

Like a Child

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Date: 17 October 2021

Preacher: Taylor Hollingsworth

[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! The film by Steven Spielberg won five Oscars and was nominated for six more.

This movie grossed over \$480 million worldwide. And it continues to rank on many lists among the top movies of all time, including my own. The film, if you guessed it, is Saving Private Ryan.

Did y'all get it? So there's many war films out there with great special effects, but most fall far short of what this film accomplished success-wise. And I'd argue that most of the success is because of the storyline.

It begins with an old man walking through this military graveyard, and he's reflecting on the story behind the men in the graves. As the story unfolds, we find ourselves transported with him into the backstory in World War II.

[1 : 20] The stage is set. We find out that Private Ryan is the last surviving brother of four. The other three have been killed in war already. And so the film follows this army squad as they seek to give their lives in order to save Private Ryan.

Well, the film captures amazing acts of courage and sacrifice, just like any good war movie. But I think the most moving scene comes towards the end of the film, after nearly all the members of the platoon have been killed during the rescue.

And Ryan cradles the captain of the rescue squad while he's dying. And as he breathes his last, the captain looks into Ryan's eyes and charges him with this.

Earn this. Earn it. So with those words ringing in his ears, the face of this young Private Ryan begins to transition.

It reveals that he's indeed the same old man that's walking around at the beginning of the film in the graveyard. And so while he's staring at the captain's grave, he takes a knee and he begins to speak.

[2 : 27] Every day, I think about what you told me on that bridge. I tried to live my life the best that I could. I hope that it was enough.

I hope that at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of you have done for me. No response. And unsatisfied with that silence, Ryan turns to his wife and he begs her, tell me I've lived a good life.

Tell me that I'm a good man. His wife, just like any wife would want to do, tries to console him. But it's clear that that question continues to cling to his conscience.

That film is hugely popular because of its ability to give voice to a vital question that so many of us are asking. It's a question that really, it digs beneath all of the Hollywood hype and the special effects.

It's the question, how good is good enough? Or maybe that question makes you uncomfortable because you don't like the thought of the answer.

[3 : 33] Perhaps you feel the weight of past decisions and regrets. Or maybe you keep yourself really busy so you don't even have to reflect on that question. Or maybe you fly right by this question, assuming all is well.

But how do you know? How good is good enough? Well, this question is really at the heart of the text that we're going to look at today.

And we have the opportunity to listen in as Jesus interacts with a number of people regarding this burning question. Who can receive the kingdom of God? Who falls short of the kingdom of God and why?

Who can be saved? How good is good enough? So let's lean in with humble hearts and listen to what God's word has to say to us this morning. This is Mark chapter 10 verses 13 through 31.

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them. And when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, Let the children come to me.

[4 : 37] Do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

And he took them in his arms and he blessed them, laying his hands on them. 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've kept from my youth.

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him. And he said to him, You lack one thing. Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor.

[5 : 44] And you will have treasure in heaven. Come, follow me. Disheartened by the saying, He went 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's 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. Peter began to say to him, See, we've 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 for the 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.

[7 : 06] But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Well, in this text, there's an answer to the question, How good is good enough?

If you're battling fear and you're wondering what the answer is for your life, there's hope for you this morning. And if you've been running at a really fast clip, which I think many of us have, and you haven't really made time to pause and reflect on this question, consider this an urgent invitation to pause and reflect.

There's time for you this morning. We'll see Jesus address aspects of that question as he engages in three main characters. And I like to think of this interaction with these characters kind of like bumpers at the bowling alley.

I love those things. So, so helpful for someone like me. They help correct us while moving us forward. So that's what these interactions are going to do. There's three characters we're going to engage.

The children, verses 13 through 16. The rich man, verses 17 to 22. And the disciples, 23 through 31. So let's look at the children. Verse 13.

[8 : 14] And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them. Well, as it's been noted several times in the series already, children were not seen as contributors to society at all.

By and large, childhood was just this like necessary interim period to adulthood before they could begin contributing to the hierarchy of society. But regardless of culture and context, mamas love their babies.

That's how it is. And mamas, you know what I'm talking about. People supposedly have heard of Jesus' ministry and know that he's performed many miracles. It doesn't say anything about these children being sick or lame or needing help of any kind.

It appears that they just wanted these kids to be blessed by Jesus. However, the text shows that the disciples rebuked them. Why?

Well, most commentators agree that the disciples were acting in line with the cultural norms of that day. You can imagine them. They're thinking, Jesus is important. We don't have time for these little kids.

[9 : 20] What good does a little kid have to bring to Jesus' really important ministry? They'll only slow Jesus down. No, no, no, no. Who do you think you are bringing these babies up here? Well, I imagine these disciples kind of like stone-faced bouncers, just like guarding the perimeter.

And they're just like turning moms and babies away left and right. But how does Jesus respond? Look at verse 14. But when Jesus saw it, the way that these disciples were handling the situation, he was indignant.

That's not a word we use a whole lot. What does indignant mean? The word for indignant means to arouse to anger. The object of a person's indignation reveals a lot about that person.

So what does Jesus' indignance reveal here? He's utterly opposed to the disciples' perspective on this situation. In effect, Jesus is radically opposed to the world's value system that's informing the disciples in this moment.

You see, the disciples were adopting a worldly attitude. Their attitudes toward others was that they value people based on their ability. There's a price tag placed on people based on their output, based on what they're bringing.

[10 : 34] But Jesus reorients everything in verse 14. Rather than rebuking the people for bringing the children, he insists that the children come.

Let the children come to me. Don't hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. He just flips the culture upside down. He introduces a new kingdom ethic.

Jesus reveals his compassion and defense of the helpless, the vulnerable, powerless. These kids have absolutely nothing to bring.

They have nothing to offer. They have no place of recognition or prestige in the society at all. But rather than adopting the world's value system by sending them away, Jesus insists that these are the ones he wants to bring near.

These are the ones that the kingdom of God belongs to. As I was reading this text, I was reminded of an experience that we had at the Pastors College this past year.

[11 : 35] The dean of the Pastors College, Jeff Perswell, is also a pastor at the church that we were attending during our time last year. And many of you have met Jeff. He's come and preached for us. What you may not know is that Jeff, as a young man, was on track to become a theological giant in the academic world.

He could have been writing commentaries on the New Testament. However, he gave up many of those ambitions in order to serve a local church and to train punk kids like me to be a pastor in a local church.

One particular Sunday after Jeff preached, we were enjoying some time just talking with people like we do here. And the kids were kind of running around in a nearby grassy area. And I remember looking over at one point and being struck by Jeff kneeling down next to my two-year-old, Ezra.

And I could just barely hear their conversation. Jeff was talking to Ezra about the monster truck on his shirt. Ezra just had this big grin on his face.

They talked about the tires and how red the truck was. And they just happily chatted for probably four or five minutes. Well, the thing that gets me the most about that particular moment was that there were no other adults standing by.

[12 : 52] No one for Jeff to impress. This was not one of those kind of like pacifying conversations with a nearby kid before we can get back to the real conversation with the adult. He had nothing to gain from this conversation at all.

And yet he took the time after preaching and laboring all week to engage a small child who had absolutely nothing to bring to the table. There were no big theological decisions being made in that moment.

There were no commentaries being written in that moment. There were no influential people even being won to the church through that conversation. This was a man following the lead of his savior, Jesus Christ.

It was a picture of a countercultural kingdom ethic. Jesus continues in verse 15, saying, Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

I think this verse helpfully clarifies what Jesus is saying in verse 14. So being a literal child is not the criteria for being in the kingdom of God. Let's just be clear about that.

[13 : 57] The kingdom of God does not discriminate based on age. Like if you're a kid, you're in. And if you're an adult, you're out. The emphasis here is on receiving the kingdom of God like a child. So the big question for us here is this.

In what way do we need to be like a child so that we can receive the kingdom of God? That's the question. So some have argued that we really need to adopt some of the characteristics of children.

Things like their innocence or their purity or even spontaneity. But if we assume that that's the case, then we have to say that the disciples get God's kingdom based on similar virtues.

So how good is good enough? What do we need to do? Is it true that we need to get the right combination of these childlike virtues in order to get to the kingdom? Well, I'm reminded of the good old days of pickup basketball in the school gym.

You remember how that works, right? So everybody is lined up. You got the two best players typically that are the captains. Everybody else is on the line. Then each captain would go kind of back and forth, picking the best players available until the teams were full.

[15 : 07] Now some of you are starting to have heart palpitations and sweat a little bit just even thinking about this moment. But if you stink, it's a humiliating process, right? That line slowly empties out until the shame just swallows up those last couple people.

And these are the ones who had little to no coordination, endurance, and let's just be real, nobility. Okay? So at my school, the last pick was always Weston.

You could count on it. He was short and had virtually no hand-eye coordination at all. And he tried to compensate for his lack of height and lack of coordination by being a hustler.

You know what I'm talking about. Lay it all on the court. Just hustle. But this basically amounted to him wildly flailing across the court like a dying cicada. You've seen those things. That's what it looks like.

It was awful. Even when he tried to compensate for his lack with good virtue, it was all in vain. He had absolutely nothing to contribute to the game of basketball.

[16 : 10] Well, Jesus is pointing the same truth out in our lives. To be like the children, we don't try to adopt certain values to make ourselves good enough.

No, like the disciples, we are not innocent and eager, but slow, disbelieving, and often stalemated by fear. James Edwards helpfully redirects us away from trying to get the right virtues mastered when he writes this.

In this story, children are not blessed for their virtues, but for what they lack. They come only as they are. Small, powerless, without sophistication, as the overlooked and dispossessed of society.

To receive the kingdom of God as a child is to receive it as one who has no credits, no clout, no claims. A little child has absolutely nothing to bring.

And whatever a child receives, he or she receives it by grace on the basis of sheer neediness, rather than by any merit inherent in him or herself. Little children are paradigmatic disciples, for only empty hands can be filled.

[17 : 27] Well, Jesus is just shattering the value system of the world. The emphasis is not on the virtues a child brings, but on the nothingness the child brings.

These are the ones who receive the kingdom of God. Don't miss that vital word, receive. Jesus looks for those who know they've got nothing to bring, and he gives them the kingdom.

They don't earn it, they receive it. And Jesus does not begrudgingly engage those who have nothing to give. He's not the captain, just picking all the best players and then gets stuck, the last guy on the line.

He's not sulking because he got stuck with the one that has nothing to give. No, Jesus gets the first pick, and he goes straight for Weston.

When you stand before Jesus with absolutely nothing to give, when you stand there on that line with nothing but past sin and present shame, know this, you are exactly the kind of person Jesus wants.

[18 : 33] If you're overwhelmed by this sense of inadequacy, and this sounds too good to be true, I invite you to look down at verse 16 with me. And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Jesus doesn't just reach out and touch them with the tip of his finger while he's looking away. When Jesus looks at you, he's not reluctant like he's getting cold leftovers.

This is a picture of Christ's heart towards those who have nothing to give. What you see here is full acceptance, full embrace, full joy.

That's Christ's heart towards you. Only a little while later, we're introduced to the second character, the rich man. Verse 17, 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?

As we're introduced to this new character, there's several things worth noting. He's apparently a man, a young man with a massive amount of wealth. We also find out that he sees himself to be a really moral person.

[19 : 57] Kept all these things from my youth, right? Well, the fact that he runs out to Jesus and kneels before him really shows that this guy is super eager and ambitious. He's come to Jesus for a very specific purpose.

He's eager to enter the kingdom of God. And notice even how he frames his question, What must I do to inherit eternal life? And the very question even points to the fact that his confidence is in himself and his behavior.

The little kids we met previously, they aren't asking that question. Their confidence is not in themselves or their behavior. So what's interesting is Jesus' first response.

Rather than like coming out and just telling the guy, Jesus asks him a question. Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

What's Jesus doing here? Why don't you just tell the guy? Well, while the young man is fixated on finding out what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus' question pushes us deeper beneath the surface to grapple with the real question at hand.

[21 : 06] How good is good enough? Well, by saying that no one is good but God alone, Jesus is pointing the man to the true standard. The only one that measures up to the standard of what good ought to be is found in God alone.

But this is completely lost on this rich young man. I imagine him kind of standing there waiting for, you know, Jesus to roll out the to-do list. So Jesus turns to a portion of the law to do a diagnostic.

And you can see it there. Just how good are you? Well, in verse 19, Jesus lays out the command. And so, do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. Well, how does the man measure up? Well, he quickly says, I've kept all these since my youth.

I don't want to doubt this guy at all. I mean, this could be true. Let's just assume it is. I mean, it could be. Well, based on his eager disposition and the fact that he had so much wealth, indicates that this man may have made his way to wealth through virtue and hard work.

[22 : 13] Many people would probably think of him as this picture of moral uprightness. I mean, it's not much different than hardworking people in our own community. I mean, this man could easily be like an educated, successful business owner in Athens.

Nicely pressed shirts. Volunteers at the soup kitchen. Gives big donations to T-dub. Has a nice yard. Always answers people. Yes, sir. Yes, ma'am. You know who I'm talking about.

He's apparently an outstanding individual. But he feels as if he's lacking something. What more must I do? Anyone who counts on what they are doing to be good enough will run into one of two dilemmas.

One is, I've done so much bad. Could God ever love me? The other one is, I've done so much good.

Is it enough? Is it enough? Well, how does Jesus respond to the rich young man's self-assessment? Well, Jesus often comes after the Pharisees for their self-righteousness.

[23 : 25] It appears that Jesus here has compassion on this man and his earnest desire to understand. Jesus loved him. Jesus' love is not contingent on what you've done or haven't done, on what you have or don't have.

It's precisely because Jesus loves him that he speaks into his situation. Verse 21 says, When Jesus says, there's one thing you lack, the guy probably gets real excited and his little antennas come up.

He gets, oh, here he comes. He's ready. But then, Jesus just hits him with the biggie, doesn't he? He lays it down. I wonder what was going on inside the young man's head at this moment.

Sell all I have? I worked really hard for that stuff. And give it to who? They didn't work hard for that stuff. So what happens?

What does the man do in response? Well, verse 22 says, He was disheartened by the saying, and he went away sorrowful, because he had many great possessions.

[24 : 49] This is a tragic moment. And sadly, the rich man walks away while clinging to his great possessions. He wanted one more thing to check off of his to-do list. You contrast this moment with the interaction with those children.

Unlike the rich man who comes with his good things and his good behaviors, they have nothing and can do nothing. And they are the ones who receive the kingdom.

They come empty-handed before Jesus. The great irony is that the rich man is actually the one who is lacking. So what's the takeaway for us?

Should we sell all that we have and give to the poor? Is that what we should conclude? Before we move to that conclusion, I think it's wise to consider what Jesus is addressing here.

Jesus is catering his approach to the needs of this man's heart. Wealth is not inherently evil, nor are we mandated to sell everything and be homeless vagabonds in order to be good enough.

[25 : 49] We know that this can't be the criteria because of other examples in Scripture, other encounters with people such as the demoniac, formerly known as Legion. You remember this story? After that man is released from demonic oppression, the first thing that he does is beg Jesus to follow him.

What does Jesus say to that man? He tells him, no. This guy's ready to go and be a vagabond with Jesus. No.

Instead, Jesus sends him home. And for what we know, he lived a normal life in his community telling people about Jesus. So what's the difference?

The difference between that former demoniac and the rich man has to do with what rules their hearts. So the problem is not that the rich man's good things or his good works are there.

The problem is his relationship to his good things and his good works. If you notice the laws listed in verse 19, every single one of them are like horizontal commands dealing with other people.

[27 : 00] Do you remember what the first commandment is in the Ten Commandments? You shall have no other gods before me. This commandment gets to the heart's relationship to God himself.

In verse 21, Jesus said that the man lacked one thing. And then he gives a bunch of commands after that. The one thing was not simply getting through another checklist.

The list only pointed to the one thing that he lacked, a heart surrendered to God. This man was deceived into believing that he was wealthy.

But in reality, his tight grip on earthly riches prevented him from receiving eternal riches. The wealthy, he was spiritually bankrupt. Well, like the rich man, we have to pause.

We must pause to look at how we've been relating to our good things and our good works. There's a way that we can use good works and good things in bad ways.

[28 : 02] Good behavior, for instance, can be a way of trying to deal with imperfections inside of us. Gaining more good things sometimes hides the feeling of lack.

And we must trace our motivations for those things. It's been said that a good thing that becomes a God thing is a bad thing.

Even good things can become a poor substitute for God. We must pay attention to how we relate to what we do and what we have.

Commentator David Garland helpfully writes, The disciples are to learn from this encounter that God requires something more than reverence for Jesus as a good teacher and earnest attempts to obey God's commands.

The man has attained conventional respectability with a gentile approach to obedience. But Jesus' demand exposes the man's reluctance to give himself and all his earthly securities, works, and possessions.

[29 : 07] He falls short of the one thing the reign of God requires. To enter the kingdom of God, one must submit to God's rule so that God reigns over every aspect of life.

May we be, as a church, people that refuse conventional respectability with a gentile approach to obedience.

Let's invite God's rule and reign over every aspect of our lives. Jesus springboards from this interaction to debrief directly with the third set of characters, the disciples.

Verses 23. How difficult it is 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's 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.

[30 : 12] So within a couple of verses here, Jesus repeatedly drives home the point how difficult it is for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

The image of the camel going through the eye of the needle is this hyperbolic, exaggerated language that is meant to provoke the question, Well, how can that happen?

That's what it's intended to do. Does Jesus use that language because he's anti-wealth? If we look at other parts of scripture, God's blessing is often associated with wealth.

Take Job 1.10, for instance. Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

So there's demonstrable evidence that wealth can be a blessing from God. But we need to be careful. These disciples, they were really awestruck by Jesus' statements here.

[31 : 22] Well, doesn't this man's wealth show that he's blessed? Doesn't his success prove his righteousness before God? But we need to be very careful because this is not the right measure of goodness and acceptability before God.

On the flip side, we see David, a man after God's own heart, being confronted by the wealth and prosperity of wicked, godless people.

Look at this in Psalm 73. He says, For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Okay, so prosperity can indicate God's blessing, but prosperity does not necessarily indicate righteousness.

On the flip side, God's often seen throughout Scripture interceding for people that have nothing. The poor, the destitute, those without power, such as the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow.

So given all of these realities, what is Jesus doing in this context? How good is good enough? Is the rich man made right with God because of his good things or his good works?

[32 : 31] No. He is forcing the disciples in this moment to grapple with the heart. He makes this connection explicit throughout the rest of Scripture and through the Gospels.

In Matthew 6, 21, Jesus says, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So Jesus is not anti-wealth, but he is pro-humility.

And he knows the devastating effects the love of wealth can have on the allegiances of the human heart. Jesus does not glorify poverty.

James Edwards clarifies that Jesus does not teach or uphold poverty as an ideal, but he does, as he regard, the awareness of need that results from poverty as a blessing.

The greatest enemies of faith and obedience are self-satisfaction and pride. And nothing removes those barriers more effectively than poverty. Likewise, Jesus does not hate wealth.

[33 : 36] But Kent Hughes rightfully points to the potential effects it has on the heart when he writes this. Pride, arrogance, insensitivity, indifference, self-satisfaction, worldliness, and other ungodly mindsets feed on affluence.

Most tragic, wealth can steal one against the objective requirement for entering the kingdom of God. Helpless dependence. So the provocative conversation with the disciples intensifies.

Disciples are being wrestled down to the mat with the implications of what Jesus is saying here. You mean to say that educated, successful business owner in Athens who has nicely pressed shirts, volunteers at the soup kitchen, donates to T-Dub, has a nice yard, always answers yes sir, yes ma'am.

That guy, all of his good works and good things don't mean he's good enough? So if the nicest, most successful out of all of us is not good enough, then how good is good enough?

And here comes the big question in verse 26, then who can be saved? If the best of us is not good enough, who of us sitting in here this morning can be saved?

[34 : 55] What's Jesus' response? With man, this is impossible. No mount of good works and no mountain of good things can make you good enough.

No effort on your part. No credentials. No trophies. No awards. No applause. No pedigree. No church attendance. No getting yourself cleaned up and straightened out.

No getting your act together. No trying harder. No compensating for past wrongs with a few more rights. What must we do to inherit eternal life? Who then can be saved with man? It is impossible.

If you're going down this road of self-help, Jesus has placed a huge sign up that just says, dead end. It doesn't matter how nice the car is that you're driving. You're driving to a dead end.

But not with God. For all things are possible with God. Jesus is redirecting our attention away from our efforts. Away from ourselves.

[35 : 58] This should cause us to ask some questions. How good is good enough? Well, Jesus said there's no one good except God alone. So how good is good enough?

Well, it's as good as God. So who can be saved? Well, Jesus says it's impossible with man, but with God it's possible. So how do we become as good as God?

Well, we can't work for it. He's saying it's impossible. So how do we get God's goodness inside of us? Friends, it's my joy to announce to you the good news.

There's more than one rich man in our text this morning. One kept his riches and he walked away sad.

But the other gave all of his riches and walked to the cross. Jesus left the glorious riches of heaven and wrapped himself in human flesh and lived among us in this sin-shattered world.

[37 : 04] Why? 2 Corinthians 8-9 says, What does he require of you?

You must leave your efforts behind. You must come with open hands and a needy heart.

Here's the main point for us this morning. You must come to Jesus with your nothing and you will receive everything. He wants all of you.

You gain infinitely more than you lose. This is what he's communicating to the disciples. Does this mean sacrifice in this world's trivial?

It means it shouldn't hurt? It seems Peter wanted to see if any of his sacrifices had any value at all. So in verse 28, he says, See, we've left everything and followed you.

[38 : 23] And Jesus replies, 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 for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now and this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

Yes, there is real sacrifice to follow Christ. One must let go of his nets, another his riches. However, one will receive a hundredfold more to replace what was lost for Christ's sake.

But this is not a plug for the prosperity gospel. This is not about cars and jets. You take a closer look at what is lost and what is gained. Notice that there's no replacement for the father in that list.

Why is that? Because those who belong to Christ are brought into the family of God and have one father. The hundredfold gain is not even necessarily private property.

It's the global family of God and all of its resources. When a person's heart is captivated by Christ, they hold their possessions with an open hand for the benefit of their spiritual family.

[39 : 47] This is how Joseph of Arimathea with an open hand used his wealth and access to property to give a burial tomb for Jesus. This is how Aquila and Priscilla could open up their homes so that the church had a place to meet.

Widows gained families. Orphans gained parents. The needy experienced generosity from their local church families. The boundless resources of God's people become available because God's people are no longer bound to their resources.

Along with this generous inheritance, there are also persecutions for the sake of the gospel. This was written to those under the persecution of Nero's kingdom.

Christians were maligned and hated. Why? Because they were drastically countercultural. But the costs far outweighed are far outweighed by the gains.

When I was a groom on my wedding day and I saw Elizabeth walking down the aisle, I was not thinking about schedule adjustments and missing ramen noodles.

[41 : 03] No, I was beaming ear to ear because I was getting something so much better than I was losing. Do you see everything giving everything to Christ as gain or loss?

I'd like to plead with you this morning to let go of your good things and your good works and come to Jesus with your nothing so that you can receive everything in this life and for eternity. If we were to enter into that final scene of Private Ryan with this storyline, we would experience something totally different.

We would not hear a dying captain charging us to earn it. We would not kneel in front of a tombstone wondering how good is good enough. Instead, we would kneel before the cross with confidence that his sacrifice was good enough.

as good as God himself. And we would hear the captain of our souls not saying earn it but receive it. Receive it.

Let's pray. Oh, Father, you are so kind to come. Give us your son. Pour out all of his riches.

[42 : 19] Embrace poverty so that we can be the beneficiary so that we can be made children of the living God. We are so grateful for that. I pray that you just captivate our hearts.

Be the king of our hearts. That's what we desire. We ask that you move us from fickle, small obsessions with this world so that we can gain an inheritance, a glorious inheritance in this life and the one to come.

We praise you. It's in Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.