the next verse but one such child in this verse I think is beginning to point us to fellow believers not just children per se although I think we should consider what he says towards children too.

Which makes sense though given that he has this child in front of them and all believers who enter the kingdom will humble themselves like this child then the association with the child and a fellow believer is a good association.

So what I'm saying I think this is children and spiritual children and then that's when he jumps verse 6 as we'll see to little ones is really he's talking little ones is fellow Christians perhaps fellow weak believers but I think just broadly fellow Christians.

Either way the point to draw from this is since Jesus is connected united to his followers then to welcome and show mercy to another believer is to welcome and show mercy or to welcome to Christ.

That should be one of our response should be one of amazement. I mean the world looks to welcome the popular the good looking the celebrity but we don't just welcome the celebrity we welcome the nobody.

[29 : 45] We treat the nobody like they are the red carpet for someone who is lowly. This should certainly obliterate any idea that there are divisions of status in the body of Christ.

Now we know this but recently I sat down with one of our church members and he said to me I don't fit anywhere including church.

In my mind it went immediately to this text because I was studying it. As believers we should be welcoming those who feel like they don't fit anywhere.

here in this place with these people they fit their home.

The church is a place that all can come all can find a welcome and those of every tribe tongue nation people group doesn't matter they all have a home here.

[30 : 52] The other aspect of this is do we have this kind of view of children in our churches? Are we welcoming children?

Do they and their parents know we value them and appreciate them? One of the beauties of polo is just this. It's an opportunity to welcome and to value children because we know that children matter. They matter to God. God loves kids. And we dare not find them a nuisance insignificant or unimportant because children matter to God and they are to have our welcome.

So mature believers have childlike dependence shown by two words lowly and welcome. That's number one. Number two you have childlike dependence then you have radical devotion.

Radical devotion. That's verses 6 and 9. So one of the clearest signs of this humility that Jesus is talking about is found in two perspectives. On one side devoted Christians committed Christians watch out for others and on the other side they watch out for themselves.

[31 : 58] That's what Jesus is going to get at here. So they watch out for others verses 6 and 7 look down at verse 6. If anyone causes one of these little ones those who believe in me.

So I think he's talking about fellow believers. If anyone causes one of these fellow believers to stumble it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

As believers Jesus calls us to have a responsibility to protect and watch over other believers. believers. We're not solo Christians just in it for ourselves on individual journeys.

No, we are in this whether we like it or not sometimes. We are in this together. And Jesus gives a warning to anyone who causes the lowly or weaker disciple to stumble.

Now to stumble is a word that maybe we think immediately of to sin, just broadly to sin or offend. But multiple scholars point out the fact that the severity of the warning probably means that this word has a more significant meaning.

[33 : 13] That is that it means to lead someone to fall away from Jesus, to apostatize. So just like a false prophet or TV preacher or something, they get on and they preach a false gospel and they lead a believer to stray away.

So would be someone in the world who leads this person to fall away. This judgment is what Jesus is talking about. Judgment on that person. And it's really an argument from the lesser to the greater. So a millstone was this, and I've seen them in Israel, these large stones that would be pulled by a donkey. And that millstone was hung around the neck as a means of execution.

This was a frequent execution in Jesus' day and it's terrible. obviously horrible drowning, we can imagine would be a terrible way to die. And Jesus' point is not to say this is what they're going to get.

His point is to say the punishment in our text is better than the punishment that they'll be dished out to those who lead them astray. Terrible punishment of being drowned would be a mercy compared to what's in store for those who turn little ones away from Christ.

[34 : 26] Christ. So broadly I think our response should be a warning, certainly, to be careful on how we lead our brothers and sisters.

We don't be a means by which they turn away. And then verse 7 adds more, woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble. Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come.

So according to God's word, we expect temptation. We're going to expect seeing temptation is inevitable. Still, the inevitability of it doesn't excuse the one through whom it comes.

And so we're responsible for other believers, for their walk with Christ, and how we interact with them to not be a stumbling block for them. And we're culpable if we lead them to stumble.

And of course, this is talking somewhat about the world, too, which is interesting to think through that them leading believers astray, the world, there will be a judgment on them.

[35 : 36] And this is a warning to them as well, to say, do not lead believers astray. So I hope you see this. The point I'm drawing out is mainly that you and I have a responsibility for one another.

Are we concerned for our brothers and sisters holiness, or are we really just focused so much on just ourselves and what we want? It's a particular thing that we should wrestle with in light of what Jesus says here, that we would not want to lead anyone astray.

So watch out for others. And then he, in verses 8 and 9, he says, watch out for yourself. Watch out for yourself. Look at what Jesus continues and says, if your hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better that you enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown in the fire of hell. So this is where I am getting the idea that it is radical devotion.

[36 : 51] I mean, this is radical, what Jesus is talking about. And you would have heard it before because he says something similar in Matthew 5 where he applies it directly to lust and he says, if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out.

But if you're watch out for yourselves, he gets to talking about what 1 Timothy 4 16 says, watch your life and your doctrine closely. So deal with your own sins.

Turn away from the thing that's causing you to stumble. And so how are we to take Christ's words? Well, we take them, I think, figuratively. He's using figurative language.

I think it becomes clear when you think about what he's actually dealing with. To cut off a limb doesn't deal with the real problem. Our hearts.

So the root of sin lies in our hearts. Actual mutilation of the flesh would not make sense because you can look and lust after something with one eye just as much as you can with two.

[37 : 57] So it doesn't take care of the problem. I think that means that he's talking figuratively saying we should take sin seriously and take measures to fight, not go around flirting with sin, but instead don't act like you're untouchable, but act like you need to resist temptation.

A famous line from John Owen, if you've heard it before, be killing sin or sin will be killing you. It's a realization that we should turn and throw it away, get rid of it, kill sin or anything that leads us to sin. We should expel it, deny it. So I don't know what it is for you, but I think what he's getting at is something where it's the thing that you know that leads you to sin.

An example would be a smartphone at night, looking at your smartphone at night. Leads you to sin. We're watching certain movies, social media, sports, doing certain activities, busyness, where you're just so busy that you're always upset with the kids, lack of sleep where you're just irritated all the time.

It's the condition that's maybe not necessarily sinful, but it leads you to be tempted to sin. And he says, cut it out. It is worth killing it than to slide adrift into judgment, which is what he's getting at, eternal hell and a lake of fire, or a fire of hell.

[39 : 28] So it's just a consideration for all of us to consider what are the things that are leading us to be tempted? And can we get rid of them? We find alternatives.

So I think of if you have a friend, so both of these together, if you have a friend who's trying to stop drinking soda, or pop as we call it, and it's not sinful, I'm not saying that at all, but that friend just decides they want to make a change, and you go out and you buy them a soda, you're not watching out for that friend at all.

And so that's what Jesus is saying spiritually. Same would be true. If you have a friend that has admitted to you, I've struggled with gossip, the last thing you'd want to do with him or her is talk about some other people in the church in a way that maybe lead them to begin gossiping.

I think that's where he's talking about with leading people to stumble. And this is radical devotion with our own life, being willing to take things out that are not necessarily evil, evil, but that lead us to struggle with sin.

So, first one is childlike dependence. I think there's a humility that has childlike dependence on God. We're desperate. And then the second one is radical devotion. And then the third one is heavenly delight.

[40 : 52] So this humility is marked by heavenly delight. And what I mean is that we're to have the same heart as the Father has. So we're to reflect his heart, his heavenly delight, delight in the same things.

And that we discover in verses 10-14. So let's take each verse in turn. Verse 10. See that you do not despise one of these little ones.

For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. So he tells us again not to despise little ones. The third time he's used that phrase.

And the least among us, and we shouldn't look down on them with contempt, instead we should love them, care for them, and treat them, and look out for their holiness.

But what is Jesus getting at? He brings up angels. Maybe not what we were expecting as we're reading through. Oh, angels. Oh, that's interesting.

[41 : 50] But we believe in angels. Right? Yes. We believe in angels. And who are these angels? Well, they're creatures, specifically God's agents.

They're messengers, the word meaning there. And the Bible calls them ministering spirits. So they're those spirits who minister to believers.

They're real, not mythical. And the Father, they serve our God in various ways, we see in the Bible. God. Some people take this passage to mean that each one of us have individual guardian angels. But what we don't see, actually, the Bible, although it doesn't say a lot about that, it doesn't ever say there's a one-to-one. So we know that there are angels that are guarding us.

But what he's not saying here is necessarily that, like, in, I don't know if you've all seen the film, but It's a Wonderful Life, the Christmas film. I don't think Johnny has seen it, but perhaps you have.

[42 : 58] And where they have, Clarence is like a guardian angel. He's got the one-to-one assigned. I don't think that's what the Bible says. I think that's made up. But there is, in a sense, where there are angels from this text that have a role with these little ones, where they are serving, they are serving believers.

And they're beholding the face of God. They're standing before God, night and day. And I think that points to the fact that God has servants committed to these little ones.

In that way, He cares about them enough to have angels take care of them. And so, so should we? We should see the heart that God has and not despise fellow believers, knowing that God cares deeply about them, enough to send out His messengers to care for them.

So He points to the role of angels to caring for these weaker Christians as a warning for those who despise them. And then, to illustrate that further, He gives a parable in verses 12 through 14.

But, real quick, I always, you know, you're reading through and then suddenly you say, well, verse 11. And you're like, when is verse 11?

[44 : 26] Well, modern translations, you'll notice it's missing. And that's simply because our earliest Greek manuscripts don't have this verse.

So the later ones have included it because they more than likely borrowed it from Luke 19. 10. So the verse, and I don't know if there's a footnote there, but the verse that is normally there in some of the older translations is just a parallel from Luke 19.

10. So it's most likely not original here, not a huge deal because it's found in Luke 19, but that's the explanation why it suddenly skips verse 11.

All right, verses 12 through 14. What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?

And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

[45 : 36] I don't know if you've ever noticed this parable. You've heard the Luke 15 one, right? I think I immediately thought this was just the same as the Luke 15 one. But in that context, Jesus is making a different point.

Luke 15, Jesus is showing God's concern for the lost sinner, the un-evangelized, the unbeliever. Now by contrast, our passage is God's love for the little ones in the faith, who wander off, who go astray, which I take to mean disciples, believers.

As one writer has noted, there's more than one way to be lost. So my daughters have these little water bottles they carry around everywhere. It is one thing, which they lose them all the time, that's

why I thought of this, it is one thing to lose it at home.

You know, we know it's inside these walls somewhere. It's a whole other thing to realize, oh, we have no idea where that is. It is out in the world, you know, whether we are out to eat or whatever it was.

I think that Jesus is talking about the home here. Believers losing it here. He's not willing to let any believer who's gone astray perish. So what this shows us is that God cares for each believer.

[47 : 01] Isn't that amazing? Even the weakest. And then there's even a rock solid promise at the end. He is not willing that any should perish. God pursues his children who have gone astray like a shepherd looking for lost sheep.

So, real quick, three things. This parable says God cares for us individually. It's amazing.

Individually. Brothers and sisters, God loves you personally. He knows you personally. And he's committed to you specifically right now.

Every believer in this room, I mean, he knows that the one is astray. That's what it says. He's not willing that one of these little ones perish.

So God is pursuing and caring for us individually. That's incredible. Second, God loves us constantly. He will search continually until he finds each sheep that has strayed.

[48 : 12] God wills that everyone who belongs to him by faith should persevere with him. His love is constant. He does not give up.

It's incredible. Three, God delights in our return. It says he's happier, which happy is maybe not the right word, I think. I don't know why they switch it.

I have an older NIV here and they switched it from delight to happy. Seems like not the greatest change. He delights.

He is a party. When one of the little ones that he is called returns, he is not willing to leave anyone behind and his response to their return is joy.

Again, I don't know, but you may be here and you feel like God has abandoned you. Know this for sure, he has not abandoned you.

[49 : 15] For his own he cares. He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you. He has not abandoned you. And he loves you constantly, and he's pursuing you relentlessly.

We sometimes think, even if we think we're more reformed in our thinking, we sometimes think that we have to pursue the Lord, and if we don't, well, we'll just stray away.

There's a sense in which the Lord is the one that is pursuing us constantly. But I think the point that I'm drawing out to is that if he cares so much about those who have gone astray, well, so should we.

So should we. Humility is not giving up on anyone who's gone astray. You can maybe look around the room and think there are some that aren't here that were not just a few years ago.

We should be careful not to write anyone off, because God doesn't. And we should care as God does. I think this humility, the theme throughout has been humility.

[50 : 25] Maybe not what we think of, but it's true greatness, greatness of the kingdom that he's been talking about, that the gospel instills in us, this humility, a childlike dependence, as we've said, despises no one, even the lowly, and this radical devotion to one's own holiness and to others' holiness, and then care and protection of our own as we walk with the Lord.

And last, it produces a delight in that when believers come in, when believers come, when they've gone astray and they are restored to us, we have this joy, this delight.

To the degree that you search for something that is lost, reveals the value of that thing. Now, if you lose something, you're like, I don't really care about that. You're not going to search very long for it. But Chris will tell you, if I lose something that I love, I search for it endlessly, I don't quit, God is not willing that any should perish.

That's amazing promise to end this morning with. It's his heart for those who have gone astray, and if that's true, if it's his heart for those who have gone astray, imagine again what his heart is for you.

[51 : 43] He loves you. And that's what our heart should be for one another and for those who go astray. May we reflect the father's love in this. To be great in the kingdom, to be humble like a child, radically leading others to Christ, and having this heavenly delight.

That's what Jesus is calling us to this morning. And we need grace. God opposes the proud, gives grace to the humble. The beauty is when you humble yourself like a child, he gives you grace.

let's pray for that grace. Lord, we are in desperate need of your grace. Give us grace to walk in this gospel humility, to be truly humble before you, not great in our own eyes or in the world's eyes, but to be truly great in your eyes.

Hear our humble prayer. be with anyone here who feels like they don't fit in, or maybe perhaps they've been searching, may they come to know you, Jesus, first of all, and then may all those who come through our doors in church here and the church in Michigan, where do I live, in Minnesota, may all who come in through our doors, our churches, find a home.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Jason.

[53 : 32] If you want to talk afterwards, to ministering habits, wait.

Thank you for doing goal. Bye. Bye.