

Luke 18:15-30

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[0 : 00] Disney's Magic Kingdom. It's been called a children's paradise, no matter what your age. It's where fantasy rules, and where entrance into Uncle Walt's wonderful world is accessed simply by getting off a plane and stepping onto a monorail.

From there, everything is taken care of for you. In the literature, it says that your ability to enter is simply by stepping on.

It will whisk you to your destination. I suppose the reason Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom is so wildly successful is in part due to our need to escape the kingdom we live in on a day-to-day basis.

The kingdom of this world, with all its fanatical rulers, overwhelming personal sorrows, collective citizenry.

Indeed, we are known more for our state of confusion on anything related to ultimate purpose as much as we are known for anything else.

[1 : 28] By our actions, our pursuits, we are constantly asking ourselves, what's the point? We grasp.

It might be drugs. Certainly that's the case for a number here. We're familiar with that pursuit. Alcohol.

Might be pleasure. Might be a combination of them all. Might be religious zeal. Might be vocational accomplishment.

You name it, we've gone after it. As I like to say, there's a little bit of everything in this room. Then we go to bed at night. Nobody talks to us, but our mind says to us, what am I doing?

What am I chasing? Why am I not making progress? Or, in the words of Bono, and I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

[2 : 44] Oh, for another kingdom. A third option for entrance. A kingdom where goodness would rule. Where your life purpose would be clear.

Where your commitments would be fruitful. One that would surpass Walt's wonderful world of fantasy.

Or this world's pointlessness. Jesus spoke of such a kingdom.

He calls it the kingdom of God. And as our call to worship this morning indicated, it's not merely something unaccessible.

But already here. He indicates that it came with him in some sense.

[3 : 53] That he spoke of a place where God rules. Where citizens are purposefully engaged. Where they're personally fruitful.

Our text today. Two vignettes. That tell us in different ways what it takes to get in. I hope you see the theme of entrance into the kingdom.

The first vignette. It's right there. Verse 17. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Or verse 24. How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. This subject then is simply this.

That Jesus spoke of a rule and a way of life that had God's blessing. That was different from the kingdoms we escaped to and the kingdom we're familiar with.

[5 : 06] Verse 15 to 17. Luke. A vivid picture.

Drawn. With only two short sentences. Now. They were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it.

They rebuked them. Interesting word. At the outset there. They're even infants. At times in Luke. This word is actually used for a pre-born fetus. Luke chapter 1. A baby yet in the womb.

At other times it's used with just a newborn sense. Here it appears that we're speaking of a very recently born infant.

[6 : 16] Whose coups indicate age. It looks like Jesus had become the stuff of modern day politicians and popes.

The young mothers were evidently finding their way as young mothers can. Not only into the presence of Jesus.

But to the press upon him that he might touch them. The disciples had evidently had enough. They rebuked them. These are the bow tied entourage of our Lord. Guarding his space and his priority.

Knowing what important things he has on the calendar for the rest of the day. I can imagine them whispering among themselves. This has got to stop.

[7 : 27] Don't they know any better? Perhaps some of them felt about kids. The way I feel about house pets.

What in the world would possibly account for your desire to have those things around your feet? That was Jesus.

Disciples on being in the nursery. Children evidently to the disciples were an annoyance. A hindrance to self-actualization. Now think of it in the Roman world in which we find this. I could have quoted documents from first century.

But I'll just give you the general sentiment. It was not a good day to be an infant. Not in Rome. In fact, infanticide was so regularly practiced that it wasn't until the 4th century that a ruler by law outlaws it as something despicable.

[8 : 43] You read the early documents. Children were discarded as a hindrance to life.

Most often just left along the road to die of exposure. You won't get through this winter in Chicago without seeing the Roman world rear its head.

We will hear yet of another alley. Another dumpster. Another infant.

Discarded along the way. In Jesus' day, children were of little regard. In fact, it would take some time to actually be called a human after birth.

The Roman world, the Roman culture, is similar toward ours in regard to this fetus, this unwanted pregnancy, this collective understanding of non-humanness, of tissue, of little consequence, of a dilemma for my plan, of no utilitarian purpose, more deeply rooted, without any intrinsic value, intrinsic worth and dignity, rather than extrinsic dignity brought on by what they could provide to the world.

[10 : 40] So, my own personal commitment to a pro-life position in its fullness really triggered itself irreversibly by some things that Robert George wrote in the Clash of Orthodoxies on abortion.

One of the wonderful things about a fetus in Luke's sense in chapter 1, even in the womb, or in this sense, a newborn, is the intrinsic value of life of the little one.

There's something beautiful about such a non-utilitarian view. I cherish it because it has no utilitarian roots.

Jesus says something about these little birthed children that were still on the breast of their mother, not yet even of an age where they were being tutored or mentored or schooled.

That is very counter-cultural. Look at verse 16. But Jesus called them to Him saying, Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them for such belong the Kingdom of God.

[12 : 27] He connects kids to the question we opened with, namely, is there a kingdom that might exceed the illusions of Walt Disney's realm?

Is there a kingdom that might surpass the atrocities of the aimless rule that we live in day by day? Is there a kingdom of God?

And if so, how does one enter it? Jesus takes this scene and turns that link. Don't hinder them.

Allow them to come. I mean, positively stated, I'm all for the nursery, says Jesus. And don't hinder them for to those like them who belong the Kingdom of God.

what does a child possess that allows entrance into the Kingdom? It's not their innocence, as every parent knows.

[13 : 42] Oh, your child is so adorable. Yeah? Sit down with me for a while. You'll see the impression of my inner man rising from within them in a short period of time.

No, it's not their innocence. There's not a parent alive who doesn't become early on familiar with the fact that not knowing how it all happens, it happens.

The nature of being human works its way against the proper understanding of God and life and relationship with one another.

It's not their innocence. Having had five children, not birth, but as a husband, father, there's one characteristic above all that newborns possess.

they are entirely dependent on their mother for life. I mean entirely. This is freshly brought to my attention given that my own daughter just some weeks ago gave birth to what is our first grandchild. [15:09] child. That child is entirely dependent on my daughter for her life.

Infants are helpless. They cannot secure their own sustenance. Let me tell you what contribution they make to being kept alive.

It is a cry. A cry that a parent knows. That's it. It's a vigorous verbal sound sound that asks for life every two hours.

there it is. There's the truly, truly verse 17. Truly I say to you whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

This is the way for you to live a more fruitful and fulfilled life that does away with the escapism into the world of illusion that you know does not satisfy and actually deals with the dilemmas and the overwhelming atrocities of the kingdom in which you live.

[16:53] to come cry to the Lord Jesus Christ for life for mercy for his spirit for his reign for his rule for his ways for his walk that's it.

You can change your kingdom identity today with nothing more than a verbal utterance that is rooted in a heart that understands I need real life.

And if you do well then you enter truly says Jesus whoever does not receive the kingdom like a child shall not enter it.

Have you done that? Scene two same theme different way of talking about it a portrait that has an emphasis on the difficulty of entering on the basis of anything other than being completely helpless. Verse 18 And a ruler asked him good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him why do you call me good?

[18:35] No one is good but God alone. Interestingly the second scene young nursing mothers are no longer the ones pressing in around Jesus in hopes that he'll touch their kids and they can get a photo op.

Rather in this scene it's a prominent man of means all grown up who makes his way to the front and it's an exchange that's put down.

Now it calls him a ruler. In chapter 8 verse 41 we have the same word spoken of in Jairus who was a ruler of the synagogue.

In chapter 14 we'll see the same word one who is a ruler among the Pharisees. In chapter 24 in verse 20 you'll see the same word regarding the religious leaders.

So when it says ruler here in all likelihood this is a Jewish civil and religious leader within the community.

[19:44] A man of means who can be found at the synagogue can be found running a productive business in fact from a reputable home and evidently one who had done quite well.

there's a sense though that Jesus got a bit of an edge on him doesn't he? Because he says to Jesus you know good teacher and Jesus kind of comes back at him got his hair on his spine up a bit why do you call me good?

No one is good except God alone. It's as if Jesus somehow picks up something within the man's tenor of superiority.

Good man. Let me put it to you the way it happened to me once in a football stadium. A guy came down and sat next to me and he goes hey boss I said what do you call I'm not your boss what you calling me boss for?

A little overconfident is this ruler. Jesus wants to take on that self assured role and notice the man wants to know how he can inherit eternal life.

[21:08] It's a compound word with law embedded. headed in it. Good teacher. Rabbi. I'm a ruler well respected in the religious community here and hold a profitable business and how might I by law by right by inheritance enter into eternal life.

I'm not a newborn after all. Jesus then points him to the Torah because the man was rooted in the Torah.

He says to him you know the commandments do not commit adultery do not murder not steal do not bear false witness honor your father and mother in other words you know just this litany they're not even in the right order these of course are from the ten commandments he goes you know the seventh one don't you you know the sixth one you know the eighth one you know the ninth one you know the fifth one you know you know you want to inherit eternal life you want that as rightfully yours by law well then do the law Jesus says if you do the law you'll get in and the man says well all these things I've done and then Jesus again puts his finger on the one thing he noticed he had left off the tenth commandment but now he kind of puts his finger on this man's particular problem and he goes well one thing you lack sell all that you have and distribute to the poor in other words let's find out if you really covet or not distribute to the poor and you'll have treasure in heaven oh and come follow me in other words put away your wealth pick up with me the kingdom of heaven is going to be where you're starting to invest and

I will be showing you the way now there's two errors here that I need to mention one is I don't want you to think that Jesus is reducing! Christianity to a vow of poverty don't make that mistake you don't enter the kingdom by making a vow of poverty Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 13 1 and 2 even if I give all that I have away but have not love I gain nothing do do not reduce the Christian faith to a vow of poverty however do not release the Christian faith from the divestiture of your wealth let me put it this way some people are going to want to read down the text a little further and go oh see this is going to be impossible anyway he can't really keep the law so he's just trying to let him know that he can't keep the law in other words they want to gum the text from its force

I'm not going to gum it this morning I want teeth in it Jesus said to this man get rid of everything you got and follow me and you'll be on the way to the kingdom why because that was the one area of life that needed to be completely overturned I mean this was a real thing it would not be appropriate for me to stand here before you today and say that you can follow Jesus but it's not going to come with any cost you receive it like a child it's going to cost you everything you got let the little children come to me sell all you have and come and follow me be absolutely helpless and completely committed what the man needed to know is that his wealth was the hindrance to the kingdom because it put him in a place quite frankly he was very unlike an infant interestingly the early signs in the early church are that they had glad and generous hearts that people began selling their possessions that there was a divestiture of wealth in play not not in a a communism sense which [26 : 09] I've heard some people say you know what is yours is everyone else's Christianity is not quite like that it's kind of more like someone who says what is mine is yours and they give everything to God and to those who are in need you cannot find in the Christian faith any attachment to the gospel without also a remembrance of the poor so Jesus hits on something here that's very important the self conscious divestiture of all the things that keep you self sufficient may hinder you from entrance into the kingdom what does this mean for us it means that the adult becomes like an infant by placing himself or herself in a position where they are leaning on

God for daily sustenance for ways forward and where the community of faith and the impoverished of means are their sphere of work that's how you get in that's how I get in he was sad like the look on many of your faces this morning that was a joke I know you're with me Jesus seeing that he was sad said how difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God the principle is clear our wealth which we think is our greatest asset is our greatest spiritual hindrance you have got to learn to be a glad and generous person you've got to learn what it is at times to place yourself on the floor hands over your head nose in the carpet

Lord give us this day our daily bread I mean that was the Lord's prayer that his people would look to him for their sustenance and that without him they would not be able to sustain themselves that was the uniqueness of the early church that everyone today longs for and the reason for which it is so hard to actualize oh how wonderful it is to see when our hearts grab hold for the kingdom of God is received as a gift and it is also true it will cost you everything you've got the disciples hear this Jesus had gone on to say it's easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom and they said well then who can be saved there's two ways to think about that just in a literal way you can't get a camel through a needle's eye it's impossible but another way just even metaphorically one who has wealth or riches and particularly in the early world it was a sign of God's blessing so if the person who's being blessed by God can't get in to God then how can anyone get into God I don't care which way you take the interpretation the point is the disciples said this is a heavy hurdle this is high hurdles not low hurdles Jesus said what's

impossible with man is possible with God have you done anything with your wealth that indicates that is not me but it was possible with

God William Borden if you're a university student listen to me William Borden was a Chicagoan post civil war family multi millionaires true story at the age of seven as a child attends what becomes known as Moody Church becomes converted in the children's ministry gives his life to Christ upon graduation from Chicago high school travels the world abroad for a year what a graduation gift he was a millionaire his family was they had all the wealth I mean when I graduated from high school I got Samsonite luggage but I got no trip with it Borden goes all over the world and he sees the need of the people and he knows the wealth from which he's come and he writes down in the fly leaf of his Bible a decision to go into mission work into the kingdom of

[31 : 56] God work and he writes down these words no reserves plural in other words I'm emptying my account came home went to Yale as an undergraduate student of 1300 students there at the time began to tell everyone about the kingdom of God during his four years there a thousand of the 1300 students were reading one to one and in prayer with one another because he would actually go around and say has anyone talked to this student about the gospel yet and which of us is going to go talk to this student and when no one would volunteer on the especially hard ones he would say put that one down for me this guy was vigorous he was a leader he was all in he decides to go to northern China to a Muslim population with his life his father disdained this decision thought he was wasting his life and said

I will never give you a job in the family business if you continue in this way and he writes down more words in his bible fly leaf no retreats gets on a boat gets to Cairo starts learning Arabic dies of cerebral meningitis age of 25 mother gets his bible after the funeral shortly before his death he had written two more words no regrets this is a man who divested himself of all wealth at the age of about 20 i have decided to follow jesus no turning back no turning back no reserves no retreats no regrets as he lays in the grave more than a million dollars of his estate his inheritance is given to china inland mission kingdom work keeps moving is there a

William Borden here today is there one who might only have a couple of years left but who enters Peter yeah that's me Lord and all these guys too don't you love him Jesus I hate to interrupt but see we've left our homes we've followed you I don't know how to take Jesus words on the back side he says to him truly

I say to you there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life basically the truth the principle level is yes and Peter you get eternal life and so will all who do what you did so at its simplest terms it's an encouragement it could also be a check on his pride it might just be yeah Peter you did it let's not kid yourself you traded one house and you're going to get 500 homes in return even here so just don't don't get into this self pity thing I found this to be true in my own Christian life when you become a Christian all of a sudden you got all kinds of homes you can walk into all over the world there's places that only missionaries and millionaires can get to there have been times

I've been standing somewhere and thought how in the world did I get here well only because I was some impoverished preacher boy that somebody said why don't you come on into this house what's mine is yours so he might be saying that to Peter but I can tell you what he's saying to you if you give yourself to Jesus as the priority over all money making over all vocational pursuit over all things you give yourself to him you will have in this life and in the one to come eternal life and the deal is you'll get so much more than uncle walt is selling you and and so much more usefulness in the kingdom world we're walking through our heavenly father we ask that you would help us apply the word that we might enter in in

[37 : 59] Jesus name amen