

# Riches and Following Jesus

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] I think you would all agree with me that living on a small island where everyone knows someone.
- ! Sometimes we complain about how preferential treatment is given to some people.! And generally, it's the people who are considered rich or well-known.
- I think the recent case with Shane Gibson before the courts brought this discussion in view again about how people are treated differently and preferentially just because of who they are and what they might have.
- And while it's easy to think that this is a reality just for us, that's not the case at all. Large countries also have the same kind of preferential treatment.
- And some time ago, I read an article by a man by the name of Matt Clark. And the title of the article is Celebrity Justice, Prison Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.
- [ 1 : 1 1 ] And in the article, Mr. Clark highlights how rich and famous people benefit from preferential treatment in the criminal justice system in the U.S.
- The article is quite lengthy, but here's a brief portion of what he wrote. He writes, One example of this dichotomy, and dichotomy simply means a division, these two different realities.
- For over a decade, suburban jails in Southern California have been renting upscale cells to affluent people convicted of crimes in Los Angeles County.
- These pay-to-state programs, also called self-pay jails, cost wealthy prisoners between \$45 and \$175 a day and include such amenities as iPods, cell phones, computers, private cells, and even work release programs.
- Some even let prisoners, who are referred to as clients, bring their own food. This nicer jail stay-for-pay scheme not only allows the rich and famous, as well as the more modestly affluent, to avoid the brutality, squalor, abysmal medical care, and other pleasant conditions typical in public jail systems.
- [ 3 : 0 5 ] It also highlights the inequities of a two-track system of justice in the United States in which the wealthy enjoy privileges and perks behind bars, while the poor are resigned to less comfortable and more dangerous conditions of confinement.
- And while I agree with Mr. Clark's assessment about the criminal justice system in the United States, that it is a two-part system, the truth is that the preferential treatment for the rich and famous is not confined to the USA, nor is it confined to their justice system.
- The reality is that preferential treatment for rich and famous people is a part of every aspect of life in a fallen world.
- And for this reason, it's easy to be a rich and famous person and to expect that in the kingdom of God, when we come to God, when we come to the church, that things would be exactly the way that they are in the world.

Many are disappointed to find that in the kingdom of God, it's not the same. There's no preferential treatment for the rich and for the famous. And the passage that we've come to this morning, as we continue our study in the Gospel of Mark, this passage bears out this truth.

[ 4 : 50 ] And so if you have not turned there yet, would you turn with me to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10. And this morning we pick up where we left off last week.

Verse 17, and we'll be continuing to verse 31. Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 through 31. Please follow along as I read.

I'm reading from the English Standard Version, so if you have another translation, yours would read slightly differently. And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments.

Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.

[ 6 : 04 ] And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, You lack one thing. Go. Sell all that you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

And come, follow me. Disheartened by the saying, he ran away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, Then who can be saved?

Jesus looked at them and said, With man it is impossible but not with God for all things are possible with God.

[ 7 : 26 ] Peter began to say to him, See, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and father gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

But many who are first will be last and the last first. Let's pray together. Father, thank you this morning for your word that you have preserved for us down the ages.

Lord, we acknowledge this morning how easy it is for us to hear your word and to read your word as bystanders and onlookers.

But Lord, I pray this morning that you would cause us to hear your word as it is directed to us this morning. And more than hear it, Lord, I pray that you would help us all to heed it.

I pray that you would grant me grace that I'd be faithful to proclaim the truth of your word this morning. Would you keep me from error and keep me from excess?

[ 9 : 06 ] And I pray, Lord, that you would glorify yourself through the preaching of your word and the building up of your people. We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Three of the four gospels provide us with this account that we have just read. We find it in the Gospel of Matthew.

We find it in Mark. We find it in Luke. We don't find it in John. And the three accounts tell us that this man was rich, but when we read Matthew's account, we learn that he was a young man.

Matthew tells us he was young. And from Luke's account, we learn that he was a ruler. And so this man has gotten the title. We don't know his name. He's gotten the title as the rich, young ruler.

And I think one of the things that we should consider as we are working our way through Mark's gospel, remembering that Mark did not randomly throw his gospel together and remembering that Mark did not include everything that he could have included in his gospel.

[ 10 : 14 ] We want to be asking ourselves the question, why is this here? Why did Mark include this account in his gospel? John didn't. Mark did.

Matthew did. Luke did. I think we should observe that this account follows immediately after what we considered last week where Jesus taught that only those who receive the kingdom like children, only those who humble themselves as children would receive the kingdom of God or would receive eternal life.

And the whole idea was that we had to see ourselves as totally dependent, the way a child is dependent on his parent, can't do anything for himself and left to himself will just perish.

We have to recognize that eternal life only comes to those who look to God in that way that we can bring nothing in our hands and we can do nothing to earn our salvation and our salvation comes by the sheer and pure mercy and grace of God.

And then we find this particular account where this man comes to Jesus and Mark puts it here where he comes to Jesus after Jesus has taught this only those who are utterly dependent on God can receive salvation.

[ 11 : 45 ] and he gives us his account. Now this man comes to Jesus as Jesus is about to leave. He runs up to him and he says what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Rich man, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And you see the contrast immediately against what Jesus has been teaching. This man believes that there's something he can do to inherit eternal life.

and when we consider this encounter of this man the discussion Jesus has with him the discussion Jesus has with his disciples what we see is a very important truth.

Eternal life is a gift of God that cannot be bought with wealth or earned by works. and somehow this doesn't get into our heads because even though we hear this we still try to do something we still try to earn our way to God.

But the whole point of the passage that we are considering this morning is to drill this truth in our hearts. Eternal life is a gift of God. It cannot be bought with wealth it cannot be earned with money.

[ 13 : 09 ] Now to help us work our way through this text this morning I'm going to use what I would call three conversational markers to guide us through. The first one is the rich man's question.

Let's look at the question that he asked Jesus. A very simple and a sincere question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Matthew puts his account words a little differently.

Matthew says that he said what good deed must I do? What good deed must I do to have eternal life? And immediately we see three important things about this rich man.

Three insights about him. The first is that despite his long-standing keeping of the commandments which he goes on to tell Jesus shortly that he has done these things from his youth, despite this practice of keeping the commandments, this young man knew he didn't have eternal life.

He knew he had come to the conclusion that keeping the commandments cannot save you and therefore he came to Jesus and he said what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[ 14 : 26 ] He came to that conclusion. And that's a great start and I think there are others who need to come to this conclusion as well. That there is nothing that we are able to do to receive eternal life.

Now you may wonder why is that? Why is it that this man is keeping the commandments but he knows he is not saved and so he comes to Jesus running to him.

What must I do to inherit eternal life? Here's why. In our hearts we all know that our best efforts and I would even say it a different way.

The most righteous among us, the most holy among us, the most committed among us being sincere and honest with their hearts would acknowledge that they know they don't perfectly heed the commandments.

things that we just don't do it perfectly. Because 99.99% is still not perfect. And God has given us a conscience and our conscience would remind us no you're still falling short.

[ 15 : 39 ] And so this man who was clearly a devout man recognized that he had fallen short. and so he came to Jesus and asked what must I do to have eternal life?

The second important insight that we see about this man is that he did not recognize Jesus as the source of eternal life. He comes to Jesus and he says tell me what must I do?

So he saw Jesus certainly as a good teacher, as a moral instructor, someone he felt could tell him what good deed he needed to do to point him to eternal life, but he didn't see Jesus as the source of eternal life himself.

And in this view there's so many people who are just like this young man. They view Jesus as a good teacher, a good moral example, and they believe that's why he came into the world. He came into the world, they would say, to show us how to live.

Some would say he came into the world to teach us the Sermon on the Mount that we live that out, as if we could live that out. just by following the example of Jesus.

[ 16 : 50 ] And then the third thing we see about this man is he truly believed that eternal life could be earned through good deeds. And here again, he's not alone.

There are people, when they're writing their will, they will leave all their assets to a particular church, because they have been taught that your good deeds will get you into heaven or certainly keep you a shorter time in purgatory.

And that's a part of the Roman Catholic official doctrine, that good deeds are a part of achieving eternal life. Countless numbers of people believe that eternal life can be earned in that way.

And I think when we consider these obvious insights about this man, they should cause us to reflect on our own views on these things.

But it's our view of eternal life. What are we placing stock in and trusting in for our own salvation?

[ 18 : 07 ] Are we placing stock in good deeds? Are we placing stock in weighing our good over our bad? Do we see Jesus as the source of eternal life or do we see him just as someone who will kind of help us on the way and point us in the right direction?

We need to consider these things. But if your view is anything like this young man's view, then consider with me the second conversation marker, which is the Savior's answer, which we see starts in verse 18.

And notice how Jesus answers the rich man. First, he challenges his understanding of good. Notice what he says here in verse 18. Why do you call me good?

No one is good except God. Now some have wrongly interpreted that what Jesus was doing was saying he wasn't good and only God is good.

And that is to misread what Jesus is saying and what he's actually doing. Jesus is addressing this man in accordance with his own statement. He's essentially saying, really, in truth, the man was not coming to Jesus as God.

[ 19 : 27 ] He was coming to Jesus as a good rabbi, as a teacher, and Jesus reminds him, Jesus says, remember, only God is good. In other words, you don't see me as God. Only God is good.

And you certainly are not coming to me, believing in me as God. And so Jesus is simply addressing him in the way that he addressed Jesus.

now, although it seems like the answer that Jesus is giving this young man starts in verse 19, the answer really begins in verse 18.

I want you to see that. In verse 19, Jesus begins to say to him, you know the commandment. But Jesus is answering him from verse 18 because the first thing that Jesus is doing is Jesus is helping him to see.

See, this young man thought he was good. He thought he was pretty good. He viewed himself as good. And Jesus was in essence really saying to him, only God is good.

[ 20 : 33 ] You're not God, so you're not good. And this is the truth that we all need to hear.

When we use good, I mean, yeah, we need to just be aware that none of us in and of ourselves is good. God, not as relates to true goodness and ultimate goodness.

Only God is good in that way. And so Jesus begins by helping this man in his quest for eternal life to understand, first of all, recognize you're not good.

You're not good. No one is good except God alone. this man felt that he was so good that he could do something to inherit eternal life.

Then in verse 19, Jesus further undermines his sense of goodness about him himself. And Jesus recites to him five of the commandments.

[ 21 : 47 ] He says, you know the commandments. And he recites five of them. Notice that the five that Jesus recites, they have to do with our relationship to one another. They don't relate to the ones pertaining to God.

They relate to the ones pertaining to our conduct towards other people. It was a fellow man, not as relates to God.

And his response to Jesus is, I kept them all from my youth. And he would have meant, from he was around about 12 years old. And then Jesus replies to help him to see that he really had not kept the commandments.

And interestingly, what Jesus now gets at is Jesus gets at those other commandments that he didn't recite here, the ones that relate to God. God. And so Jesus says to him in verse 21, you lack one thing.

Go and sell all that you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. Interestingly, Jesus said you lack one thing, but Jesus told him to do two things. What he lacked was not what Jesus told him to do.

[ 23 : 06 ] What he lacked was behind what Jesus told him to do. What he lacked was Jesus showed him what he lacked by his inability to do what Jesus told him to do.

That was what he lacked. He lacked the ability to do what Jesus asked him to do, and that had its root in something far deeper.

the issue was that beneath this man's piety, beneath his outward devotion, this rich man's heart was set on riches, he trusted in riches.

That's what he lacked. And his inability to do what Jesus asked him to do showed that he had set his heart on riches. And the very heart and the emotions and the affections that he needed to inherit eternal life and to follow the one who would give him eternal life, he had it set on something else.

And Jesus knew. That's not the thing for a minute that Jesus was surprised, thinking, oh, I knew he was going to do it, I knew he was going to do it, and then said, oh, my goodness, I can't believe he didn't do it. No, Jesus knew. Look at verse 20 again.

[ 24 : 27 ] Verse 21, sorry. Jesus, looking at him, loved him. There's a whole lot in that. It's almost like you could say Jesus saw into his heart, Jesus saw beyond the surface, and even in spite of all that, Jesus loved him.

Jesus saw this man, he was in trouble. He was in trouble. He wanted eternal life, life, but his heart was set on his riches.

And this is a radical requirement. Jesus didn't say to this man, go sell some of what you have. He said, you go and sell all that you have.

The man was willing to do a good deed. Perhaps he had already thought about what he would do with some of the riches, what he was willing to go to a certain extent to do whatever. Jesus would ask him, Jesus says, here's what I want you to do, I want you to go and sell every single thing.

Give to the poor, and then you come and follow me. Jesus saw beneath the surface and recognized that this man did not love God with all of his heart, and all of his soul, and all of his strength.

[ 25 : 49 ] And that's the greatest of all the commandments. The greatest commandment when Jesus was asked was, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength.

Yet this man said he kept them all. And I don't think he was lying to Jesus. I think he sincerely believed that he was keeping them all.

I think he sincerely believed he kept them all. And he reminds us that we fall short even when we think we've done a job that is acceptable in God's sight.

When he looks at it, when he looks at our effort in and of ourselves, whatever we do, our best acts of righteousness, the witness of Scripture is they're filthy rags in God's sight.

God's love. And isn't it interesting that this rich man was trusting in his riches, trusting in his own ability to do a good deed, to inherit eternal life, but he was unwilling to part with his riches that Jesus says, if you do this, you will receive eternal life.

[ 27 : 10 ] it's easy to think this rich man was really so bad, that this man, he was so materialistic and he loved things so much. But you know what?

We have a whole lot in common with this man. We've got a whole lot in common with him. I know quite often if we were to look in stories and kind of point who we are more like, some of us would probably put ourselves more with the disciples who would be following Jesus, but you know, truth is, we have more in common with this man than we realize.

And so what we see after Jesus tells this man what he needs to do, this detail I think is very important for us to see. Notice in verse 17, it says, the man ran up to Jesus and knelt before him Mark tells us in verse 22, disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful.

And the whole idea is that he's just walking away, he's just walking away. Now imagine that. Think about that. He goes to Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal eternal life?

Jesus tells him. Essentially what he does is he consciously walks away from eternal life. Disheartened because he had great possessions.

[ 28 : 52 ] And again, brothers and sisters, it's easy to overlook what the issue is, easy to overlook what Jesus is getting at. The issue is not this man's wealth, the issue is his heart.

The issue is not that he had wealth, the issue is that wealth had him. And wealth had him in the most sensual way, wealth had his heart, so much so that this man being told by Jesus, the one he considered, able to tell him, told him, here's how you get eternal life.

And this man is essentially saying, not at that price. And I would even add, perhaps, maybe not at that moment, because we don't know what his final outcome was.

We don't know if he went and counted the cost. We don't know what he did. We don't know. The gospel writers don't tell us. We don't know what he did in the end.

Again, Jesus was not surprised by this man's response, but he knew this man was in deep trouble and he still loved him. I think we see God's mercy and we see God's grace for those who are trapped in their sin and lost in their sin, that he loves them in their sin.

[ 30 : 18 ] Not upset with him, but loved him, even though he trusted and loved his riches more than he loved God. I think it's important for us to see that this is a very unique situation.

There are some people who will take this and they would make it normative and say this is what you must do, but nowhere else in scripture do we see selling your goods as a prerequisite for discipleship.

And while this was a unique requirement that Jesus put to this man, and it's not binding on all people, I think the lesson behind is applicable to all of us.

And the lesson is that riches that we set our heart upon can endanger our souls. We trust in them.

They can endanger our souls. Even now, for those of us who follow Christ, we're already following Christ, but we can come to a decision in the road, a point on our journey where Christ calls us to go in a certain direction, to do a certain thing, and we know it will cost us, and we could be unwilling to pay the price, because we love whatever it is.

[ 31 : 41 ] We fear we have to give up what we know we have to give up. And so this is not just for those who are beginning the Christian life in terms of adjustments they need to make.

this is for all of us, wherever we find ourselves. And so I want to ask us this morning, what is our heart set on?

Who is our heart set on? Are we like the rich man and unwilling to part with some possession, perhaps a relationship?

Even when our very life, eternal life, is staked upon it? And here's the interesting thing, I think most of us have lived long enough to know that things that we hold on to, things that we try to hold with our strength, we can never keep.

And we generally tend to lose. And so we need God's help, we need God's help to love him with our whole hearts.

[ 33 : 00 ] Our hearts were made to love God and loving anything else, anyone else, the way we should love God is idolatry. And what we know is all idols come down.

All idols come down. Now you'd notice that this conversation up to this point was between Jesus and the rich man. But then in verse 23, Jesus turns to his disciples and he brings them in on the conversation and he says to them, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And this brings us to the third and final conversation marker, the disciples' amazement. Verse 24, Mark tells us that the disciples are amazed at the words of Jesus when he said how difficult it would be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

Now the reason that they would have been amazed is most likely because the rabbis taught that anyone who was blessed with wealth, that God blessed them.

and it had to be some indication of God's approval on their lives. And so, this man who clearly, not only was he rich, this man was pious, this man had outward devotion, this man had been keeping the commandments in spite of his riches.

[ 34 : 37 ] And he comes to Jesus and he seeks out Jesus, he wants to follow Jesus, wants to have eternal life. And so, they're absolutely stunned at what Jesus says.

And Jesus underscores what he says in verse 25. Sorry, in verse 24, it says, they were amazed at his words and Jesus said to them again, children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

word. Now, if you have an ESV Bible like I do, you would notice that there is a footnote in verse 24, footnote number two, and at the bottom of your page, it would show that some manuscripts add for those who trust in riches.

So, the translators of the English Standard Version Bible is saying that some manuscripts have these additional words, that it is difficult for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God.

Now, real quick, let me just say this, that when the Bible was written, there were no photocopiers, no typewriters that you could just, or word processes where you could save the original document and keep printing it off.

[ 36 : 06 ] God inspired men to write the Bible, and the first document where the Bible was written was called an autograph.

It was written by hand, by the person to whom God, by his spirit, spoke his word. After that, every copy of that had to be handwritten, and so they had scribes who would handwrite them, and because of the human limitations and human frailty, and this was a very painstaking job, sometimes they may have been tired, and they may not have copied every single thing the same, and then also sometimes some scribes would have taken it upon themselves on some occasions maybe to add some words for clarification, and so the whole process of Bible translation is you have groups of men, scholars, who understand the original languages, who would pore over these documents, and they would try to compare manuscripts to see which will be more faithful than others, and so the English Standard Version landed on saying that the better manuscripts, the one that seems to be the correct one, doesn't have these words, those who trust in their riches, and I think those words, it would seem, were added just to make what would be on its face.

It's a difficult verse, easier to understand. But however you land, it still comes down to the point being that Jesus is telling them it's not just difficult for a rich person to be saved, it's difficult for anybody to be saved.

Now, I want you to see that. I don't want you to just take my word for that. I want you to see that. So, starting back in verse 24, children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

So I'm reading it without the footnoted words. And then he goes on, he explains, he says, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

[ 38 : 23 ] Now, what we have in verse 25 is what we call hyperbole. It's just an exaggeration to make a point. We know that, humanly speaking, a camel can go through the eye of a needle.

But notice in verse 26, it says, they were exceedingly astonished and said to him, then who can be saved? Now, think about that. If Jesus was only talking about rich people, they only needed to be concerned about the rich people.

They didn't need to be concerned about every single person. But their response to what Jesus said, whatever he said to them, is, who could be saved?



That amazement by the disciples seems like it is more logical that they were referring to what Jesus most likely said, children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

How difficult it is. And remember, go back to the earlier teaching that we looked at last week where he was talking about the children. He says that unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.

[ 39 : 34 ] You can't receive it. And so I think what Jesus really said to them is how difficult it is for anyone, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. And so then they're saying, well, who could be saved?

Again, if it's only the rich, the poor man don't have to worry, you can say, boy, glad I'm rich because I could get saved. But no, it is, they say, how, who then can be saved?

Who then can be saved? And then Jesus looked at them and Jesus said to them, with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Brothers and sisters, only God can do the impossible of extending grace and mercy to people who, like the rich man, who left to themselves will choose their riches over God and over eternal life.

You don't need to raise your hand on this, but I imagine that all of us in this room have lived and experienced where we did something or some things that we never thought we would do or we were capable of doing.

[ 41 : 02 ] And it's a reminder that sometimes we don't know ourselves as well as we think we know ourselves. And if we think that we are so different from this rich man, that we faced with this command from Jesus, go and sell what you have, give to the poor and come follow me, that we could have riches so much and our hearts set on them so much that we could choose our riches over God.

and over eternal life. And I think the point is that if God does not extend mercy and grace, no one will be saved. If all of us were left to ourselves, if God folded his arms and says, here's eternal life, come and get it, none of us would.

We would choose our idols over God every single time. God can do the impossible of extending mercy and grace to people who want eternal life on their terms.

Only God. Only God can do that. And so it should be clear to us, that eternal life is a gift, it's a gift from God. It can't be earned.

earned. Can't be bought by our wealth. Can't be earned by our good works. And God has to have mercy on us when he entrusts us with riches.

[ 42 : 47 ] Because again, left to ourselves, we'll set our heart on them and we begin to trust in our wealth. And of an individual who had more money than so much money as hard to imagine.

But he was sick. And he was terminally ill. And he would fly to a particular country which at the time had the best cancer treatment in the world.

And humanly speaking, I believe his life was probably prolonged, but he still died. Wealth can only take us so far. Ultimately, wealth cannot give us what only God can give us.

In verse 28, Peter says to Jesus, see we have left everything and followed you. And Peter's statement really indicates that he did not understand what Jesus was saying.

He still hadn't gotten to the point up to this particular point. And Jesus quickly says to him in a nutshell, he says, Peter, no one is worse off giving up anything to follow me or for the sake of the gospel.

[ 44 : 14 ] Just no one is worse off. And that's what he means when he says to Peter in verse 29, truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mothers or mother or father children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and land.

What is he describing there? He's describing for us the fact that he has a big family. And that in the family of God, we have these multiplied blessings that we get to enjoy.

We don't own them, but we get to enjoy them. I stayed in many, many houses that I don't own. I've been embraced by many brothers and sisters my mother did not give birth to.

For the sake of the gospel. Gone to foreign countries where people didn't know me from Adam, but they received me in Jesus' name.

And they received me as a brother, as a sister. Jesus says, no one gives up anything for him and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive it abundantly in this life and then in the life to come, eternal life.

[ 45 : 49 ] Isn't it interesting that I believe that you probably heard others preach on this verse before. Isn't it interesting that oftentimes these two words often get left out with persecutions?

With persecutions? Jesus never promises us a bed of roses. He never promises us that the road will be easy. In fact, he honestly tells us it's going to be hard.

He says, if you're going to come after me, you're going to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me. He says, if you don't do that, you're not fit to be my disciple. And so these are not easy things that we are called to, but God gives grace.

And God enables us to be able to do them. And then Jesus concludes in verse 31, where he says, many who are first will be last and the last first.

This verse casts our eyes on the day when God will make all things right. Where those who, like this rich man and like others who may have position and prominence and may be able to get preferential treatment, who may be first.

[ 47 : 17 ] He didn't say all of them because by the grace of God, some of them are going to come to know Christ. But many of them who remain unrepentant, who remain on that path, they will be last.

And those, many of them, who follow Christ, who are the back of the line, they will be first. There's coming a day where God will make all things right.

Where God will make those adjustments. And he will do it in a just manner. And so this passage is a stark reminder for us this morning that the kingdom of God operates differently from the world.

The rich and the powerful have no advantage in the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, and this is something we need to hear, in many ways, and I know some wouldn't believe me, I'll tell you right up front, in many ways, those who have wealth face amazing temptations that the rest of us don't face.

I know some are saying, Lord, I could deal with the temptation. Just trust me, I could deal with it. But the Bible says, those who want to be rich, they pierce themselves through with all kinds of pangs and arrows.

[ 48 : 43 ] And so we trust God's good providence that he blesses us with wealth. We trust his providence. And we try to learn setting our hearts on the Lord, not on the things that he gives us.

And we see again also from this passage that all people, even very good people, like this rich man, are in need of God's mercy and in need of God's grace.

Only God can cause self-centered sinners to have a heart towards him. And again, let me just conclude by saying to us, I've tried to say it all morning, I say it to us again, if we believe that this is just talking about rich people, we've missed the entire point of this account.

And it would only be speaking to a very small percentage of people, but it speaks to all of us. Because all of us left to ourselves will choose idols over God every single time because we will set our hearts on idols.

And so we thank God for his mercy that he doesn't leave us to ourselves. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your great mercy that what is impossible with man is possible with God that if we were left to ourselves, none of us would choose you.

[ 50 : 20 ] We thank you for your mercy in Christ that enables us to obey your word even when you're calling us to willingly take losses, whether it's material losses or relational losses, all in a bid to follow you.

Lord, it is only by your grace, not any goodness in us, not any spirituality in us that we do those things. It is by your amazing grace that we are able to do those things.

I pray that you would work in our hearts, cause us to love Jesus more. I pray this morning for those who don't know Christ, Lord, that you would convict their hearts, help them to see the treasure that Christ is, help them to see that everything else in this world is passing away and not worthy of our affections, but only Jesus is a lasting treasure.

God, I pray you'd open their eyes in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.