

(Through the Bible) Mark 10-11

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon explores Jesus' teachings on marriage, divorce, and the importance of prioritizing God in our lives.

Duration: 1:21:34

Topics: "Faith And Wealth", "Jesus And Suffering"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of making God the center of our lives. He uses the story of a young man who was sad because he had great possessions, highlighting the paradox of material wealth and true happiness. The preacher also discusses Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and his prediction of his own death and suffering. He then shares the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar who cried out to Jesus for mercy and was healed. The sermon concludes with the disciples finding a colt as Jesus had instructed and bringing it to him.

Transcript

Mark's Gospel, chapter 10. And he arose from there and came to the coast of Judea by the farther side of Jordan. And the people resorted unto him again, and as he was accustomed, he taught them again.

Now, Jesus is leaving the area of the Galilee for the last time. He is on his way to Jerusalem to be crucified. He knows this.

He presently will be telling the disciples this. They still do not understand. It's still to them a mystery.

But yet, it's very clear in the mind of Christ, and so you have to realize that he is now knowingly on his way to Jerusalem to be crucified and, of course, to rise again. So, he leaves the area of the Galilee. He arose from there, the area of Galilee, and he came to the area of Judea.

So, he's moving south towards Jerusalem. He's on the far side of the Jordan River. So, he's coming down in the area of the Ammonites and the Moabites.

And the people were still gathering to him, and as was his custom, he was just teaching them. And now the Pharisees came to him, and they asked him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? And notice, they were tempting him. This was a league kind of a question.

Obviously, they were seeking to trap him in the answer that he gave. They felt that his answers were contrary to the law given through Moses. And they were hoping to trap him, to show to the people that were gathered there that he was a heretic, that he was teaching something other than the law of Moses.

And so, they asked him the question, is it right for a man to divorce his wife? Now, in the law, in the book of Deuteronomy, God did say, through Moses, that if a man married a woman and found some uncleanness in her, he should give her a writing of a bill of divorcement. Now, that is a little vague, not much, but a little. But there are always people who are trying to jump into any little area of controversy or any area where there might be an excuse for what they want to do.

There were two basic schools of thought taught by the Jews that were headed under famous rabbis. There was a rabbi by the name of Shemai. Shemai taught that uncleanness meant only that when he married her, he discovered on the marriage night that she was not a virgin.

She was not clean. She was not a virgin. And thus, if he discovered that, he had the right to divorce her.

And Shemai took that very narrow, limited viewpoint, the uncleanness would be adultery on the part of the wife, either before or after marriage. And that constituted the only grounds for divorce. Now, there was another school, headed by the rabbi Elel, which took a very liberal interpretation of finding an uncleanness in her.

If she didn't dress the way he liked her to, if she was a brawling woman, and they interpreted that if you could hear her voice next door, she was counted a brawling woman. Or if she didn't fix the meals to please him, that this constituted an uncleanness in her, and thus, he had the right to divorce her for these grounds. Now, the Jews were quite divided, but naturally, the Elel side was of greater popularity among the men.

And there was one rabbi by the name of Achavi, and he said that if he found another woman that pleased him more, that constituted an uncleanness in his wife, and so he could divorce her just because he found another woman that pleased him more. Now, naturally, by these liberal interpretations, they made the law totally meaningless. But, still, they were divided, quite sharply, on this particular issue.

And so, they brought the issue to Jesus. Can a man divorce his wife for any cause? And Jesus answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses allowed to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept.

But, from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. And for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. So then, they are no more two, but one flesh.

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. So, Jesus, in answering their question, asked them the question, What did Moses command? They said, Moses said we could give her a writing of divorcement and put her away. And they had two different bills of divorcement.

The second one became quite technical and had to be written up by a rabbi and then approved by three rabbis and you could give it to your wife and she officially was put away. But, because of the liberal views that they had taken, there was social chaos. Children who really were almost orphaned in the sense that they did not have a solid type of a home environment to grow up in.

And so, Jesus, in talking about marriage and divorce, rather than going to the precept of Moses, he said, Moses gave you that because of the hardness of your hearts. But in the beginning, and from the beginning, it was not so. Now we are dealing with God's divine ideal.

From the beginning, what was God's ideal? What was God's intention? First of all, there is the recognition that man by himself is not complete. Woman by herself is not complete. God made them male and female and the two become one.

And there is only a wholeness as the two become one. The wife is to complement the husband and make a completeness as the husband is to complement the wife and make a completeness. But neither are complete in themselves.

And in the beginning, God made them male and female. And for this cause, a man leaves his mother and father, cleaves to his wife and the two of them become one. One whole, one total.

Therefore, those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And he is dealing now with the basic divine ideal established by God for marriage. And so we must note that Jesus is going back and dealing with the basic ideal and intention of God in the beginning.

But man did not live up to God's divine ideal because of the hardness of man's heart. So many times the unwillingness to bend, the unwillingness to forgive or the unwillingness just to give for marriage is surely a giving proposition. And the hardness of a man's heart in his unwillingness to bend or to give created intolerable situations.

And so, because of the hardness of their hearts towards God's divine ideal, Moses in the law declared, let him give her a writing of a bill of divorcement. So Jesus declares the divine ideal of God recognizing man did not come to it and thus God's accommodation through the law to make that separation binding and legal to go through the writing of divorcement. Today, we are faced still with the hardness of heart.

Now, God's divine ideal still stands. It is still the divine ideal that there be one marriage for life. That's God's divine ideal.

That's what God would have. But today, there are still those who have hard hearts to God's divine ideal. They will not bend.

They will not yield. They will not give. They will not forgive.

And when that condition does exist, marriage can be a hell. And it is extremely unfortunate when two persons set about consciously or unconsciously to destroy each other. That surely is not God's divine ideal either.

And I'm going to hang on until I kill her, you know. God's divine ideal is that the two be one. That they be brought together in a harmony through love and a true oneness in love.

It's difficult to deal with this subject in as much as, number one, we do not want to broaden the issue to make divorce and remarriage a very simple, you know, go for it kind of a thing. If she doesn't please you, if you found someone else, you know, divorce her. Surely, God does not intend that.

In fact, God declared in Malachi, He hated divorces. Yet, He also hates those intolerable conditions that sometimes exist when you get a hard-hearted person in a marriage relationship. So, we just can't say, Oh,

well, you know, it doesn't matter.

Do what you want, whatever pleases you. Our desire should be to please God. If we are in a bad marriage, we should seek to make it a good marriage.

We should do our best to make a go of the marriage. To forgive, to give, to love, to have understanding and to come to an agreement, to come to a oneness. On the other hand, in dealing with the subject, we do not want to create condemnation for those who have had that bitter experience of being married to someone by paper, but not by reality, where there never was a true oneness brought together by God's Spirit.

And because of intolerable situations, to save themselves, found it necessary to get a divorce, lest the marriage totally destroy them. It is unfortunate that many times, in the folly of youth, young couples believe themselves to be madly in love and insist on getting married because they can't wait. And soon after the infatuation has worn off, they realize the total incompatibility.

Someone has said that a decision as important as marriage should never be left up to the judgment of a child. And that's why they had marriage by arrangement. But that had its flaws too.

Now, if a person, while a teenager, gets married, and it is soon obvious that it was a tragic mistake, and it's impossible to live with that person, and they then get a divorce. I speak now for myself. As Paul the Apostle said, Paul is speaking now.

I don't have any commandment of the Lord of this, but this is Paul speaking. And so this is Chuck speaking now. I do not believe that God says to that person, alright, you made your bed lie in it, or you blew it, you made a mistake, now you can just suffer the rest of your life for the mistake that you made as a silly child.

And you can never marry again. I really do not believe that God says that. But that's me.

But that is my conviction. So, Jesus sought to bring back the realization of the sacredness of marriage. The Catholic Church says it is a sacrament.

And I think that they are probably correct. It is an outward sign of a spiritual work. And there is that spiritual union that is created by God as the two become one.

Marriage to the right person can be heaven on earth. Marriage to the wrong person can be hell on earth. And I speak especially now to young people who are not yet married, who are perhaps contemplating it.

Spend much time in prayer over your decision. Before I married my wife, I went off and spent time fasting and praying. I'm glad.

I'm glad I made the right decision. I'm glad the Lord led me to that decision through prayer and through fasting. And I mean that it is a matter that you should not leave to your heart or to your emotions.

It is something that you need to prayerfully consider. Much better that you not make a mistake than you try to later on correct the mistake. I do not believe that God condemns that person to hell who has divorced and remarried.

I believe that if you find yourself in a remarriage, that you need to make the best of it and just let your marriage become all that God wants it to be. I don't think that you should go out and say, well, I was married before, now I better divorce you too. I believe that you should stay in the condition where you are.

The Bible tells us that a man should abide in the calling wherewith he was called. When you were called by Christ and you accepted the Lord, what your condition was theirs. Maybe you've been married, divorced, remarried.

Work it out now in this relationship that you have. Let it bring honor and glory to God. But we remember David who became involved with Bathsheba and later married her.

And God was merciful and God was gracious and God was forgiving to David. The Prophet said unto him, Thy sin is forgiven. He did pay a price.

They lost their first child. And yet God granted to David that forgiveness of sin. And you may have sort of a sorted past as far as marriage is concerned.

I don't know if some people are just really hard to get along with or just don't have good judgment in picking out a partner. But you may be a loser in marriage. But yet God is able, I know, to help you.

And God is glorified and honored when couples are able to resolve their differences in Christ and come to a loving relationship through Him. When they came in the house, the disciples asked Him again of the same matter. They did not fully understand what He was declaring in His answer to the Pharisees.

And so Jesus said to them, Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another commits adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband... Now, there were only a very few grounds upon which a woman could put away a husband. If he falsely accused her of not being a virgin when they got married, that gave her the right to divorce him.

Or if he committed adultery, she had the right to divorce him. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she commits adultery. It doesn't say anything about the innocent party here.

But as I say, people are always looking for loopholes. Now, as they are continuing on the way towards the cross, they brought young children to Him that He should touch them. And His disciples rebuked those that brought them.

Now, there is even to the present day this custom of going up to a rabbi to receive a blessing. And there is a very colorful little rabbi in Jerusalem today. He's a Yemenite.

Short little fellow with a long gray beard. And he reads his prayers quite loudly as he walks back and forth, not directly in front of the wailing wall, but sort of out in the court, the large courtyard where both men and women can gather. And you'll hear him as he's really sort of yelling out his prayers, walking along.

And this little rabbi is respected by many of the young men studying to become rabbis. And they will go up to him, and he will put his hand on their head and touch them and give them a blessing. And it's interesting to watch him and to watch these young fellows go up and to receive their blessings from him as he touches them, bestowing a blessing upon them.

Now, this was what was taking place. The children were being brought to Jesus. And it was a custom in those days to usually bring the child when they were about one year old to the rabbi to be blessed.

And so the parents were bringing their little children to Jesus that he might touch them. And the disciples began to rebuke the parents, saying, ah, don't bother the Lord, you know, he's too busy. And they started hindering those parents who desired to bring their children to Jesus.

But when Jesus saw it, he was very displeased. He was angry, angry at his own disciples, acting on their own part, not for his part. And he said unto them, allow the little children to come to me, forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Now, remember, Jesus is on his way to the cross. This is weighing heavy on him. And yet, the disciples felt that he didn't have time for children.

He should have been bothered with children. But Jesus said, no, you're wrong. Let the little children come to me.

Don't forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. Don't stop the children from coming.

You know, there is something beautiful in a child. I believe that it is natural for a child to believe in God. I think that they have to learn atheism.

I think that instinctively, naturally, a child believes in God. There is that simplicity of faith there within the child. A beautiful faith in the child.

A natural faith in the child. Whenever I'm not feeling good, I like my grandkids to pray for me. Such faith.

It's beautiful. And Jesus said, unless you become as a little child, that's, you won't enter in. That's the way to enter in, to become as a little child.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, will not make it. And he took them up in his arms and he put his hands upon them and blessed them. I love this picture of Jesus holding the children.

And I'm certain that they were just naturally drawn to him. And when he was gone from there, from the area of Jordan on his way towards Jerusalem in the area of Judea, when he was gone from there and he was back on the path again, there came one running and kneeled before him and said, good master, what shall I do that I might inherit eternal life? And Jesus said, why did you call me good? There is none good but one and that is God. Now, so many commentators say that Jesus was rebuking him for calling him good.

I do not believe that. I believe that Jesus was trying to awaken his consciousness. Jesus is either saying to this young man, I am no good, or he is saying to him, I am God.

And I believe he's saying the latter. And he's trying to awaken his consciousness. Why did you call me good? Think about that a minute.

There's only one good and that is God. Why did you call me good? Because I am God. And that is in harmony with the rest of what Jesus said to him.

In fact, the rest of what Jesus said would be blasphemy if Jesus was not declaring to him, I am God. Because Jesus is saying to him in the remainder of the story, you have a need to have God at the center

of your life. Follow me.

You've got the wrong center to your life. You've got money as the center of your life. You need to have a new center to your life if you're going to come into the kingdom of God.

You follow me. You need God at the center of your life. Follow me.

And so Jesus awakening his consciousness said, why did you call me good? There's only one good and that is God. You know 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 unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

And Jesus, beholding him, loved him. He looked at this young fellow. He had just flashed before him the second table of the law.

He said, kept them all from my youth. Jesus looked at him and he loved him. But he said unto him, one thing you lack.

Now Matthew tells us that he had said to Jesus, what lack I yet? So Jesus is answering and he said, there's one thing you lack. Go thy way. Sell whatsoever you have and give to the poor.

And you will have treasure in heaven. Come, take up the cross, follow me. And he was sad at that saying.

He went away grieved for he had great possessions. Now, as I pointed out, Jesus' central word to this young man wasn't go and sell everything and give to the poor. That was incidental.

The central thing that Jesus said was, come, take up your cross, follow me. Now with him, his great riches were keeping him from coming and taking up his cross and following Jesus. I don't know what it is in your life that is keeping you from coming, taking up your cross and following Jesus.

Maybe it's a relationship that you have. Maybe it's a job. Maybe it's an ambition, a goal.

Whatever it is that is keeping you from coming, taking up your cross and following Jesus, get rid of it. That's what Jesus is saying. With this young man, he just named what it was.

This young man had as his God money. Jesus said, you can't serve God in mammon. So get rid of your false God.

Come, follow me. Know the true God. Let God be the center of your life.

Follow me. Now the word of Christ is the same to us today as far as letting God become the center of your life. Follow Jesus Christ.

That's the way to enter the kingdom of God. That's the way to eternal life. That's the only way to eternal life.

Is that the center of your life is in God. So whatever it is that is keeping that from becoming the central aspect of your life, get rid of it. Now this young man went away sad.

He was grieved for he had great possessions. Isn't that a paradox? Because so many of you think that's all I need to be happy is great possessions. Here's a man the Bible tells us was sad because he had great possessions.

Now, do not assume that this young man was lost. We don't know. He may have thought over what Jesus said and called in his servant and said, sell everything and give it away.

I'll see you later. I'm going to follow Jesus. Or he could have just gone back to his misery and lived out his life with money as his God.

Now Jesus looked around and he said to his disciples, how hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God. And the disciples were astonished at his words. Because in the Hebrew mind, they thought that riches were a sign of God's blessing upon a person.

That if a person was prosperous, it was because God favored him and he was blessed with prosperity. That it was a sign of a man's faith and closeness to God. And they're astonished when Jesus said how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

What do you mean, Lord? I thought that was a sign that he was holy and righteous. You were able to trust him with those riches. Jesus is blowing that philosophy right out of the water.

There are those today who have that same feeling. That riches, prosperity is a sign of spirituality. And they even preach that godliness is a way to prosper.

Paul tells Timothy, from such, turn away. And so the disciples were astonished. So Jesus qualified a little bit what he said.

He said, children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God. It is 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, as I pointed out, there are those who say the eye of the needle was a sub gate in the main gate of the city when after the gates were closed at night and a person would arrive at the city, they would not open the main gate lest there be enemy troops that would come pouring in.

So there was this sub gate that a person could dismount and come crawling through the sub gate into the city. And that this sub gate, they say, was called the eye of the needle. So when Jesus said it is easier for a camel to get through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus was referring to this little sub gate, how that they would have to unload the camel and then guys would be pulling and guys would be pushing and squeezing and shoving and get that ornery beast through this little opening in the gate.

But with a lot of sweat and effort, you could make it. No, that's not what Jesus is talking about. Whatever Jesus is talking about, it's an impossibility.

There are always those men who would try to make salvation within the reach and grasp of struggling men. Work hard enough. Try hard enough.

Be sincere enough. Surely you can save yourself. No.

Jesus is talking about an impossibility. For the disciples were astounded above measure. They were totally blown out at this point.

Astonished out of measure and they said among themselves, who then can be saved? You know, the rich aren't going to make it. Who in the world can be saved? And Jesus answered them and said, with man, it's impossible. God, help us to realize that.

Salvation with man is impossible. There is no way man can save himself. No matter how noble your efforts, how righteous your deeds, how faithful your walk, no man can save himself.

With man it is impossible. Jesus in the garden said, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me. If man can be saved by some other means, but with man it is impossible.

But Jesus said, but not with God, for with God all things are impossible. As bad as you are, it's possible that God can save you. You're not beyond God's reach.

You're beyond your own abilities, beyond other man's abilities, but not beyond God's abilities. And haven't we seen God work where men have given up? You know, there are some people, I've looked at them and said, it's impossible that they could ever be saved. They are so lost.

And I've really given up on certain people. Absolutely given up. And no way are they ever going to be saved.

But God saved them anyhow. In spite of the fact that I had really committed them and condemned them as impossibilities. God has so many glorious trophies of grace.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lord, we've left everything and followed you. This rich young ruler was seemingly unwilling to pay that price, but Peter said, Lord, we did it. We left all to follow you.

And Jesus said, Assuredly I say to you, there is no man that has left his house or his brothers or sisters or his father or his mother or his wife or children or lands for My sake and the Gospels. Now, it would appear that many of them, because of the Jewish culture being so strong, their believing and receiving Christ as their Messiah caused them to lose their inheritance. Houses.

Homes. Caused them to lose their family relationship as they were ostracized as heretics. And in many of the Jewish homes, they would hold a funeral service and consider that child or that person as dead who had received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And it would appear that with Paul the Apostle it cost him his wife. And Jesus said, No man has left house or brothers or sisters, father, mother, wife or children or lands for My sake and the Gospels. But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come, eternal life.

You may be persecuted, but you may have lost your brother, your sister, your mother, but you're going to gain in the family of God a hundredfold. Now, there are some of you who your faith in Jesus Christ has caused a breach in your family. I had a wedding yesterday and the young man who was getting married in the back room said, Preach the Gospel.

He said, My mother told me if I ever mention Jesus Christ again, I wasn't welcomed at home anymore. And he said, She's here, so preach the Gospel. But it cost that young man.

And yet in the family of God, that love, that bond, that relationship that we are brought into as we are made one in Christ within the family of God. I look around at all the brothers and sisters and all that we have

here and it's just glorious to realize that we are just one big family of God. And though there may have been an alienation from our natural blood relatives as the result of our commitment to Jesus Christ, yet we've come into such a broader family.

I feel extremely fortunate that all of my immediate family love the Lord and serve Him. That's a blessing. I have cousins though that don't know the Lord, aunts and uncles that don't know the Lord.

You know, I'm much, much closer to all of you than I am to them. There is this gap between us. So many of them are in that social set and I've got to be careful because they do listen to my tapes.

They're wonderful people. But they just need Jesus. You know, they need that until there is that bond in the faith of Christ.

There is a division. There can't be that total unity. And so, Jesus said, look, no one has left these things but what they're going to receive a hundredfold.

You're going to get persecution. Persecution from the family, yes. But in the world to come, eternal life.

But many that are first shall be last and the last first. Why He threw that in here, I don't know. Now, they were in the way going up to Jerusalem.

Now, you see, He's on the way. This young guy comes and kneels at Him. They're still on the path.

They're on their way towards Jerusalem. And Jesus went before them and they were amazed as they followed. And they were afraid.

And He took again the twelve and He began to tell them what things were going to happen to Him. Now, they can see that He's more contemplative at this point. Getting alone.

It's obvious that there is this heaviness. And so, they're frightened. They see the moods.

And so, He gathered Him and He began to tell them, now look, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man is going to be delivered unto the chief priests, unto the scribes. And they're going to condemn Him to death. And they're going to deliver Him to the Gentiles.

And they shall mock Him and scourge Him and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him. And the third day He shall rise again. Now, notice, He says that the scribes and the priests are going to condemn Him to death but deliver Him to the Gentiles to do the job.

The Gentiles will mock Him. It was the Roman soldiers who put on the purple robe and mocked Him saying, Hail, King of the Jews. They will scourge Him.

It was the Roman soldiers that laid the 39 stripes on Him. They shall spit upon Him which, of course, is recorded also. And they shall kill Him.

That is the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers. But the third day He will rise again. Now, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him saying, Master, would you do us a favor? And Jesus said, What do you want? And they said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit one at Your right hand and the other at Your left hand in Your glory.

And He said unto them, You don't really know what you're asking. Can you drink of the cup that I'm going to drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, Oh, we can. And Jesus said unto them, You will indeed drink of the cup that I drink of.

Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he had James beheaded. He was one of the early martyrs. And with the baptism that I am baptized, you will be baptized.

But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give. It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. God is already foreordained.

God is already predestined. And so it will be given to those for whom it has been predestined. Now, you remember, you remember, just a couple of chapters ago, the disciples were arguing when they were on the path coming down from Caesarea Philippi as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And when they came in the house, Jesus said, What are you guys arguing about back there on the path? Nothing, you know. They were afraid to tell Him. They were silent.

They held their peace because they were afraid to tell Him we've been arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. But here old James and John, they come up to the Lord now and, you know, they said, Lord, would you do us a favor? We want to be one on your right hand and the other on the left. So they're still seeking that prominence, that position of prominence.

Jesus said, look, you're going to go through the fire. You're going to drink the cup. You will be baptized of the baptism whereof I am baptized.

But to grant this favor is something that has already been granted. The foreordained plan of God shall stand. Now when the other ten heard it, they were very displeased with James and John.

Oh, so typical. This righteous indignation, you know, and yet all of them were thinking the same thing. But Jesus called them to Him and He said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

But so shall it not be among you. Now the Gentiles, the heathen, they love the position of authority and power and ruling over people. Jesus said, it shall not be among you.

The kingdom of God is different from the kingdom of man. For in the kingdom of God, whoever of you will be the chief shall be the servant of all. Whoever would be great among you, let him become your servant.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. And so again, Jesus is teaching the importance. If you want to be a ruler, if you want to be chief, if you want to be the head, then learn to be the servant.

The path of greatness is through service. It is important that I realize that as I am serving man, I am actually serving God. I do it in the name of the Lord.

I do it as unto the Lord. Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God. And you need to realize that in serving the Lord that constitutes serving man because that's what the Lord requires you to do as His servant.

And so the path of greatness is the path of humility. Learning to be the servant. Now, they came to Jericho.

And of course, He has now crossed over Jordan, come into Jericho, and He's on the last hitch, the last 20 miles up to Jerusalem. They came to Jericho, and as they were going out of Jericho with His disciples, a great number of people with them, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the highway begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, no doubt he could hear the crowds going by.

You know, the blind people are very perceptive from an audible sense. Their sensory perception is extremely high because they can't see. They develop capacities of listening and discerning by listening.

And hearing all the people, he's probably saying, what's happening? Who's going? What's going on? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth is going by. And old Bartimaeus thought, man, this is my chance. And he began to cry out, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

And many that were around him said, shut up. But he thought, this is my only chance. And he cried even louder.

And Jesus stood still. And He said, call Him to me. And so the people said, be of good comfort, rise, for He's calling for you.

And He casting away His garment. Some say that this garment was the typical garment of the beggar. It was sort of the badge of the beggar.

But He threw it away because He knew that He wouldn't have to be begging anymore. In faith, He knew once He got to Jesus, it was going to all be over. He'd be able to see.

His life would be changed. And so casting away His garment, He rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to Him, what would you like Me to do for you? And He said, Lord, I would like to receive My sight.

And Jesus said unto Him, go your way. Your faith has made you whole. Maybe He saw Him throw the garment away.

Saw the faith of this man. Saw the faith in his heart. He said, go your way.

Your faith has made you whole. And immediately, He was able to see. And He followed Jesus along the path.

Beautiful, beautiful story. So much can be drawn from it as far as spiritual allegories, but that isn't really my bag. Now when they came near to Jerusalem, to Bephagy and to Bethany, they were on the Mount of Olives.

He sent forth two of His disciples, and He said unto them, go over into the village, and as soon as you're entered into it, you're going to find a colt that is tied whereon never a man has sat. Loose him and bring him. And if any man says unto you, why are you doing this? Just tell them that the Lord has need of him, and immediately they'll let him come.

And so they went their way, and they found the colt tied by the door outside of the place where the two streets met, and they untied him. And certain of those that were standing there said unto them, what are you doing untying that colt? And they said unto them, as Jesus had commanded, that the Lord needs him.

And so they let them go.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and they cast their garments on Him. And He sat upon Him, and many spread their garments in the path. And others cut down branches off of the trees, and they strewed them in the path.

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried saying, Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple. And when He had looked round about upon all of the things, it was now even tied. And so He returned to Bethany with the twelve.

So, this is on a Sunday, and Jesus makes His entrance into Jerusalem riding the colt. Matthew's Gospel and Luke's Gospel gives us more details. They tell how the Pharisees objected to the cries of the disciples, saying that it was blasphemous, because they were acknowledging Him as the Messiah.

This is the first time Jesus had allowed any public proclamation of Himself as the Messiah. They were crying forth a psalm that was definitely a prophetic psalm of the Messiah. Psalm 118.

Behold the stone that was set of not of you builders, the same has become the chief cornerstone. This is marvelous. It is the work of God.

It's marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. This is Psalm 118.

And they are quoting from this messianic psalm. And so that is why the Pharisees said, Lord, You better rebuke them. You better stop them.

That's blasphemy. And Jesus said, I'll tell you the truth. If I would stop them, these very stones would start crying out.

And so Jesus, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9. Rejoice, O daughters of Jerusalem. Shout for joy, for your King cometh unto thee. But he is lowly.

He is sitting on a colt. And here he comes riding in on a colt. Just as the Scriptures predicted.

He looks around the temple. And then he leaves with his 12 disciples as they go back over to Bethany to spend the night. The next day would be Monday.

And we read, And on the morrow, that would be Monday, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree afar off that had leaves on it, he came, if by chance he might find anything thereon. And when they came to it, he found nothing but leaves.

For the time of figs was not yet. Of course, this would have been in April. And figs generally do not become ripe until summertime.

However, over there they have a first ripe fig. And when we go over there in February, March, you will see these large first ripe figs on the tree. And usually they precede even the leaves so that by the time the leaves come on the tree, these figs are pretty well developed.

So, seeing this fig tree with leaves, he figured there might be some of these first ripe figs on it. Coming to it, finding no fruit, Jesus answered and said unto it, the tree, Let no man eat fruit of you after this forever. And his disciples heard him.

Now when they were come to Jerusalem, Jesus went into the temple. Now this was Monday, the day after the triumphant entry. And he began to cast out those that were selling and buying in the temple.

And he overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he would not allow any man to carry any vessel through the temple. They were using the temple for a shortcut to get from one side of the city to the other.

And they were carrying their things through the temple and he stopped that. He was taking control over changing the money changers. Now, this is the second time Jesus cleansed the temple.

At the beginning of his ministry, John records how he cleansed the temple. Now this is at the end of the ministry and again he is cleansing the temple. The thing that he is striking out against is those who are making merchandise of the things of God.

And he has a real thing against mercenaries. Those who would make merchandise of the things of God. In the temple they were changing money because the priest would not accept Roman coinage in the temple treasury.

When you dropped your offering in it better not be Roman coins because they are unclean. That's Gentile money. The only money we will accept are the Jewish shekels.

So, when you got paid, you got paid in Roman coins. You want to give to God your tithes. So, you have to change your Roman coins for the Jewish shekels so that you can give God your offering.

So, these fellows, the money changers, were sitting there in the temple. They had their tables all up and they would change money for you at exorbitant rates. So, they would really rip you off.

You want to give to God? Well, they'll get their 10-15% by changing the money for you. You want to offer a dove to God? We have kosher doves guaranteed to be accepted by the priests. Because you could get a dove outside of the temple, out on the streets of Jerusalem.

You could buy a dove for 15 cents. But you buy one of those doves out in the street and the doves were for the poor people who needed to make an offering to God. Couldn't afford to offer a lamb or an ox or whatever.

Offer the dove for the poor people. And out on the street, you buy one for 15 cents. But you bring one in off the street and the priest would examine it carefully until he found a blemish and he said, can't offer this thing to God, take it out of here.

But these that were sold in the temple precincts at the priest's little booth, no questions asked. But you had to pay five bucks for one. So, they were ripping people off.

And it angered Jesus that they would take advantage of people who were wanting to come to God, ripping them off for their desire to come to God. And so, He overthrew the tables of the money changers and the seats of those that were selling doves. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But you've made it a den of thieves.

Boy, I wonder what Jesus would say about some of the churches today with all their rip-off schemes. I wonder what He would say about a lot of these letters that are sent out by many of these famous evangelists. Letters that are filled with lies and deception.

I get so upset when they write me these letters. Oh, I better not get on that. They listen to my tapes, too.

Maybe I will say something. The scribes and the chief priests, when they heard it, they sought how they might destroy Him. But they feared Him, for all of the people were astonished at His doctrine.

And so, when the evening was come, He went out of the city. Monday evening, He exits the city. And in the morning, Tuesday morning, as they were coming along the path again, they saw the fig tree, and it was dried up from its roots.

Died. And Peter, calling to remembrance, said unto Him, Master, look at the fig tree that You cursed, how it's withered away. Now, the fig tree was the symbol of the nation Israel.

And here is a typical picture. Jesus was coming to the nation as the Messiah to receive the fruit. You remember the parable that Jesus said of how the householder left his fields and his property in the hands of his servants.

And he went away and he sent back at the time of harvest some of his servants that they might bring to him the fruit from his field. But these men who were in charge of the fields beat the servants and sent them away empty. So, he sent other servants.

But they continued to beat them. Some they killed. Some they beat.

And finally, he said, I will send my own son. Surely they will reverence Him. But when the son came, they said, look, here's the son.

Let's kill him so we can take over the vineyard. And Jesus said, what will the Lord of that vineyard do? And the Pharisees said, well, He's going to wipe them out. And Jesus said, that's right.

And then suddenly they realized, hey, He's talking about us. God was looking for fruit from the nation of Israel. The vine in Isaiah 6. God planted the vineyard.

He placed in it the choiceless vines. He hedged about it and He dug the irrigation system and all. And it came time for Him to come and gather the grapes.

But there was nothing but wild grapes. No real fruit. And so He'll let the vine go.

And He'll give it out to others who will bring forth fruit. Now, that's exactly what Jesus said was going to happen. The nation of Israel failed to bring forth the fruit that God was looking for.

And thus, they were to be withered and die. And God would give out the vineyard, the work to other nations, other people who will bring forth fruit. Jesus is still looking for fruit.

He said, I am the vine. My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that bringeth forth fruit.

He cleanses it that it might bring forth more fruit. Now, you are clean through the Word which I have spoken of you. Abide in Me and that My words abide in you that you might bring forth much fruit for herein is the Father glorified.

God is looking that you might bring forth fruit for the kingdom. Israel failed. Jesus came to the fig tree.

It was barren. Thus, He cursed it. It withered and died.

And now, He is looking for the fruit from our lives and the fruit of the Spirit is love. And how God desires to receive that love from you and from me. He looks for fruit in His garden.

Now, Jesus used this incident to talk to them about faith. Peter said, look, wow, Lord. That was just yesterday, but look, that thing's already withered and died from the roots.

And Jesus said, have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, be thou removed and be cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he says shall come to pass. He shall have whatever he says.

Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them. What a broad promise for prayer. But, note, who was He talking to? The multitudes? Nope.

He was talking to His disciples. Who are these tremendous promises made to as far as prayer is concerned? They are made to disciples. And what constitutes discipleship? First of all, deny yourself.

Take up your cross. Follow Him. So, this is not just a broad promise that anybody can say, well, bless God, all I have to do is believe and say it and I'm going to have it.

Alright, I want a new Mercedes. I want a home on Little Island. I want a yacht on the dock.

I say it, I'm going to have it. Praise God! Hallelujah! And what's the first thing that makes a disciple? Deny yourself. Oh, wait a minute.

That yacht isn't denying myself. You see, these promises are made not to everybody, but to those who have denied themselves to take up their cross and follow Jesus. So, it would follow that you're not going to use this prayer, this power through prayer to fulfill your own lust, but you would be using it to bring glory to God.

Then Jesus said, when you stand praying, forgive. If you have ought against any, oh, the importance of forgiveness. If you have ought against anyone, when you stand there praying, forgive them that your Father also which is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses. That is heavy duty. You say, what does He mean? What He said.

Yes, but then where is grace? I don't know. Isn't that then works? Hey, don't ask me to change the words of Jesus. You say, well, how do you reconcile that with grace? I can't.

Well, what do you do about it? I forgive. Like Jesus said, the forgiveness shows that Christ truly dwells in me. For he who says he abides in Him ought also to walk even as He walked.

And as they were nailing Him to the cross, He said, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. If I walk as He walked, I too must forgive.

And Jesus said, if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses. Forgiveness is one of the signs. That forgiving spirit is one of the signs that I am truly a child of God.

Now they came again to Jerusalem. As He was walking in the temple, there came to Him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. This would be on Tuesday.

And they said unto Him, By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority? By what authority and who gave it to you? I get a big kick out of a lot of people who come up to our young ministers and say to them, Who gave you the authority to baptize? Who gave you the authority to be a minister? Especially the Mormons make that challenge because they have the twelve apostles who only can give authority. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will ask you one question and you answer me the question and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer me.

And they reasoned with themselves saying, If we say it's from heaven, He'll say to them, Why did you not believe John? And if we say it was of men, then these people will stone us because they all think John was a prophet. So they said to Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus said, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Next week, chapters 12 and 13. David said, Thy word have I hid in my heart, O Lord, that I might not sin against You. And may we take the Word of God and may the Spirit hide it away in our hearts tonight.

Jesus said, Now you are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you. And may that Word of God have that cleansing effect in our lives tonight to bring us into that place of bearing more fruit for His glory. God bless you and God be with you and keep His hand upon your life this week.

Just fill your heart and life with His love, with His Spirit. May He bestow upon you the glorious blessings of fellowship with Him. In Jesus' name.

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