

How do you enter the Kingdom?

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[0 : 00] These weeks as we journey through Lent and come towards Easter time, we are thinking about being in Jerusalem with Jesus.

! And we are reading again and hearing again some of the things that Jesus said and did during that time he was in Jerusalem at Easter time.

How do you enter the kingdom? I guess we all might think we know the answer. You have to do good things. You have to do what's right. You have to be one of the good people, perhaps even one of the righteous people.

Well, Jerusalem is known and has, I think, always been known as the holy city. It was certainly known in this way at the time of Jesus. And so Jerusalem is where you would go if you wanted to meet holy people, righteous people, the good people, the religious people who would be sure to enter God's kingdom.

And so, often, quite often, in fact, some of you have said to me, how much you would like to have met Jesus.

[1 : 27] Wouldn't it be good to have been with Jesus, to walk with him and hear him speak? And of course, we would not have made any of the mistakes that those foolish disciples made.

Because we are the righteous people. We are the good people. And it would be great to have met Jesus. In our reading today, in Jerusalem, in the holy city, Jesus meets some of the holy ones, the righteous ones, those who thought they were good.

Jesus talks to people like us, and from their own words and actions, which too often are exactly like our words and actions.

Jesus condemns them and condemns us by our own words. It has often been written that this is the easiest, the most obvious of parables.

It hardly needs any explanation, the scholars write. And the point of the parable does seem remarkably straightforward. But the challenge begins when we try to understand this and to put it into practice.

[2 : 48] For example, one common way to read and understand not only this parable, but all of the parables, is to do what we call allegorizing.

To make the elements in the parable stand for something else. And so in this parable, we read the first son, who says that he won't go, but then later on goes, turns out to be just like the Gentiles. And the second son, who says he will go, but later on doesn't, turns out to be just like the Jewish leaders. Or indeed, all the Jewish nation. Problem is, we don't use words like Gentiles in our days. We don't think of ourselves as Gentiles. And we certainly don't think of ourselves as Jewish leaders. Or Jewish peoples. And so what we've done is to trap the parable in categories that are 2,000 years old.

And therefore, it doesn't have anything to do with us. We get to sit back and smugly watch these foolish Gentiles and foolish Jewish leaders get it right and wrong as they will.

[4 : 06] All the time secure. But we are different from them. And this isn't really about us. However, every parable is spoken to us.

Every word of scripture is spoken to us. It turns out that we are exactly those followers of Jesus. Who sometimes say that we will obey him.

And then we don't. Who sometimes say that we won't obey him. But then we do. In real life. Situation from situation.

We can find ourselves. To be both of these sons. So let's not work hard at allegorizing the parable. And making it about someone else. Let's hear this parable as Jesus intended it to. For us. About us.

[5 : 09] And spoken to change our lives. Parables usually teach us two key things. Something about the kingdom of God.

And something about Jesus who is king in the kingdom of God. Those are the two main things. The kingdom of God and Jesus. It's good for us. It's good for us.

To hear God's word speaking to us. About these things. By means of this simple parable. The Lord Jesus leads his hearers.

That is you and me. Into a place where. Our own words. Are used to condemn us. Which of the two did the will of his father? And they said the first.

And Jesus said to them. Why are you like the second one? Truly I say to you. The tax collectors and the prostitutes.

[6 : 05] Go into the kingdom of God. Before you. In this part of the parable. We're reading that the Lord Jesus. Is the one. Who has authority.

To explain. The life of the kingdom. The Lord Jesus. Has been given authority. To see. Who enters the kingdom. And who doesn't.

Jesus is king. In God's kingdom. He gets to judge. All those who will enter. Or all those who will not. And the difference. Depends upon Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus like the father. The father in the parable. Gets to call people. And send people.

Remember the father said to the son.

Go and do this. That's like Jesus. He says to us. Go and do this. And he has the authority. To tell us. To call us.

[7 : 04] And send us. In his service. Our obedience. Is important. To Jesus. Jesus. Yes.

It matters. What we say. The hymns. We sing. The prayers. We say. The words of the Bible. Which we read. These things matter. To Jesus. But also.

Our obedience. Matters. What we do. With our hands. Where we walk. With our feet. What we look at. With our eyes. What we say. To one another.

With our mouths. Our obedience. To the way. Of Jesus. Matters. The Lord Jesus. Has called us. Into his service. And he has sent us out. To serve him. The Lord Jesus. Asks. Today. Who has done.

[8 : 00] The father's will. Who is entering. The kingdom. Who is living. In the way. That I have called you. And sent you. To live. By our own answer.

By the evidence. Of our own lives. What we do. With our hands. And our feet. And our eyes. Jesus will condemn. Or welcome us.

Our obedience. Matters. The Lord Jesus Christ. Is king. Is king in the kingdom. It is Jesus.

Who can say. To you and me. And to us all. Son. Go and work. In the vineyard. Today. When you say. You will go. But you don't. It is Jesus.

You are denying. It is him. You are rejecting. When you say. You won't go. But later on. Go. It turns out. It is Jesus.

[8 : 59] You are obeying. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. You are begging. lot of different things for each one of us but we are called to service in the same way and we are called to serve the same king all are welcome all are invited and called to obey what we say to jesus is important we cannot ignore or forget what we do the lord jesus spoke about those who call him lord who claimed to know him but never obey him and never submit to him as those who at the end will turn out not to have known him at all it's supposed to frighten us today is the day for you to decide will you be a son who says oh yes i'll go but never goes will you be a daughter who says i'm not going to do that but later on changes and obeys where will you go in his service being a follower of jesus means at least two things first of all jesus gets to go first he is the leader and we are the followers secondly it means this we have to get off our seats and follow him you cannot follow jesus by doing nothing you need to do something at the end of the parable jesus speaks to the self-righteous religious leaders john came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him and even when you saw it you did not afterward change your mind and believe him the way of righteousness is the way which leads to life the way by which anyone who will enter does enter the kingdom of god who enters the kingdom of god those who walk on the way of righteousness we read about john and we heard about him just a few weeks ago he came introducing the kingdom of god preaching repentance and

baptism and announcing the forgiveness of sins the self-righteous are not able to recognize their need of forgiveness they do not need the way of righteousness because they are already walking in their own self-righteousness and so they reject john and they reject jesus those who enter the kingdom of god who enter the kingdom of god who enter the kingdom of god those who enter the kingdom of god are those who are in need those who know their sin and who long for forgiveness they are the ones who begin to walk in the way of righteousness following Jesus and depending upon him.

Only those who enter the kingdom in the way of Jesus will enter God's kingdom. This parable invites us to recognize that today there are women and men entering God's kingdom and challenges us.

Are we entering? Or are we too self-righteous? Too proud? Are we those who look down upon others who are entering and so exclude ourselves?

Are we pressing in? Is today the day when we will continue to change our thinking and change how we live that we might belong to Jesus?

Let's pray together.