

Entering the King's Kingdom

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[0 : 00] It would be great if you could have those inserts handy, because we'll be working our way through those. There's also an outline in the pew notice sheet as well, which you might find helpful.

Why don't you pray for us, though, before we get into it? Let's pray. Our great God and Heavenly Father, we do thank you again for your word. We ask now that you would help us to understand it, and more than that, help us to live in light of it.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, some time ago, I had an operation on my knee. I have two bad knees for various reasons, and I needed a knee reconstruction.

I tore some ligaments, and so I went to have surgery. And at the hospital, they asked me if I wanted to be numbed from just my waist down, which apparently is better for recovery, because there's less anaesthetic going through the body, or whether I wanted to be knocked out completely.

So given the recovery was better for the waist down, I said, yeah, I'll just do that. But that meant I was awake during surgery. And I tell you what, I've never felt so helpless in all my life. At one point, they lifted my leg up in the air.

[1 : 11] It was my leg. I recognised it. They were moving about, and I had absolutely no control over it whatsoever. And then once the operation started, they put up a sheet in front of your face, so you couldn't see anything, which I was quite happy about.

Except at one point when I heard this noise. Let me make it for you. Now every time I heard that noise, it coincided with my body moving.

It sounded awfully like a hammer and chisel that they were using. And I tell you what, at that point, I wished I had been fully knocked out. But the point is, I was totally dependent on this surgeon to save my leg.

I couldn't do anything myself, except simply trust him. Now hopefully that wasn't too graphic for you, but I think it illustrates what it means for us to enter the king's kingdom.

And so save not just our legs, but our very lives. You see, we cannot do anything ourselves to earn entry into the king's kingdom. Instead, we must simply trust and depend on Jesus to save us.

[2 : 16] And we need saving, because as we heard from our Old Testament reading, God will judge those who have sinned, like the Israelites who had turned from him. Even though it's his alien work.

I love it how it says that, Isaiah 28. It's his alien work. It's not natural to him. However, he still will judge and punish people for the wrong they do. And in a chapter of Isaiah 28, in a chapter full of judgment, there's that one verse that Linda rightly pointed out to us.

Verse 16, the one who trusts in him, Jesus, will not be put to shame. This is Mark's big point today in chapter 10, that we must trust in Jesus. And to make this point, he introduces us to three groups of people.

And the first one are some children, which brings us to point one, verse 13. People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them. But the disciples rebuked them.

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant, angry. He said to them, let the little children come to me and do not hint to them. For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. People, most likely fathers who were responsible for their family, were bringing children to be blessed by Jesus.

[3 : 25] But the disciples rebuked them. Why? Well, probably because children were not important and not important enough to bother adults. Now, has anyone heard the phrase, children are to be seen but not hurt?

You're familiar with that phrase? We don't use it much today, but certainly back in Jesus' day, it was very, very true. For children had not earned their keep, so to speak. They had no great achievements, no great contribution to society yet.

And they didn't always behave appropriately, which sounds all too familiar. In other words, they had no greatness about them. And so in the disciples' minds, who are they to bother a grown-up, particularly a grown-up as important as Jesus?

But do you notice Jesus' reaction? He gets angry with his disciples. Why? Because children are important to him. In fact, he says, The disciples, it seems, are still thinking in worldly terms about greatness, as we heard last week.

But when it comes to entering the king's kingdom, it's not about your greatness. It's about trusting and depending. See verse 15 and 16? He says, You see, Jesus not only rebukes the disciples, as we saw earlier on, but here he now says that they have to be like one of these little children.

[4 : 52] They've just turned away. Otherwise, they will never enter the kingdom. Now, you can imagine the disciples at this point scratching their heads and thinking, How are we to be like these kids? I mean, what have they done to enter God's kingdom?

And the answer is nothing. But that's the point. They simply receive it by trusting and depending. See, just like children trust and depend on their parents, no questions asked, Jesus is saying we too need to be trust and depend on him to enter the kingdom.

We must always depend on him and not ourselves. Now, I've done a number of baptisms over the years, and I've often used this very passage at the baptism service. And to illustrate the point about trusting and depending on Jesus like a child, I've occasionally given the child being baptised a piece of paper, usually the order of service, something like that.

And they simply receive it. They take it. That is, they trust me, and so they happily receive the piece of paper, what I offer them. It did backfire on me once, I must confess.

The child started eating the piece of paper. I almost gagged on it. I don't do it anymore. But you get the point. We're to be like a child who simply depends, trusts, no questions asked.

[6 : 05] See, it's not by doing anything ourselves. It's by receiving it through trusting in Jesus that we enter the kingdom. And to make this point even clearer, Mark then gives a negative example. He introduces a man who is almost the complete opposite to the children we just saw.

The rich young man. Point two, verse 17. As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. Good teacher, he asked. What must I do to inherit eternal life, he says.

See, here is a man who wants to know what he must do to enter the kingdom. That is, inherit eternal life. Now, this man is almost desperate, you notice. Verse 22 says that he's wealthy.

But despite his wealth and the status that would have come with it, he runs to Jesus and falls on his knees before him. He's desperate. But he's also sincere and respectful, for he calls Jesus good teacher.

But instead of answering his question about eternal life, Jesus first picks up the idea of being good. He says in verse 18, Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good except God alone.

[7 : 11] You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. Jesus says here, There is no one good except God alone.

It's different to society though, isn't it? Have you ever heard people say in society that people are generally good people? I don't know if you've heard that before. Now, sure, people can do good things.

But Jesus says very clearly, There is no one good except God alone. But I wonder if Jesus is doing two things here. At first, I wonder if Jesus is getting the man to realize that by calling Jesus good, He's actually calling Jesus God.

I wonder if Jesus wants him to realize that. And second, I wonder if Jesus is also trying to point out that no matter how good a person might be, No one is good enough to inherit eternal life.

And so Jesus lists the commandments which often simply remind us of how bad we are, how much we've failed. Except look at this man's response in verse 20. Teacher, he declared, All these I have kept since I was a boy.

[8 : 15] Now, here is a good man. He's kept all these since he was a boy. Imagine having him as your son. It'd be brilliant. Tidy up your room. Oh, already done, Dad. Always say he's pleased and thank you.

In fact, he's probably more upright than us here today. And it's not just, you know, it's not a case that he's lying about keeping these commandments. He genuinely believes that he's kept all these

commandments.

But interestingly, he still knows he's missing something, doesn't he? He still knows he's not quite good enough. Otherwise, why does he come to Jesus in the first place and ask what else he must do?

He knows he's missing something and so does Jesus. See verse 21? Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing you lack, he said. Go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow me. Jesus loves this man. He can tell he's sincere. But he also knows he still lacks something or rather someone.

[9 : 17] That is, he lacks Jesus. You see, this man, for this man, his wealth is his king. It's the thing he follows, the thing he trusts in or depends on.

And without realizing it, he's actually broken the first commandment, which says to have no other gods before the one true God. And so Jesus says, stop trusting and depending on your wealth and start trusting in and depending on me.

Start following me as your king because that's what you lack. But in verse number 22, we read perhaps one of the saddest verses in the Bible. At this, the man's face fell and he went away sad because he had great wealth.

You see, this man doesn't trust Jesus enough to walk away from his wealth and so instead walks away from Jesus and away from eternal life. He chooses treasure on earth instead of treasure in heaven.

And notice, it's not just this man who finds it hard to trust Jesus above his wealth. Jesus says it's all who are rich. Have a look at verse 23 to 25. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

[10 : 25] The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus says it's hard for the rich to enter the kingdom, probably because it's so hard for the rich to trust in Jesus above their wealth for security. And we here in Australia are rich compared to many other countries, aren't we?

If you're anything like me, then you'll find it much easier to trust in wealth and a healthy bank balance for security than Jesus. For example, if I was to ask us, what helps us sleep better at night, knowing that our bank balance is good and that all our bills are taken care of, or that Jesus is our king and saviour?

What helps us to sleep better out of those two? What brings us more comfort? And our answer often indicates who we really depend on, who we really trust in. It is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom.

In fact, Jesus says it's impossible. It's as impossible as a big camel passing through the small eye of a needle. And the disciples are amazed at this. You see, for the disciples, they thought that if anyone had a chance to enter the kingdom, then it would be this man.

[11 : 39] I mean, he is rich, unlike the children. And being rich was surely a sign that he was blessed by God. And he was good, and he had status and greatness, unlike the children.

I mean, this man had no trouble getting past the disciples to see Jesus. And he was the complete opposite, you see, to the children. But that's the problem. You see, unlike the children, this man does not trust and depend on Jesus.

Instead, he trusts in his own resources. Remember the question he asked Jesus? He said, what must I do to inherit eternal life? But Jesus is clear here. He says, we can't do anything to save ourselves.

We can do nothing. I once heard a joke about a young boy who came up to the minister after church on one Sunday and handed him \$5 in change. It was his pocket money.

And the minister smiled at him and said, oh, thank you, but what's that for? And the boy responded, it's for you, because my dad reckons you're the poorest preacher he's ever heard. No one give me money at the door after church.

[12 : 46] Now, what's this joke got to do with this passage? Absolutely nothing. But that's the point. There's absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves.

That's what Jesus is saying. And so the disciples are even more amazed in verse 26 and say, well, then who then can be saved? And Jesus responds with man. This is impossible.

We can do nothing. But not with God. All things are possible with God. You see, it's impossible for people to save themselves, but not for God, says Jesus. God can save us.

God can save us and offer us free entry into his kingdom. And the way we receive this offer is like a child who simply trusts and depends on Jesus. Now, I was going to skip over the next scene, which is over the page in your reading, and go straight to blind Bartimaeus, which is the third person that Mark introduces us to in order to hammer home his point.

But the next scene actually shows us how God is able to save us. For here, Jesus speaks about his death and resurrection, which brings us to point three and verse 32.

[13:51] Verse 32. They were on their way up to Jerusalem with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished while those who followed were afraid. Again, he took the 12 aside and told them what was going to happen to him.

We're going up to Jerusalem, he said, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him.

Three days later, he will rise. The disciples are astonished, verse 32 says, or amazed. That is, they think that Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to bring about the glorious kingdom.

They think the kingdom is about to come in glory. And so Jesus takes them aside and reminds them again, no, no, I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm going to be killed. And in so doing, he shows us how God will save us.

For God saves us through Jesus, who is about to be mocked, spat on, flogged and killed for us. For in his death, Jesus pays the ransom required for our sins.

[14:58] That is, at the cross, Jesus takes the punishment we deserve on himself so that we can go free, forgiven and be given entry into God's kingdom. Now, as I said, I was going to just pass over these verses quickly to get to our final scene.

But this isn't just some tangent that Mark takes us on. He doesn't just throw it in, his little pictures between the children, the rich man and blind Bartimaeus to kind of spice things up. Now, this is at the heart of what Mark is on about.

For it is at the heart of what Jesus is on about. And so don't skip over these verses in your mind and think, yeah, yeah, I've heard all this before, hurry up and finish. Rather, pause for a moment.

Reflect for a moment at what it costs Christ to save us. And reflect on God's amazing grace that he gave his only son, that we might freely have eternal life in his kingdom.

You see, to not pause and not be moved is to be as almost as insensitive as the disciples were.

See verse 35? James and John, the sons of Zebedee, then came to Jesus.

[16:01] Teacher, they said, what must, sorry, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. What do you want me to do for you? He asked. They replied, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.

You see what's happening here? Jesus has just said that I'm not going to establish the glorious kingdom. I'm going to be mocked, spat on, flogged and killed. And then what do the disciples say?

We want you, Jesus, to play genie and give us whatever we wish for.

It's pretty insensitive, isn't it? What's more, did they not listen last week when Jesus told them the path to greatness is through sacrificial service? And have they not understood that they can do nothing to enter the kingdom?

And so they have no right to demand anything in the kingdom. And so Jesus reminds them that greatness is about sacrificial service, as we heard last week. He says in verse 38, you do not know what you're asking, Jesus said.

Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with? We can, they answered. Jesus said to them, you will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.

[17:09] But to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared. When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. And so Jesus called them together and said, you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles are lorded over them.

And their high officials exercise authority over them. But not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. Because even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Now Jesus says back in verse 38 that he's going to drink the cup. Which often refers in the Old Testament to suffering God's judgment. And baptism here was Jesus' way of saying that he's going to be fully immersed in God's anger for sin. God's judgment for our sin. And so he asked them if they can suffer in the way that he is about to at the cross. And without thinking they say, oh yeah, of course we can. Jesus does say though that they will suffer for the gospel.

[18 : 13] And they won't die for the sins of the world. But they will suffer for the gospel. They will drink and be baptized so to speak. And we know that James was killed ten years later for the gospel. And we know that John was exiled to the island of Patmos for the gospel.

They did suffer for Jesus. But these places, says Jesus, are already prepared for others. Instead what they must remember is that true greatness is about sacrificial service. As we heard last week. That's why I came, Jesus said. Not to be served, but to serve by giving my life as a ransom for you and for many. And so if you want to be great, then serve like me.

Now there's more that could be said on these verses. But let's get to our final scene. We've had the positive example of the children. Then the negative example of the rich man. And then Mark brings home his point with another positive example of Bartimaeus.

Point four, verse 46. Here we meet a blind man.

[19 : 35] And interestingly, Mark tells us his name. It's Bartimaeus. He doesn't tell us the rich man's name, does he? And I wonder if he tells us Bartimaeus' name because he becomes a follower of Jesus.

And so Bartimaeus might have been known to Mark's first readers. Unlike the man who walked away from Jesus. Either way, Barty is blind, isn't he? Yet he still sees something about Jesus. Do you see what he sees? He sees Jesus as the one who can save him. And that's why he calls out to him in the first place. In other words, he sees Jesus as a savior.

But more than that, he also sees Jesus as the Christ. He calls him son of David twice. Remember, David is the great king of Israel. And from David's line was going to come the chosen king, the Christ.

And so by calling Jesus the son of David, Bartimaeus is actually calling Jesus the Christ, the king. In other words, Bartimaeus sees Jesus as savior and king.

[20 : 35] See, unlike the rich man, Bartimaeus was ready to acknowledge Jesus as his king. And unlike the children, rather, he was depending on Jesus to save him. And so this final scene almost summarizes the first two scenes of the rich man and the children, which is why I think Mark puts it last here.

Well, while the crowd rebukes Bartimaeus, Jesus actually calls for him. See verse 49? Verse 49. Jesus stopped and said, call him. So they called to the man, to the blind man.

Cheer up on your feet. He's calling you. Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked him. The blind man said, Rabbi, I want to see.

Go, said Jesus. Your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. The crowd changes from rebuke to encouragement here.

But do you notice verse 50? Verse 50. Bartimaeus throws his cloak aside. Now, it's just a little detail, but here, this cloak, we need to realize, would have been his only security.

[21 : 42] His only possession. The thing that he had to keep him warm. The thing that he had to collect money in. The only thing he had to really depend on. But unlike the rich man, Bartimaeus casts what he once depended on aside, doesn't he?

And now he comes to Jesus and depends on him. And so Jesus says in verse 52. To go, your faith, your trust in me has healed you. Bartimaeus is healed by trusting, not in his cloak, but in Jesus, you see.

And notice his response. Instead of going off to follow his own life as Jesus said he could, he instead now follows Jesus along the road to Jerusalem. You see, if you really trust in someone, you'll act on it, won't you?

Bartimaeus truly trusts in Jesus as the king. And so he follows him. He wants to learn more. If we really trust in Jesus as our king, then we're to act like it.

We're to live like it in our lives. We're to listen to him and obey him as our king. But you see how putting all these three scenes together, the children, the rich man, Bartimaeus, Mark is making it abundantly clear the way to enter the king's kingdom, the way to be saved is trusting in Jesus as our king and savior.

[22 : 59] And so the question I need to ask us now is, do we trust in Jesus as our king and savior? Do you? Do you trust in him?

Of course, before that, we need to realize we need help, that we can do nothing ourselves. In the words of Bartimaeus, we need to realize we need mercy. And so have you realized you need mercy? And have you gone to Jesus for help?

And if you have, then you have eternal life. Now, does that excite you? Does that excite you? It's a great thing, is it not? You see, although our physical bodies will die, our souls will live on.

And then when Jesus returns, our souls will be reunited with a perfect physical body, one with great knees. Yes, I'm looking forward to it. And we'll live in paradise forever.

Now, that is something worth looking forward to, is it not? It's something worth thanking God for. I mean, people in this world would pay millions to live forever. And Jesus gives it to us freely by trusting in his son.

[24 : 02] It gives us eternal life. We're not to underestimate how big it is. But in the meantime, we are to keep trusting in Jesus as our King and Savior.

You see, the trust that brings us into the kingdom is the same trust we're to keep having as members of the kingdom. We're to keep trusting Jesus with our priorities, our time, our money, indeed our whole lives.

At one of my old churches, there was a small group of older folk who attended the 8 a.m. service. And lots, if not all of them, were hit hard by the GFC. And their superannuation accounts all lost money.

And for most of them, there was no way of earning it back. Yet they remained the biggest givers of all the four congregations we had at our church. And one of them actually commented by saying, Why would I stop giving when Christ gave so much for me?

Now, I'm not telling you this story because I think you don't give. The reason I'm telling you is because it illustrates, I think, that here is a group of people that trust more in Jesus for their security than their superannuation funds.

[25 : 10] And that's what it means to live as Jesus as your King. That's what it means to live it out. You see, we're to live out our trust. If we really believe Jesus is our King, then we'll act like it.

We'll entrust our whole lives to Him, you see. And if there is something that is stopping us from doing that, like the rich man, then we're to be willing to get rid of it. We're to get rid of whatever it is that stops us from following Jesus.

For the disciples, it meant literally giving up everything. Now, come back with me to verse number 28 and we'll finish here. Verse number 28 to 31, and we'll finish here. Peter said to Jesus, We have left everything to follow you.

I tell you the truth, Jesus replied. No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields, and with them persecutions, and the age to come eternal life.

But many who are first, like the rich man, will be last, and the last first. Here, the disciples to follow Jesus have given up everything, haven't they?

[26 : 19] They've left their nets, their jobs, their families, their parents to follow Jesus. But Jesus says it will be worth it, doesn't he? We'll receive a hundredfold of whatever we've given up, whether homes, brothers, sisters, and so on and so on.

For me and my family, moving here to Melbourne has meant that we've left all our family and friends behind in Sydney. We've loved Melbourne, by the way. We really like it.

But it has meant, following Jesus, coming here has meant that we've left all that behind, including free babysitting. Although I'm pleased to say our parents are here, and we're going to go out on Tuesday night, and they're going to look after the kids, so it's very exciting.

But more than that, becoming part of the Holy Trinity family here has meant that we've received that in any case. We've had people from this congregation come and babysit our children.

Just two weeks ago, we moved house to next door to the church, and we had people bring meals around. They were beautiful. They were so nice, in fact, I was thinking of moving again, to repeat the experience. Actually, we won't move again.

[27 : 21] It's all right. But the point is, it's worth trusting Jesus. It's worth following him, because whatever we give up, we actually receive more of by being part of his family.

We have to remember that it's worth following Jesus. We have to remember that on top of all that, we get eternal life. And so it is certainly worth following Jesus. See, we have to remember all that Jesus has done for us and gives us, that we might keep living, not for ourselves, but for Jesus, our King.

Let's pray that we would do that. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, thank you again for the Lord Jesus.

Help us to keep trusting Jesus as our King and Saviour, and so living in a way that shows that.

And Father, we pray that you would help us to follow him above all things, knowing that it is indeed worth it. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing a hymn that picks up the theme of trusting.

[28 : 29] It's, My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood. Amen.