

Matthew 20

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following Christ for His sake, rather than personal gain, and the principle of grace that underlies the reward.

Scripture: Matthew 20:16, Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:43

Topics: "Discipleship", "Humility and Service"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the importance of following Christ with the right motives, highlighting that true discipleship involves self-renunciation and a spirit of service. He explains that the rewards for following Christ are rooted in grace, and that even those who come late to the faith can be powerful testimonies of God's grace. Darby also discusses the humility of Christ, who, while deserving of glory, chose to serve and suffer for the sake of others. He encourages believers to adopt this same attitude of humility and service, reflecting the character of Christ. The sermon concludes with the acknowledgment of Christ's final journey to Jerusalem, where He is recognized as the Messiah despite being rejected.

Transcript

We may remark that, when the Lord answers Peter, it was the consequence of having left all for Christ upon His call. The motive was Christ Himself: therefore He says, "Ye which have followed me." He speaks also of those who had done it for His name's sake. This was the motive. The reward is an encouragement, when, for His sake, we are already in the way. This is always the case when reward is spoken of in the New Testament. [See Footnote #59] He who was called at the eleventh hour was dependent on this call for his entrance into the work; and if, in his kindness, the master chose to give him as much as the others, they should have rejoiced at it. The first adhered to justice; they received that which was agreed upon; the last enjoyed the grace of his master. And it is to be remarked that they accept the principle of grace, of confidence in it. "Whatsoever is right I will give!" The great point in the parable is that-confidence in the grace of the master of the vineyard, and grace as the ground of their action. But who understood it? A Paul might come in late, God having then called him, and be a stronger testimony to grace than the labourers who had wrought from the dawning of the gospel day.

The Lord afterwards pursues the subject with His disciples. He goes up to Jerusalem, where the Messiah ought to have been received and crowned, to be rejected and put to death, but after that to rise again; and when the sons of Zebedee come and ask him for the two first places in the kingdom, He answers that He can lead them indeed to suffering; but as to the first places in His kingdom, He could not bestow them,

except (according to the Father's counsels) on those for whom the Father had prepared them. Wondrous self-renunciation! It is for the Father, for us, that He works. He disposes of nothing. He can bestow on those who will follow Him a share in His sufferings: everything else shall be given according to the counsels of the Father. But what real glory for Christ and perfection in Him, and what a privilege for us to have this motive only, and to partake in the Lord's sufferings! and what a purification of our carnal hearts is here proposed to us, in making us act only for a suffering Christ, sharing His cross, and committing ourselves to God for recompense!

The Lord then takes occasion to explain the sentiments that become His followers, the perfection of which they had seen in Himself. In the world, authority was sought for; but the spirit of Christ was a spirit of service, leading to the choice of the lowest place, and to entire devotedness to others. Beautiful and perfect principles, the full bright perfection of which was displayed in Christ. The renunciation of all things, in order to depend confidently on the grace of Him whom we serve, the consequent readiness to take the lowest place, and thus to be the servant of all-this should be the spirit of those who have part in the kingdom as now established by the rejected Lord. It is this that becomes His followers. [See Footnote #60]

With the end of verse 28 this portion of the Gospel terminates, and the closing scenes of the blessed Saviour's life begin. At verse 29 [See Footnote #61] begins His last presentation to Israel as the Son of David, the Lord, the true King of Israel, the Messiah. He begins His career in this respect at Jericho, the place where Joshua entered the land-the place on which the curse had so long rested. He opens the blind eyes of His people who believe in Him and receive Him as the Messiah, for such He truly was, although rejected. They salute Him as Son of David, and He answers their faith by opening their eyes. They follow Him-a figure of the true remnant of His people, who will wait for Him.

Footnotes for Matthew 20

59: Indeed, reward is in scripture always an encouragement to those who are in sorrow and suffering by having from higher motives entered into God's way. So Moses; so even Christ, whose motive in perfect love we know, yet for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame. He was the Leader and Completer in the path of faith.

60: Observe the way in which the sons of Zebedee and their mother come to seek the highest place, at the moment when the Lord was preparing unreservedly to take the very lowest. Alas! we see so much of the same spirit. The effect was to bring out how absolutely He had stripped Himself of everything. These are the principles of the heavenly kingdom: perfect self-renunciation, to be contented in thorough devotedness; this is the fruit of love that seeketh not her own-the yieldingness that flows from the absence of self-seeking; submission when despised; meekness and lowliness of heart. The spirit of service to others is that which love produces at the same time as the humility which is satisfied with this place. The Lord fulfilled this even unto death, giving His life as a ransom for many.

61: The case of the blind man at Jericho is, in all the first three Gospels, the commencement of the final circumstances of Christ's life which led on to the cross, the general contents and teachings of each being closed. Hence He is addressed as Son of David, being the last presentation of Himself as such to them, God's testimony being given to Him as such.

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