

The Eye of the Needle

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon explores the challenge of letting go of worldly possessions and trust to fully embrace the kingdom of God.

Duration: 43:54

Scripture: Matthew 19:24

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Surrender To God"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of letting go and fully trusting in God. It delves into the story of the rich young ruler and the concept of going through the 'eye of the needle' to enter into the kingdom of God. The message emphasizes the need to surrender all to Jesus, trust in His provision, and be willing to let go of anything that hinders a deeper walk with Him.

Transcript

You may be seated. Everybody will be happy over there. I'm glad we sang that song.

It has something to do with what I'm speaking this morning. I'm going to speak on a topic that is quite frequently misunderstood. Scriptures I'm about to read have been misinterpreted, misapplied, misrepresented, and caused at some times confusion among people.

I'm going to speak about something that Jesus said in a message called the eye of the needle. If you'll turn to Mark chapter 10, please, and then we'll pray together as you have your Bible open on your knee. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you said that we shall know the truth and the truth shall set us free.

Lord God, let there be freedom in this house today. You sent your word to do a specific purpose, and you say that your word never comes back void without fulfilling that which it's sent to do. I yield my life, my body, my mind as a vessel to you.

I'm asking you for a quickening of the Holy Spirit. I'm asking you, Lord, to animate me and give me the grace to disappear that you may appear. I pray that every person in this sanctuary and is hearing my voice might become aware at some level that you are speaking to them.

Take these words that you've given to me and multiply them thousands of ways and speak into every heart into the many situations represented this morning. Lord, you've got to quicken the word or it just falls on deaf ears. Quicken it, quicken our hearts to hear it.

I thank you, Jesus, that at the end of the day, all we ask is that you be glorified in us. We ask it in your precious name. Amen.

Now, the scripture I'm about to read, Mark chapter 10, I'm going to start at verse 17 in just a moment, but it's a situation very much like this morning. We're seeing, I look out in the sanctuary this morning, I see so many young people here. I'm surprised at the youthfulness and how the demographic of this church is actually changing over time, and I see so many young people coming in.

Thank God for that. Perhaps I'm just getting older and maybe that's part of the reason, but it truly is a church of young people. And we're singing today, everybody's going to be happy over there.

And I'm drawn back now into this passage of scripture. Jesus Christ is here as a man. He's walking through the streets of that particular time, and everyone's excited.

They're all talking about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven has come. Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven, and there's an excitement in the house.

And you sang that song today, everyone will be happy over there. And here's this young man, beginning in verse 17, who gets caught, I think, in the fervency of the moment. Now you have to understand, Jesus is not just traveling with 12 at this point.

There's most likely thousands following him. The whole country, or at least a great measure of it, is abuzz because something is happening in the spiritual realm. They're aware of this, and this young man now just decides, as it is, to take the plunge.

This is a type of an altar call, if I may say so. But he's kneeling right before Jesus now. Verse 17 of Mark chapter 10.

And it says, And when he was, he, that's Jesus, was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Now he's asking about a future kingdom. He said, God, I'm just so caught in this. I'm so excited about what I'm hearing.

I want to be happy over there. And I want to be over there. So what must I do? And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? There's none good but one, that is God.

Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said to him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said to him, One thing thou lackest. Could you imagine if it gets down to that? Imagine the whole life of religion and it gets down to one thing. What if God came this morning and told you there's one more thing, just one thing that you need to do.

Go thy way and sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come take up the cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about and said to his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches. See that it's important to note that word trust to enter into 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 into the kingdom of God. Now there have been many speculations about this. Some say the eye of the needle is some kind of a slipped in the old city wall or some kind of a narrow gate.

But every credible commentary you'll ever read says that he's speaking about a camel and a needle, about a camel going through the eye of a needle. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? The disciples, every one of them, I'm sure, had a measure of trust in something, you know, could see what they're leaning on. And so they included themselves as it is in the statement and said, Well, who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it's impossible, but not with God.

For with God all things are possible. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we've left all and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There's no man that has left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake in the gospels.

But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions. And in the world to come, eternal life, but many that are first shall be last and the last first. Now, this young man came in sincerity and in his earnest religious practice, he was seeking a future hope.

And that's where many are today. You're here. You're not being insincere in your worship.

You're clapping your hands. You're shouting and praising God. And in the midst of all of this worship, you are seeking a future hope.

And he comes to Jesus and said, What must I do? I have a sense in my heart that I'm not complete. And if God is drawing you, there will always be this sense when there's something left, when there's a step that's not been taken yet, there'll always be in your heart, this sense of incompleteness, no matter how much you clap your hands or how exciting the service gets. There's this deep inner sense that what is it yet that I lack? What am I missing? How come his religious observance all of his life left him with this question? What must I do? I don't feel like I've got the fullness of what God has for me yet.

And so he's asking about a future hope. I want to go to heaven. Now, Jesus, in verse 21, it looked at him and it says he loved him.

And in the Greek text, the word is it's an agape love. And the context is a love that gives to the person who's loved not what he thinks he wants, but what the giver knows he needs. Now, when God looks at you and loves you and you say, Lord, I want I want eternal life.

And the Lord says, oh, good, I love you. Now I'm going to give you what you need to get there. And that's exactly what is going to happen in this particular interaction.

Now, Jesus offers him not just a future hope, but a present reality. In effect, he opens to him the kingdom of heaven in a moment and invites him to walk with him through time and into eternity. He said, listen, you've got something that you need to do.

You've got to let go of what you have. You've got to start giving to the poor. You'll have treasure in heaven.

Come take up the cross and walk with me. Follow me. Now, this young man had in his mind heaven.

But Jesus is saying, no, the kingdom is here now and I'm inviting you now to come and walk with me. The invitation is the same this morning as it was in this passage of scripture. Jesus Christ is inviting every young person is here, in particular, all people.

But I'm thinking about young people because this is what the scripture is about. He's inviting you to walk with him, not just heaven, but now a supernatural life, something that comes from God, going into a place that only God can take you into. But only one thing kept him from this life that he longed for.

You see, he had another trust. That's really the issue. It was another trust that had to be broken.

And that's where so many people are today. They have a present trust and they're seeking only a future hope. It's like, God, I like my life right now.

I like what I'm doing. I like what I have. I like where I'm going.

I just want to get to heaven when it's all over. That's called a present trust, seeking a future hope. And that's where many young people are today.

That's why they don't last in the kingdom of God. That's why they come in and and sort of slide in on their knees and look so like this young man just running and kneeling and looking so devoted. But they don't last because Jesus says, I want you to give up your present trust and I want you to enter into the future hope now.

I want you to start walking with me now. It's not just about heaven. I can't tell you over the years the number of people who fit this pattern of coming into church and saying, I'm not willing to give up where I'm going.

I'm not willing to give up what I have or what I'm presently doing, but I do want to go to heaven. Now, Jesus tells him plainly in his case that this is what he must do. He knew this was the one thing.

He knew this was the thing in this young man's life that needed to be broken. And he put it to him straight. You've got to let this go.

You've got to sell it off as it is, this trust that you have. And in his case, it was in wealth and everything that wealth represents, all of the things that men use to procure wealth. He said, you've got to let this thing go and you've got to start giving literally to the poor and come and walk with me.

And there's a reproach there. He says, take up the cross. In other words, it's not going to be the most popular journey.

It's not necessarily going to make you famous among men, but I'm asking you to come and take up the cross and walk with me. Now, it's not a formula for all people, folks. I want you to understand when a lot of times this has been taken and you get the poverty culture as it is, it comes into the church of Jesus Christ.

You know that it's holy to be poor. And it's not holy to be poor. And being poor does not make someone holy, nor does having wealth make someone unholy.

It's not the issue. James said, charge those that are wealthy in this world not to be high minded, but to remember to do charitable works. And I'm paraphrasing him, that's what he said.

You see, it's an issue of trust. The disciples were dumbfounded at his words in verse 24. And Jesus answered them again and said, children, how hard it is for them that trust riches to enter into the kingdom of God.

And so the question therefore is, what are you trusting in that's keeping you today from walking in the power of God's kingdom? What's there? What is that last thing that stops you from getting through? And then he says in verse 25, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Now, we're not talking about somebody who's wealthy, folks. We're talking about someone who's trusting in his wealth.

Someone who has, and the disciples immediately knew what he's talking about. In that culture, you packed everything you owned onto a camel. When you saw a camel train coming into town, it was always loaded to the hilt, as it is with goods, as much as this beast of burden can possibly carry.

And Jesus is making a contrast that they're quite familiar with. He said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man, and in the context of trusting in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God. The picture is just simply somebody who's traveling with so much baggage that he simply can't get in.

And that's exactly what happens to so many people. You see, the kingdom is in our principle. The kingdom that he's talking about is a release in us of the very real, powerful, and present life of Christ.

That's the kingdom. It's leaving behind what we trusted in, entering into a brand new life. It's a supernatural life.

It's, Paul said, we live in him. We move in him. We have our being in him.

Now, Luke chapter 19, put a mark and mark, and go to Luke chapter 19. I want to show you again that it's not a formula. Verse 1, it says, Jesus in Luke 19 entered and passed through Jericho, and behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

Now, he's a tax gatherer, quite despised, actually, by his own people, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, who he was, but he could not for the press because he was of little stature. He was short, and he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him and said, Zacchaeus, make haste, come down, for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. When they saw it, that's the religious, they murmured, saying that he's gone to be the guest with a man that is a sinner.

Now, Zacchaeus stood, this is in the house, he's with Jesus, Jesus has been speaking to him, and he said to the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I've taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said to him, this day is salvation, come to this house,

for as much as he also is the son of Abraham, for the son of man has come to seek and save that which is lost. Now, we ask ourselves the question, if he said to the rich young ruler, sell it all and give to the poor, now how come Zacchaeus has another standard? How come Zacchaeus only gives half? And Jesus said, oh, today salvation has come to this house.

Why didn't Jesus say, hold it, hold it, hold it, Zacchaeus? Half is not enough. You were there when the young ruler came, and I told him everything. You see, the issue is not money.

The issue is the trust and the love of the things of this world. And Jesus knew that his trust, this trust in his life was broken. And the evidence was he's no longer willing to use others for his own gain, but he was using his gain for others, folks.

That's the issue. The people who are bound to this world use people for their own gain. People who are bound to Christ use their gain for others.

That's the difference. And Jesus knew when the transformation had come. It's not wrong to prosper.

It's not wrong. We have to do something in life. But the issue is, what do we do with what we have? Does it become unwittingly our trust? Does it become what we're focused on? Do we see people as it is? The blind man that Jesus prayed for, and he saw them as trees walking.

In today's context, how do you see now? Well, I see people as a pulp and paper industry. I see people as firewood that I can chop up and sell for \$150 a cord. This is how I see people.

But he had to touch them again. Says, how do you see them now? And his vision cleared up. Do you not see them the way I see them? That's really the question that comes to us in this generation.

How do we see people? Do we walk out of the church and go into society, looking around all through New York? And do we join the hustle, bustle, the scurry on Madison Avenue and Broadway and Park Avenue, looking how we can use people for our own advantage and our own gain? How can we get something? Every interaction that you have with another person in the business community, do you see that person as potential for your own advancement and for your own gain? Or do you see them as a person born in the image of God that Christ died for? Do you see them as something precious in the field that once you found it, you're willing to sell what you have, that you may possess that? You see, this is the issue that Jesus is getting at. This rich young ruler just wanted his religion. He wanted to be safe in the house of God, and he wanted his cake and eat it too, in other words.

Wanted to pursue his own agenda, his own happiness, his own wealth, his own goal. But when Jesus started talking to him about ministering to the poor, it was outside of his sphere of thinking as it is. And that's why he put his finger on it.

And in Zacchaeus's case, he had begun to see others with the heart of God. In verse 10, it says, for the son of man has come to seek and save that which was lost. And that's what Christ was saying in Zacchaeus's house.

This man has my heart now. This man that used to use other people. He was a tax collector.

And I always find it funny. He says, if I've taken anything by false accusation, he knew darn well that he had taken a lot of money by false accusation from people. But nevertheless, he said, half of my goods

immediately going to the poor.

Everything I've taken by false accusation, I'm going down the list, and I'm going to give four times back what I took to them by false accusation. Now people are more important than money to me. I'm going to go, and Jesus said, you see, he's got my heart now, because I came to seek and save that which was lost.

That's what Jesus was trying to get through to this wealthy young man in Mark chapter 10. He loved him, and he's telling him, let go of what you're holding to and follow me. Be willing to be to give to and be given for those who have no help without God.

And folks, the question for us today is, what are we holding on to that's keeping us from getting through to the life that Christ has for us? What are you holding on to that's keeping us from getting through to the life that Christ has for us? And I'm going to give you an example of that. I'm going to give you an example of that. You're running and kneeling, and I'm happy you're running and kneeling.

And he looked at him, and this young man had to be aware that God loved him. And now he says, now there's one more thing. There's just one more thing that you have to do.

And what is it that God keeps speaking to you about? I think of the examples I've seen over the years, especially here in New York, people standing outside of five-star hotels with a suitcase in their hand, and they're standing in the cold. They stand on the street. They don't go in because they can't figure out how to get their big suitcase through the revolving door.

Have you ever seen that? It doesn't fit. Or perhaps they have two bags, and they can't get them in. The revolving door is too small.

And so they put one down, and then they hesitate and say, well, all the precious things that are in there, like, God forbid, if I leave it here, somebody may steal it while I'm going through the door to the other side. So they put the other one down, pick up the next one, and then ponder it again. And that's exactly what it's like.

It's trying to, inside is a five-star hotel. Inside is a comfort and warmth and a banquet table. Inside is this incredible life.

But they choose to stand on the sidewalk because they can't fit their designer shoes through the door. It's amazing. What is it that won't go in? What is it that causes us not to pass through the eye of the needle? Now, the eye of the needle is a restrictive place.

In other words, nobody can get through here unless God brings them through. But what is it that restricts us? I was thinking, as I was preparing this, of the proud man, for example. You see, the loneliness of Christ is too much of a step down to fit a proud man's image of himself.

And so he hits his head on the top of the needle, literally. He cannot bend, he cannot bow. The pride in his heart will not allow him to go through.

His diplomas and all of his credentials don't fit. You can't get a framed diploma through the eye of the needle. He tries, but it won't fit.

He keeps running into something. He can't get in because of the pride that's in his heart. Is it undealt with sin? What causes us not to go through? Think of bitterness, for example.

The man or woman who walks around with their fists clenched and lists in their hands of the wrongs that people have done to them. And their clenched fists by their sides make them too wide to fit through the eye of the needle. They can't get through because their fists hit the sides.

They're not willing to let go. When Christ is saying, let go of these grievances, let go of what people have done to you. Why would you hold to this thing that is just causing you to stand outside of the incredible life that I've got for you? Let it go.

Let go of the list. Let go of the past. I'll heal you.

Jesus said, I've come that those who were wounded in their heart and bruised might be set free. He said, if you let me lead you through, I will set you free from what happened in the past. Let it go.

Don't hold these lists in your hands and walk around with your fists clenched. Is it, is it another trust? Is there a trust in your heart that keeps you on the other side? Now I'm talking about standing on the wrong side of the eye of the needle. You can't get through.

And on the other side is this incredible life that you're being invited into in Christ. Is it another trust? You know, I had to smile last night because I was thinking there's going to be some here this morning, especially the young people who say finally a message that doesn't apply to me because I've got no money. I have no money.

So I'm feeling very comfortable this morning sitting here. I'm just trying to scrape up enough to pay my rent and get through. And I finally, I can just sit back and relax because this doesn't apply to me.

But you know, the scripture says after Jesus said, it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. His disciples, the scripture says they were astonished out of measure saying among themselves, who then can be saved? Now it's incredible. They included themselves in the statement.

They all knew. Peter in his mind, perhaps his fishing boat still on the beach somewhere with the nets underneath the deck of it. And there's a trust there.

Every one of them were put in by the inclusiveness of Christ's words into this scenario. And all of a sudden they're standing there saying then who can be saved? Can anybody be saved? How can anybody be saved? Because we're all trusting in something. Now they weren't rich.

They had little in the way of resources. In John, let me just read it to you for time's sake. In John chapter six, and I think it's verse five, Jesus lifted up his eyes, it says, and saw a great company come to them.

And he said to Philip, whence or where shall we buy bread that these may eat? This he said to prove him for he himself knew what he would do. And Philip answered him and said, 200 penny worth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one of them may take a little. In other words, well, we don't have enough.

We looked in the bag as it is, we don't have enough to feed this kind of a crowd. And one of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother said to him, there's a lad here which has five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And so they didn't have a lot of resources. And when Jesus said, well, let's feed them immediately, they looked at what they didn't have.

I want to ask you a question. Would you agree that the lack of resources can also be a false trust? Would you agree that if we choose to look at what we don't have and say, God is not able to do anything through me, that that's a trust? I'm trusting that my littleness and my lack is going to limit the hand of God. And so I won't even try to go through the eye of the needle.

I just stand there and stare at it. And that's what many, many people do because unbelief is a trust. Unbelief stares at the eye of the needle and doesn't even try to get through because it looks at itself and says, well, I trust that I will fail.

I trust that nothing will come of my life. I trust that in my littleness that nothing is going to happen. And so I'm not going to get my hopes up.

I'm just going to stand on the edge of the crowd. I will let the rich young rulers try to get through and those who are successful and those who have diplomas and degrees and who can sing better than me, but I'll just stand on the periphery of the crowd and I'm going to trust in my littleness that nothing's going to come of my life. It's an inverted, it's another form of trust.

And the disciples said, who then can be saved? We all trust in something, even if it's in our lack, we're all trusting in something. And Jesus said with men, it's impossible, but not with God for with God, all things are possible. That's the issue.

The Lord says, I will get you through. Do you believe God today? Do you believe that he could make a difference through you? Do you believe that he could put some things in your hands for your keep and some for others? When he took the loaves and the fishes, the scripture says he multiplied them. He fed 5,000 men plus women and children.

And when it was all over, there were 12 baskets left, one for each of the disciples, one for each of these men, more than they needed. That's what Jesus can do. Now, folks, in Isaiah chapter six, the prophet Isaiah in his youth, he was drawn up into the presence of the Lord and in the presence of God, he became aware of something.

He became aware that nothing he had could give him access or keep him in this place. He saw the holiness of God. He saw the resources of God.

He saw it all in the moment of time. And in spite of all of his religion and in spite of what he thought he was, and then in spite of what he thought he wasn't, he stood in that place knowing that nothing in him that was good could keep him there, and nothing that wasn't good could keep him out. Amazing when you begin to see it.

And he stood there and said, I'm undone. In other words, this is beyond me. I don't fully grasp this.

I shouldn't be here, but I'm here. And God, when he saw this young man was undone, when he saw that there was an admission in his heart, I don't grasp this, but I somehow want this. I know this is where I need to be.

I don't understand the fullness of it. And immediately when he had this come into his heart, he was touched and the scripture says his iniquity was purged. God will do that.

The moment you and I say, Lord, I don't grasp it all. And I know I can't bring anything to you. And I know I've failed in other areas, but God almighty, I want to be where you are.

I don't want to be on the other side of the needle looking in at where your life is. I don't want to just spend my life reading textbooks about what some other people did in another country at another time. I want to enter into the life of Christ.

I want to walk with God. I don't want to just come to church, hear other people's testimonies about how God is using them. I want God to use me.

I want God to use my life to touch this generation. I want to be able to speak in a manner that touches men and women's hearts. I want to have hands that are open.

Whatever God gives to me, I want to be able to release it as the Holy Spirit speaks to me to meet the needs of others. I want the eyes of Jesus for men and women around me and young people. I don't want to be looking at people the way the world looks at people.

I want to see with the eyes of God. I want to hear with the mind of God and the ears of God. I want to walk with God.

But God, I'm nothing. I feel like I'm nothing. And folks, this is the beauty of it.

It's the man who's nothing that can slip through the eye of the needle. Hallelujah. It's amazing.

It's the complete opposite to this world. We come thinking when we're everything that we're going to make a difference somehow. God says, no, when you're nothing, that's when I can use you.

That's when you can fit through the eye of the needle. When I know I have nothing to give God but my heart, I have no resources, I have even my best intentions, Isaiah said, are filthy rags. I have nothing but my heart.

And I can slip through the eye of the needle and say, God, take my life. God, use me for your glory. I'm not looking just for a future hope.

And that's why young people are flooding to this church. You're not looking just for a future hope. You're looking for a present Christ.

You're looking for a reality. So the first thing that happens to Isaiah when he slips through is he begins to hear the voice of God. He begins to know the heart of God.

And he heard God saying, who will go for us? Who will go? And he, in his heart, knows that he doesn't have the ability because he shouldn't be there in the first place. But he says, I'll go. I'll go.

Lord, you speak to me, and I'll go. I don't care where it is. I don't care to who it is.

I don't care what it is going to, where it's going to place. I'll go. If I know it's you, God, I'll go.

And Isaiah enters into a supernaturally commissioned and empowered and sustained life. Oh, God, help us young people in this generation. Don't play the game anymore.

Don't stand on the fence for the sake of Christ, for the sake of his people, for the sake of this country. Go through the eye of the needle into the glory of Christ, into the life of Christ. Then he says in Mark, again, chapter 10, verses 29 to 31.

Verily I say to you, there's no man that's left house or brethren or sisters or fathers or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and for the gospels. But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.

And what Christ is saying now to his disciples is that no matter what you are called to leave behind, you'll always have more than enough to finish what I've called you to do. That's the whole context of this. You'll have more than enough.

You may not own it, but you'll have more than enough. You'll always have shelter. You'll always have food.

You'll always have friends. There'll be something of family you've never known before. There'll be something of the heart of God you've never fully understood.

You will have the whole supply. Others will be fed, but you will be fed also. And you'll have enough to go around for others around.

And then he says in verse 31, but many that are first shall be last and the last first. Now in its initial context, it speaks about Israel. Israel was invited as it is into this incredible life of God in Christ, but they rejected it.

And the Gentiles who were last came in first. But Israel is coming in at the end, folks. I'm telling you, there's going to be a great, great revival among the Jewish people in the last days.

But it also speaks of this rich young ruler. In a sense, in the crowd, he was first. And he was at the knees of Jesus.

And he was pleading, what must I do? Jesus answered him directly. And it was his choice. Could you imagine the folly as it is of hearing something so directly from God and just saying, no, I'm sorry.

I'm not willing to give this up. And he walked away. His career, he was advancing.

He was just breaking into the scene as it is. He was getting to be known. And he was advancing in his career.

And Jesus was saying, if you're going to walk with me now, some of that's going to change. And you're not going to be using people for yourself, but you're going to be giving to people. It's going to be a different focus on life.

And he had so much going that he just walked away. He was sad. And so he goes from this exuberant joy at an altar to just walking away, shaking his head so sad through the crowd.

But he was first, in a sense. He was the first one to get there. The scripture says he was a ruler.

He had a reputation. He was a mover and shaker, perhaps, in the religious world of his day. And yet on the periphery are people who were last, people who didn't dare even approach God, perhaps such a

negative self-view they had of themselves.

Perhaps they didn't have anything to offer this Christ. Perhaps they had just a list of failure and a history of being let down and letting others down. And they thought, well, I... And so they stood on the periphery.

I can actually see it in my mind. This rich young ruler, nobody impedes him as it is because he's known and he just dashes in. It's almost like a theatrical moment showing his dedication to God.

And yet this other man, perhaps young man, just stands on the edge and says, man, I'm nothing. What a mess I've made in my life. I've not obeyed the commandments.

I've dishonored my mother. I have committed adultery. I've killed all these things.

I've stolen all of these commandments that Jesus said that you're not to do, not to break. He's broken them. And he's standing, he's in effect last.

And the religious crowd would brand him last, actually give him the name. Stand back, stand back. Here comes the rich young ruler.

Step back, step back. So he's pushed to the periphery of the crowd, having done all of these things. But Jesus set the record straight when he said to the Pharisees and the scribes in Matthew 21, 32, he said, I tell you that publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of God before you.

Publicans and harlots, tax gatherers and prostitutes, people who have used others as the Pharisees were doing, but they're not going to be willing to see it, that they've used people for their own gain. But those that had used people for their own gain and were willing to see it and call it the way God called it. Prostitutes and tax gatherers who had been using other people and saw their worthlessness and saw that they had nothing to offer God.

While all of those are standing around trying to figure out things theologically from the theological perspective, the tax gatherers and the lepers and the prostitutes are slipping through the eye of the needle into this glorious life that God promises through Jesus Christ. Who do you think was in the upper room on the day of Pentecost? Failures, fearful people, people that had all failed God in some measure and felt they had nothing to offer the Lord, but they went anyway. And they said, whatever we have, we give it to you.

Whatever we are, we're going to be given for your purposes, Jesus, to reach this generation with the knowledge that through the cross, they can be saved. And they slipped through the eye of the needle as it is and come out the other side with a glorious testimony of God in their lips and the power of the risen Christ upon them. Hallelujah.

This is what Christ was offering this young man. This is what Christ is offering this generation. Folks, don't stand on the other side looking in.

There's the cry of my heart. I'm speaking to my heart. I'm speaking to your heart.

There's more for every one of us who are gathered here today. The issue really is letting go and trusting in God. I'm going to go through to what Christ has for me.

That's my whole message. That's everything God's given me to say this morning. I'm going to go through and I'm going to trust God.

Hallelujah. I guess my altar call this morning is for harlots and publicans. You've used people and you're living a lifestyle that uses people.

The Lord says, no, I want you to, I want to bring you into something where you are, you are used for people. If you're willing to go through the eye of that needle, you can't bring your ambition. You can't bring your pride.

You can't bring your frame diplomas. You can't bring your agenda. You can't bring your suitcases.

You have to just come as you are. Oh, I now understand the scriptures where Isaiah talked about when Christ comes, there'll be a pile of religious confusion, but the lame will take the prey. While the religious are trying to figure this out, people with no legs are crawling by and going through the eye of the needle.

Prostitutes are walking by and the drug addicted are walking by. Oh, hallelujah. Makes you love God ever the more.

The ground is so completely level. Hallelujah. He said, I'm not calling people that are something.

I'm calling people that are nothing and they know they're nothing. Come with me. Let's go into the vineyard.

Hallelujah. If that's in your heart, I'm giving an altar call this morning for people who want to let go and trust God. It's as simple as that.

Let go of what you think life is all about. And if you're only here because you're looking for a future hope and you're not looking for a present reality, let that go. Let this wrong perspective of God go.

Come through the eye of the needle and give your life to Jesus Christ. Let's stand together. Annex, if you stand between the screens, if you want to move forward in the balcony, you can go to either exit, make your way to this altar in the main sanctuary, just slip out where you are.

We're going to worship for a few minutes. And as we do make your way to this altar and think about these words this morning. Have the courage, young people, to let go.

Have the courage just to let go. It doesn't mean you're not going to have a career. Just let it go.

Let it go. Do what you do for the glory of God. Now, Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is as a man who went out into a field seeking goodly pearls.

And when he had found one of great price, said he hid it and went and sold all that he had that he might possess that pearl. The pearl is the person that works with you in your office next to you. It's the person across the hall in your apartment building, the single mom and her three kids.

That's the pearl. And when he found it, when he saw what the work of God was really about, when his eyes were open and he saw that it's about people finding Christ and spending eternity in heaven instead of hell, when he saw it, he went and let go of what he had that he might possess that pearl. Thanks be to God.

Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. Lord, help us to let go.

Help us to let go of what we hold to that keeps us out of your life. Help us, Lord, to yield it to you. It's an issue of the heart.

It's not a matter of a prayer. It's an issue of the heart. Help me, Jesus, to let go.

Help me, God, to release and give it all to you, Lord, and to be willing to spend the rest of my days on the right side of the eye of the needle. God Almighty, thank you for what you're doing with so many today, Lord. Thank you.

Thank you that you're opening our eyes. You're giving us an eyesight that we can see, Lord. You're washing our eyes, O God, and helping us to see what your work is.

Help us not to use people for our own gain, but to use what you give us for the gain of other people. Help us to see things correctly, Lord. Help us, God, to see the poor the way you see them.

Help us, Jesus. Give us the grace that we need, Lord, to be able to walk in these things. Lord, this is a desperate hour.

It's a dark day, and so many are living now without hope. Help us to see them with the eyes of God. Thank you for this, Lord.

Thank you. Pray with me. Lord Jesus, I give you the right to my life.

Take me, save me, and use me for your glory. I realize that everything you put into my hands, all that you give to me is for a purpose. It's for your purpose that men and women and children may be saved.

God, help me to walk with your feet, touch with your hands, speak with your voice, and see with your eyes. I believe, God, that from this day forward, I will know something of your life that I've not known before. I'm not doing what the rich young ruler did.

I'm not walking away from you. I'm hearing what you're speaking to me. You've invited me to your life.

I take the invitation. I look forward to the journey. Thank you for receiving me.

Oh, Jesus, I love you. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Give him praise. Give him praise. Hallelujah.

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