

(Matthew) ch.18:21-19:30

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches us that forgiveness is a matter of quality, not quantity, and that we must forgive infinitely, forever and ever, just like God's love for us.

Duration: 50:28

Scripture: Matthew 5:6, Matthew 19:27

Topics: "Serving God", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, Jesus addresses the attitude of seeking rewards for serving God. He emphasizes that one cannot serve both God and money, and that the love of money can hinder one from obtaining eternal life. Jesus uses a parable about laborers to illustrate this point, highlighting the importance of serving God without expecting rewards. He also emphasizes the need for forgiveness, comparing the small offenses committed against us by others to the immense debt of our own sins before God.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew chapter 18 and verse 21. Then Peter came and said to the Lord Jesus, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, up to seven times? And Jesus said to him, I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. There is a tradition among the Jews, there was in those days anyway, in the times of Jesus, that one was to forgive his brother three times.

Peter knew that Jesus was teaching a higher standard, and so he asked the Lord whether it would be alright if he went a few steps higher than the Jewish tradition, and if he would forgive his brother seven times. And that means seven times in a whole lifetime. But Jesus replied saying, not seven times, but seventy times seven.

It's not just that the new covenant is quantitatively superior to the old covenant, but qualitatively, it's a matter of quality, of forgiveness. And here, when Jesus said seventy times seven, it's clear that what he meant was infinitely, forever and ever. And when we compare the scripture with what Jesus said in Luke chapter 17 and verse 4, there he says if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying I repent, forgive him.

Before we look at seventy times seven, we could look at Luke 17.4, where Jesus spoke about forgiving your brother seven times in a day. And remember that the Jewish day was just twelve hours. So, assuming that your brother sinned against you at six o'clock in the morning, and he came back at seven

o'clock and said, I repent, we've got to forgive him.

At eight o'clock the same morning, he comes back and sins again. And at nine o'clock, he comes back and asks for forgiveness, saying he repents, you've got to forgive him. At ten o'clock, he sins again, a third time.

And at eleven, he comes back and asks for forgiveness, you've got to forgive him. At twelve, he sins again, and asks for forgiveness. At two, he sins again, and asks for forgiveness, and so on.

Seven times in a day, every two hours from six in the morning till six in the evening, and he comes back and asks forgiveness. I wonder how many of us would really be able to believe that his repentance was genuine. No wonder in Luke 17.5, when the Lord said this, the apostles said, Lord, increase our faith.

Help us to believe that this man's repentance is genuine. It really requires faith to have that love which believes all things, which takes a man at his word. In other words, the Lord was teaching us there, don't go digging into the roots, by their fruits you shall know them, that which is visible.

If he says he repents, accept it. Don't go judging a brother's motives. 1 Corinthians 4.5 says we don't know the hidden things, we don't know whether the repentance is genuine or not.

That's for God to judge. We've got to go by the outward expression of repentance, and ask that he asks, and we are to forgive him. And now when we compare Matthew 18.22, 70 times 7. If Jesus meant this was 70 times 7 in one day, that increases the frequency of sinning and the frequency of forgiveness.

490 times in a day. That's every few minutes. The point of it all is this, that Jesus was teaching that you must never hold anything against a brother.

You must forgive him. In another passage, in Luke chapter 6, which is really a parallel passage to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. In Luke chapter 6, Jesus expressed it like this, in verse 37. Luke 6.37, do not pass judgment and you will not be judged.

Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Pardon, or as the literal Greek word there is, release, and you will be released. Forgiveness is releasing a person.

And that comes out very clearly in this story that Jesus spoke in Matthew 18.23-35, where he says the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had in repayment to be made.

The slave therefore falling down prostrated himself before him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything. And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii.

And he seized him and began to choke him, saying, Pay back what you owe. So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will repay you the same words that the other slave had spoken to his master. But this slave was unwilling, and he went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

And when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. And then the lord summoned this unforgiving slave and said to him, You wicked slave, I forgive you all that debt because you entreated me. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow slave even as I had mercy on you? And his lord moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed.

This is a very important parable that Jesus spoke for all of us who are slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because here is a story spoken about a slave, one who was a servant, and who could be forgiven so much and who was unwilling to forgive others another, even a small amount. What does this amount mean? How much did the Lord forgive the slave? It says here 10,000 talents, or in terms of Indian rupees that would be, it says here in the margin, about 10 million American dollars or 140 million rupees.

140 million rupees. Just imagine that. There are very few people in the world who even own that much money.

And here is a picture of how much we owe to the Lord. The sins that we have committed are equivalent to a debt of 140 million rupees that we have to pay back to God. Sin is a debt.

Every time I sin, in thought, word, deed, attitude or motive, I build up a debt towards God. And it's something that I have to repay. And if I don't repay it, I have to be thrown into prison till I clear it.

There is no way out. This is why God couldn't forgive just because a person repented. He forgives only on the basis of that debt being repaid by Jesus on Calvary.

And that's why Peter says in 1 Peter 1 that we have been redeemed by, not with silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ, which is far more valuable than all the silver and gold in the world. And so we see that forgiveness is not cheap. It's cheap for us, but it costs Jesus everything.

The Lord of that slave felt compassion, Matthew 18, 27, and forgave him that debt. But the slave himself, when he went out and met a fellow slave of his who owed him a small amount, and how much was this amount? This is about three rupees. Three rupees.

A small amount. And he was unwilling to forgive that. A small amount of money like that.

And it says here he caught the fellow slave by the throat and began to choke him. He was ready to take revenge straight away for this small amount. And when we think of the greatest crime that another human being has done against us, remember, the greatest crime that another human being has ever done against us is only three rupees worth compared to the 140 million rupees that we owe to God.

That's about the proportion of the guilt of another human being, however great his crime against us compared to our guilt before God. We need to see this proportion clearly. Then only forgiveness becomes easy.

And there we see how evil an unforgiving attitude is. When God has forgiven us 140 million rupees, for us to be unwilling to forgive three rupees to another human being is the picture of a person who cannot forgive another. And there Jesus said that this Lord handed him over to the torturers.

And then he said in verse 35, So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart. It's not just forgiving with our lips. We got to forgive from the heart.

From deep within our heart we got to forgive. In other words, it's not just a matter of externally saying to a person, I forgive you, but of changing our whole attitude towards the person. This is the meaning of forgiving from the heart.

And if I haven't changed my attitude towards that person who has done harm to me, if I've still got a bitterness even though I'm pleasant on the outside towards him, then I still haven't forgiven him from the heart. And then the Lord said, So shall my heavenly Father do to you. What will the heavenly Father do? Read verse 34 and 35 carefully and see what the heavenly Father will do.

It says he will hand you over to the torturers. Imagine a father handing his son over to the torturers. But then that person is not behaving like a son, he's behaving like a child of the devil when he doesn't forgive another person.

He's not releasing a person, he's got somebody by the throat. And I want to ask you, dear friend, have you got someone by the throat inwardly? Have you holding on to someone, not forgiving? Well, then the devil has got power over you. The torturers are Satan and his evil spirits.

And they get a hold of many believers. This is why many believers are sick. A sickness that multitudes of pills and injections don't cure.

What is the reason? They haven't forgiven someone. Harassment of Satan and evil spirits on the mind, bringing depression, gloom, so many things. Very often the reason is an unforgiving attitude.

So shall my heavenly Father do to you. It's a warning. Let's take it and learn to forgive everyone wholeheartedly, completely.

Let's turn now to Matthew chapter 19 and verse 1. And it came about that when Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed him and he healed them there. And some Pharisees came to him testing him and saying, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all? And he answered and said, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female? Just a passing word about verse 2. In the healing ministry of Jesus, we find a number of occasions where he healed everyone.

In fact, we do not read of a single case of Jesus laying his hands on someone and the person not being healed or of his praying for someone and the person not being healed. There is only one recorded instance of Jesus laying his hands on a blind man's eyes and the person being healed partially. And when he said that he was healed only partially, Jesus prayed for him a second time and he was healed completely.

And the reason for this was certainly not any limitation of power in Jesus himself, but there was a lesson that Jesus was trying to teach through that two-step healing of that blind man recorded in Mark's gospel. We also read in Matthew 13 of the lack of faith on the part of those who were from Jesus' hometown because of which Jesus could not do many miracles there. But in such cases, he never prayed for anyone either.

I mention this because this is the distinguishing difference between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of many who claim to have healing gifts today and it's important to see that distinction. Jesus always healed those he prayed for. Every person he laid his hands on was healed completely.

The rate of success was 100% because he never prayed for everyone. Where he sensed a lack of faith, he did not pray, he did not do miracles. He went into the poolside of Bethesda and he healed one person, as we read in John 5, and came away.

But there were other instances like here in Matthew 19 where we read that they were all healed. Now we see in verse 3, the Pharisees coming to test Jesus about the matter of divorce. The Pharisees were the ones who wanted to keep the law in such a way that it wouldn't inconvenience their life.

They were always looking for loopholes in the law through which they could escape. And this was the difference between the Pharisees' attitude to the law and Jesus' attitude. The Pharisees' attitude was, it's the legalistic attitude, what is the minimum that I have to do in order to please God? Now Jesus came with another spirit, and this is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

The New Covenant spirit is, what is the maximum that I can do to glorify God? What is the maximum that God can get out of this one earthly life that he's given me? A legalistic attitude is, what is the minimum that I have to do in order to please this hard and demanding God? And it's amazing, if we were to examine our life, to see how it's possible that such an attitude can lurk behind some of our service for the Lord. What is the minimum that I have to give up of this world and still be a Christian, still be a disciple of Jesus? What a different attitude Jesus had. What is the maximum that I can give up so that I can glorify God and use my time and my money and my energy in a way that would please the Father more? The Pharisees came testing Jesus, because they knew that Jesus would be against divorce.

They knew that in the beginning, but they asked Him questions to test Him. And Jesus replied saying, Haven't you read that He who created them from the beginning? Jesus went back to the beginning, way back in Genesis 2, before sin came into the human race. There we have a revelation of God's will.

God made them male and female. And this statement from Genesis 2, verse 24, Jesus quoted in verse 5, For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. That is a statement found in Scripture before sin entered the human race.

It was a law God laid down. Adam didn't have a father and mother to leave, but it was a law God laid down for marriage before sin entered the human race, in Genesis 2, verse 24. And there we have God's original will for man.

The two shall become one flesh. And therefore there is no question of divorce. Therefore Jesus said in verse 6, Since God has said that, they are no more two, but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. It is wrong to separate two whom God has joined together. And since marriage is not a religious institution, but something that God has ordained for the whole world, everyone, even if he's not a Christian, can be married.

And even if it's a non-Christian who's married, God has joined them together. Because marriage is something that God has ordained for society, for the human race. So it's not just when Christians are joined together that God's joined them together.

When two unbelievers are joined together, it's God who's joined them together because he has allowed them to come together as part of his will for human society. And it's he who blesses even the marriages of unbelievers with children. Children are the gift of God.

Not just believers' children. It's important to remember this because we find nowadays in the world people making a distinction between unbelievers divorcing and believers. There is no difference.

God has ordained marriage for human society and when God has joined two people together, they are husband and wife. They are one flesh. And divorce is not permitted.

And that's clear. And they said to him, the Pharisees, why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her? And here we see the wrong attitude of the Pharisees towards the law. When you read the actual passage of scripture which they were quoting in Deuteronomy chapter 24 and verses 1 to 4, what Moses said was when a man takes a wife and marries her it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he's found some indecency in her and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife.

And if she's again put out by the latter husband then the former husband is not allowed to take her again. And if you read Deuteronomy 24 verses 1 to 4 carefully you'll find there was no command to divorce at all. It's very clear.

What Moses was saying was that if a man has divorced then what he should do he was certainly not giving a command there to divorce. But this is the quirk of human nature enslaved to the flesh that we read into the scriptures what we want to read to justify our sinful actions. And God allows those who don't love the truth to be deceived like this as we read in 2 Thessalonians 2 verses 10 and 11.

And the Pharisees were deceived. It's a great warning to us that when we read the scriptures if our desire is to justify ourselves we will read into it on any subject, in any matter that which suits our position. This is why we need to fear when we come to God's word.

We need to let God's word judge us not make God's word fit our circumstances and justify our actions which may be worldly and sinful. And there we read the Pharisees coming to Jesus in Matthew 19, 7 and saying, why did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her? And Jesus didn't get into a theological argument with them trying to prove to them that Moses did not actually command it. He just told them because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you.

He didn't command it. There is a difference between permitting there is such a thing as the permissive will of God and there is the perfect will of God which are his commands. They didn't understand that.

Under the old covenant many things were permitted which were not in God's perfect will. Here is one of those things. Divorce.

That is not in God's perfect will. But it was permitted. Why was it permitted? Because of the hardness of the hearts of those Pharisees and of people generally under the Old Testament.

In Ezekiel chapter 36 we read that the new covenant promise was I will give you a new heart. Ezekiel 36 verse 26 I will take away that hard heart and give you a soft heart. Now no one could have a soft heart until Jesus came and the Holy Spirit was given.

It's when the Holy Spirit is put within us Ezekiel 36 verse 27 that we get a soft heart. So under the new covenant divorce is not permitted. Under the old covenant because they didn't have the Holy Spirit God's standards were lower.

That's so clear. There are many things that we permit a little six month old baby to do because it's ignorant which would be more serious in a 15 year old son. A three month old baby slapping his mother is not as serious as a 15 year old son slapping his mother.

There is a world of difference between the two. Divorce under the old covenant wasn't serious. It's very serious under the new covenant.

It's forbidden. And I say to you, verse 9 whoever divorces his wife except for immorality and marries another commits adultery. There is only one condition under which Jesus said divorce was permitted and that is immorality where one partner has in a sense broken that vow by sexual immorality.

But when we compare the other passages of scripture dealing with this in Matthew 5 verse 32 whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery it's clear that even where divorce is permitted for immorality remarriage is still forbidden. The divorced person must remain single until his or her partner dies. So Jesus' standards are quite different from the standards of this world.

That's only to be expected. And Christians who are looking for loopholes who are not seeking God's highest can be led astray even in this matter of divorce. If you seek for God's highest you will not miss it.

Let's turn today to Matthew chapter 19 and verse 10. This is the passage where the Pharisees had come to Jesus and asked him why Moses commanded divorce. Verse 7 and Jesus replied saying in verse 8 that Moses hadn't commanded divorce it's because they misread the scriptures that they got that message out of it.

In Deuteronomy 24 Moses had permitted it It was God's permissive will because of the hardness of people's hearts under the old covenant. Because they did not have the Holy Spirit. When a person receives the Holy Spirit his heart becomes soft.

Soft in the sense that he can live up to a higher standard. Just like in our study of Matthew chapter 5 we saw how whereas the old covenant merely required that people stay away from physical adultery in the flesh Jesus commanded that we were not even to commit it in our thoughts. That's the result of getting a soft heart.

It's impossible to do that if we haven't received the power of the Holy Spirit within our heart. In fact this teaches us when we compare it with Ezekiel 36 verse 26 and 27 that the primary purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit is that this hard heart is taken away and we're given a soft heart that's responsive to God's commands and that seeks not the minimum needed to please God but what the maximum is by which we can please God. And when a person approaches this subject of divorce he will find that if his attitude is what is the minimum that I have to do he'll get some other answer out of the teachings of Jesus whereas if his attitude is what is the maximum which can please God through my life he'll get the right answer.

God has made it like that and that's why you find even among believers there can be a difference of understanding in the subject but that reveals only the condition of those believers' hearts whether they're going to the scriptures to find a justification for their wrong actions or for their worldliness or whether they're going to the scriptures to find out with sincerity of heart how God can be glorified in their life. It's a fundamental principle concerning all areas and all subjects in scripture that we can get the right answer only when we go with the right attitude to scripture which is the attitude Jesus had. What is the maximum that God can get out of this one earthly life? How can God be glorified? Most through my life not what is

the minimum that I have to do to obey the commands of Jesus.

And so, as I have just said if we approach the scriptures with the attitude of Jesus we shall see clearly that divorce is forbidden for Christians except for immorality whereby one partner breaks the marriage vow but even in such a case when we compare all the scriptures on the subject, in all the gospels it becomes clear that a divorced person cannot remarry because they have been joined together by God. And just because one person has become unfaithful does not mean that the other person should be unfaithful too. Just because one person has broken his vow doesn't mean the other person should break his vow also.

Just because one person serves the devil doesn't mean the other person serves the devil too. One person in a marriage contract may go against God's word, but the other person must keep God's word if he is a disciple of Jesus. That is clear.

When the disciples who never knew anything about the new covenant standards yet really heard this, they said if the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it's better not to marry. In other words, they found it a bit of a strain to have a command like this. The disciples understood it correctly, but they felt it's very difficult to be married if we don't have permission to divorce and remarry.

There we see that the disciples themselves found this a difficult and a hard statement. But Jesus did not modify it. And he said to them, not all men can accept this statement to remain single.

That teaches us clearly that single life is a gift that God gives and a calling. Just like it would be wrong to leave a secular occupation and go into full time Christian work without a specific clear calling from God, it would be wrong to choose to be single without a specific clear calling from God. If we believe that God has a plan for our life, as we read in Ephesians 2.10, that God has foreordained before the foundation of the world good works that we should walk in, that he's got a plan for our life for the future, then he's got a plan, and in that plan, in that blueprint that he's got for your life, it's also determined whether you should be single or married.

All you need to do is to seek what is in God's blueprint for your life. Some, like Paul, were called to a single life. But Jesus made it very clear that not all men can accept this, only to those to whom it has been given, and the word given means a gift.

Single life is a gift from God. It's a calling from God. And only such people, he said, should accept it.

This is why it's wrong for anyone to teach that if you are in full time Christian work, or what they call a servant of God, that you should be single. That, Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 verse 1 to 4, is a doctrine of a demon, those who forbid marriage. Marriage is never forbidden.

Hebrews 13 verses 1 to 4 makes it clear that marriage is honorable, not to be forbidden. And celibacy must never be forced on anyone. Only those to whom it has been given can receive it.

For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb, Jesus said in Matthew 19.12. There are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men. And there are also eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, meaning that there are people who have stayed single for the sake of the kingdom of God to spread the gospel, so that they can be free to travel. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.

In other words, if you don't have the ability, then you should not accept it. Jesus' teaching was so clear and so balanced. And then, here we see another aspect of that balance.

He's just been speaking about the gift of a single life. And then, we read in verse 13, the beautiful balance in scripture. The gifts, the gifts that come from married life.

Then, some children were brought to him. These were the gifts that God had given to married people. So, immediately after Jesus speaks about the gift of a single life, we find here the Holy Spirit recording the blessing of marriage.

Some children were brought to him, so that he might lay his hands on them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. They'd just heard about the glory of being a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

And they thought that Jesus would have no time for children. How mistaken they were. And Jesus said, let the children alone.

Permit the children and do not hinder them from coming to me. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Yes, there is a balance.

There are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. But then, there are those who are married also for the glory of God and for the kingdom of heaven. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to little children.

We read about the one man in the Old Testament about whom it is said first of all in Scripture that he walked with God, Enoch in Genesis chapter 5. And we read this wonderful word in Genesis 5 verse 22 that after Enoch became the father of Methuselah, he walked with God for 300 years and had sons and daughters. His having sons and daughters did not hinder him from walking with God. And it need not hinder you or me from walking with God.

That is a doctrine of a demon which says that if you have children and if you get married, it will hinder your walk with God. The first man who walked with God was not hindered and no one has ever been hindered. Children are the closest to the kingdom of heaven here on earth.

That's what Jesus said in Matthew 19 14. And he laid his hands on them and he departed from there. Notice Jesus did not baptize them.

He laid his hands on them. And it's important to see what Jesus did. Because in John chapter 4 we read that Jesus did baptize people through his disciples but the children he only laid his hands on and blessed.

And it's very interesting to see that Jesus didn't make a mistake there concerning what to do to adults and what to do for children. John chapter 3 verse 22 says Jesus and disciples came to the land of Judea and there he was spending time with them and baptizing. But when children were brought to him, he laid his hands on them and he departed.

Verse 16. Behold, one came to him and said, Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life? And he said to him, Why are you asking me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.

This was the Old Testament standard. There was only one way to enter into life and that was by obedience to the commandments. The new covenant had not yet been established.

And he said to him, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The commandments relating to man and the young man said, All these I have kept. Here was a God-fearing man who had kept the commandments from his childhood. And Jesus said to him, If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven and come follow me.

But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. Among the commandments that Moses gave, the ten commandments listed in Exodus 20, there were four. The first four that had to do with man's relationship with God, and the next six in man's relationship with his fellow men.

And out of the next six, Jesus mentioned to this rich young ruler, holy five. Holy commandments five to nine. He never mentioned anything about commandment number ten.

He came to that finally. For what was the tenth commandment? You shall not covet. You shall not desire.

Now you can take it literally according to what is written in the tenth commandment and say you didn't covet what is another's. But when you have the attitude to find out what is the maximum one has to do to please God, one can find that even a wrong attitude to money is a form of covetousness. And that is what this person had.

That's how he missed the kingdom. Mark 10, 21 says, Jesus told him, You lack one thing. And because of that, he missed the kingdom.

A wrong attitude to money is covetousness. And it can make us miss the kingdom. This is why we need to pray that the Lord will deliver us from the love of money.

Let's turn today to Matthew chapter 19 and verse 20. This is the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, wanting to follow him, wanting eternal life. And Jesus tells him in verse 21, if you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give it to the poor.

You shall have treasure in heaven and come follow me. Jesus didn't tell Mary, Martha and Lazarus to sell what they had. And even Zacchaeus, when Zacchaeus was converted, we read in Luke 19 that he told Jesus that he would give half his money to the poor and return four times what he had cheated others of, which still would have left Zacchaeus with a certain amount of money.

Jesus did not tell Zacchaeus to sell everything. Because it was clear that Zacchaeus had been freed from the love of money. But in this particular person's case, it was also clear to Jesus that he was enslaved to money.

And where a person is enslaved to money like this, Jesus has to use radical measures. And he told him to sell all that he had. The young man went away grieved.

Remember, the question the young man came with was what shall I do to obtain eternal life? And here is the answer. Be free from the love of money. Because you cannot serve God and mammon.

Most people in the world serve mammon. Money and material things or as they say, the good things of this life. And those who live for that can miss eternal life.

Because you cannot serve God and mammon. You've got to hate one and love the other. And you can have your choices to which you're going to hate and which you're going to love.

But you cannot love both. You cannot love God and money. And if you love God, you've got to hate money.

That's very clear in Luke chapter 16 verse 13. If you hold on to God, you've got to despise money. Jesus taught us that we could use money, but we were not to love it.

We were to hate it and despise it. Luke 16 verse 13 is clear on that point. And one who doesn't do that cannot serve God.

The danger is not in having. The danger is in loving. The love of money is the root of all evil.

But it certainly is more difficult for those who own much not to love it. Those who have much will certainly love it. And Jesus said to his disciples in verse 23, I say to you it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

This does not mean that all those who are poor enter the kingdom. We enter the kingdom through a genuine repentance and genuine faith. But it's difficult for people to repent genuinely when their heart is so much set on earthly things.

And that's why he said it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you in verse 24. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

It's impossible, we know, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. That's impossible. And it's impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God too.

And the disciples heard this. They said, then who can be saved? For most people in the world love money. How can they be saved then? And then looking upon them Jesus said, with men this is impossible.

But with God all things are possible. In the context what does it mean? It means that God can do such a work in a man's heart. Even though he is rich.

To free him from his riches. And take him into the kingdom. But not if he is not freed from his riches.

God alone knows whether a person has been freed from attachment to money and material things. The next time you lose some money, ask yourself whether God is not perhaps answering your prayer when you prayed that you might be freed from the love of money. When something expensive that you have bought packs up or is lost or stolen, ask yourself the same question.

Those who wholeheartedly pray to God asking to be freed from attachment to material things will get an answer. God will certainly answer them, but the answer can come in painful ways. In ways in which they did not anticipate.

But if you are wholehearted and you say Lord, I really want to serve you. And I don't want any mixture in my life. I don't want to serve God and money.

Then God will take you in hand and take you through various trials in the financial area to free you from the love of money. And any sincere wholehearted Christian will certainly pray that prayer. For dear friends, the love of money dwells very deeply in our flesh.

It's one of those sins that dwells very deeply. Like selfishness dwells very deeply in our flesh. And if we don't identify it and hate it and ask God to deliver us from it, we shall spend our earthly days not getting that spiritual education that God wants us to have.

We shall fail in one subject constantly and that subject is the love of money. God wants us to pass. God wants us to be free from it before we leave this earth.

Completely free. And the earlier we are free from it the better because then we can be true servants of God for the rest of our days on earth. Otherwise we can waste our life.

A man who lives on earth without being free from the love of money, even if he calls himself a believer, has wasted his earthly life because he could not serve God. Whatever he calls service for God was not service for God because Luke 16.13 says you cannot serve God and money. Money is the big alternative master to God.

Not Satan because no believer serves Satan. But money. Many believers do and they don't realize that when they do that they cease serving God.

And Peter when he heard this he felt a little complacent and self-satisfied because he wasn't like that rich young ruler. And that is a warning to us. Here is the other side of the coin.

Here is a warning for those who are not rich young rulers, who don't own so much property and who can feel self-satisfied and smug and complacent like Peter. He said, well Lord, we are not like him. We have left everything and we have followed you.

Can you see that self-congratulation there? What will that be for us? Well, he missed everything. But what we don't realize is that the man who has owned property and given it up may be at a far higher level than the one who never had very much to give up. Peter had a job but he didn't probably own much property.

So you couldn't really put Peter and the rich young ruler on the same level. One wonders what Peter's condition would have been if he owned much property. If his heart were sincere, no doubt he would have left everything.

But the fact is he had not been tested in that area. That's a great danger that we can compare ourselves with others when they are being tested perhaps in deeper areas and we ourselves are not being tested there. And to think that we are spiritually or morally superior to them.

That's what we see in verse 27. We've left everything. How much had Peter left compared to that rich young ruler who had to give up so much? And Jesus says to them, first of all he says yes, if you have followed me, then in the regeneration that is when the world is regenerated, the whole earth, when the millennial kingdom is established, Jesus the son of man will sit on his glorious throne and you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

They had indeed forsaken everything. And Jesus recognized that and he appreciated it and he said to them that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the millennial kingdom. So it's obvious that that is yet to take place and that is the time when Jesus spoke of as the regeneration of this earth.

The earth is going to go through a new birth where everything becomes new compared to what we see now. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for my name's sake shall receive many times as much and shall inherit eternal life. Everyone if you have had to give up something for the Lord, is it a house? Maybe you were cast out by your brothers or sisters or by your father or mother or children or maybe you've lost property you were not included in the Father's will because you became a wholehearted disciple of Jesus and you have suffered a loss of these things for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ.

The Lord said you will receive many times as much or a hundredfold. And in another passage it says with persecutions. We will have persecutions as well.

But you will also inherit eternal life. This is the answer to the rich young ruler's question. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Well, here it is.

Put Jesus first and forsake everything else. And here it says you shall inherit eternal life. This is the real meaning of faith.

He who believes has eternal life. Compare it with this passage and you find that you cannot believe unless you have forsaken your attachment to everything else. Because to be united to Jesus is like getting married.

It's a spiritual marriage and you cannot be married to a man. A girl cannot be married to a man if she is still interested in other men. She has to forsake the others and cleave just to one.

And so also the bride of Christ is to forsake her attachment to all earthly things and cleave to the Lord. And everyone who is left that shall inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last first.

And there Jesus went on to speak a parable in chapter 20 verse 1 to 16 which was an answer to Peter's question. What will we get who have left everything? Jesus was trying to explain to Peter that that attitude of yours is wrong. You can have forsaken everything and no doubt you have and you will receive a reward for that.

But if you keep this attitude of what will we get? 1927 Matthew 1927 What will we get out of it? In other words, Lord, I have sacrificed so much. I've given up so much. What am I going to get out of it? That attitude Jesus said was wrong.

Then he went on to speak this parable about these laborers who made a contract with the master. And who at the end asked this question, what are we going to get? Aren't we going to get more than those other laborers? This was to answer Peter's question. Aren't we going to get more than this rich young ruler? If we come to serve God with the attitude what shall we get? Even if we serve a lot on this earth and we are first in the eyes of others as being dedicated self-sacrificing servants of God, we'll end up as last in spite of our service because our attitude was wrong.

Our service for the Lord must be a love service without any thought of reward.

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