

Getting into the Beautiful Kingdom (Matthew 19:13-30)

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[0 : 00] Then children were brought to him that he may lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

And he laid his hands on them and went away. And behold, a man came up to him, saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

And he said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you will enter life, keep the commandments. 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, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to him, I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you will be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.

[1 : 09] When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly, I say to you, only difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved?

But Jesus looked at them and said, With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Then Peter said in reply, See, we have left everything and followed you.

What then will we have? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who had houses, or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

[2 : 21] But many who are first will be last, and the last first. So good to be back.

I was here a couple of weeks ago. It was a great time. I brought some accessories this time. A few years ago, I need to be on crutches, and I painted them black, and I put flames on them.

I reckon it made me go faster. I'll give you a race later. Look, we've just read an awesome part of God's words, and we're going to spend the next little while exploring that.

So let's pray as we do that. And I thought, since we're looking at the New City Catechism on prayer, let's model our prayer on that as we get into God's words. Father, we confess that we can understand nothing that we've just read outside of you speaking to us, your spirit whispering into our ears, and so we ask that you would speak, that you would give us ears to listen.

Father, we grab hold of who you are, the God who does speak, the God who does work, and so we ask that you'd do that now, and we give you great thanks that even as we ask this, we know that you delight, you love for us to know you more, to see your son more richly and more vividly from your word, and so we ask that that would happen right now.

[4 : 05] In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, how do I get in? How do I get in?

I'm standing in the airport, this is a few years ago, I'm standing in the airport and my plans are made. Okay, I have tickets in my pocket, this is going to be great. I'm off to California, I'm going to ride across that bridge, that one there, the Golden Gate Bridge, I'm going to tour the Stanford University campus, I'm going to taste what is arguably, I'm told anyway, arguably the best deep dish

pizza outside of Chicago.

It is going to be amazing. But, everything still lies before me. These guys lie before me.

I've got the maze of the airport, I've got the customs interrogation, right, what is the purpose of your visit to the United States of America? And that threat, as you answer that, they're like, oh, don't say the wrong thing.

Like, don't have to go and sit in the naughty corner, because the naughty corner is not fun. And as we pick up in Matthew's gospel, well, over the last few weeks, as we've been walking through, or as you've been walking through these chapters of Matthew's gospel, Jesus has been painting a picture for us.

[5 : 27] He's been, he's been painting a picture of his kingdom. And, I hope you've seen this, it's a beautiful kingdom, isn't it? It's a beautiful kingdom. You see, this kingdom, well, we started with the glory of the king of this kingdom, didn't we?

We caught a glimpse of his glory as we, well, as he transfigured before us this servant king. And, the kingdom of Jesus, our servant king, it's where, it's where we care about our sin.

It's, it's where we care about each other's sin. It's where people loved, loved and cared for by Jesus, we care for each other.

Right? It's, it's a kingdom where, if we wander away from Jesus, and away from each other, well, then we love each other enough to go and find one another, to have the hard conversation, as Jesus draws us back.

It's where, as people who have been forgiven so outrageously by this servant king, set free from an impossibly large debt, well, that forgiveness overflows and we forgive one another.

[6 : 46] It's a kingdom where all people, in all stages of life, married or single, they're treasured, they're invested in, as Jesus redefines, everything, as he turns things upside down, as he lays out his kingdom.

It's a beautiful kingdom. It's a, it's a, it's the kingdom of our servant king, but we're not supposed to just look at this kingdom and go, oh, that's nice. Cool. Good for you, Jesus, with your, your servant kingdom.

What we're supposed to do is, we're supposed to see it, we're supposed to go, oh, this looks good. And, and for us to respond to that by going, I want in. How do I get in?

And so Matthew, in this, this passage that we've just read together, he raises key questions throughout it, four key questions that we're going to explore. They come off the lips of the characters in the passage to show us how, how can we join this kingdom?

The first question, it's raised by a young man. What must I do to get eternal life?

[7 : 56] Verse 16, let's read it together. Just then, a man came up to Jesus and asked, teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?

Now, there's something amazing about this man, right? He, he, he sees what's going on in this kingdom. He's kind of watching this picture be drawn, and he wants to be there.

How can I enter this kingdom? That's what he's asking. And so Jesus tells him, he says, follow God's commandments, his law, his instruction.

That's in verse 17. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments. But here's the thing, here's the thing, right? Verse 18 and 19, if you read through them, they're not a checklist.

Like, you shall not murder, check. You shall not commit adultery, check. You shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, check, check, check, check. Like, that's not how we're supposed to read those verses. Jesus is saying, Jesus is saying, live a life worthy of, live a life of worship.

[9 : 04] Live a life worthy of being called one of God's people, because, this is key. We've got to see this. If we see nothing else in this passage, it's this. Eternal life is not about what you do.

This is why Jesus doesn't, like, what would you list? If you're going for commandments, what would you list? The ten commandments, right? But Jesus doesn't do it, did you notice? And it's not that Jesus is sitting there, he's like, ah, you've got me on the spot, I can't remember what order they're in.

Like, he's the one who came up with them. Jesus is teaching us how to understand the whole law. How to understand all of God's commandments, his instruction.

And it's this kind of expansive view that touches the whole of life. It's a life of worship. And this young man, he's actually doing pretty well.

Did you notice? Verse 20. Read it with me. All these things I have kept, the young man said. What do I still lack?

[10:10] What do I still lack? That's our second question. But it's interesting, isn't it, that as, Jesus, he doesn't shake his head disapprovingly here.

He's not like, you have got to be joking. That's, like if I said, I have done all these things, you know, I've lived my whole life, followed these commandments, he'd be like, Dave, Dave, you've got to be joking.

But he doesn't say that. He says, well, he says eternal life. It's not about what you do. It's about me. And that's a problem.

That's a problem for this rich young man, because he is Mr. Independent. He's Mr. Kind of, tell me what I have to do, because I've got this.

And that's a problem, because it can't be fixed. Do you see, it can't be fixed by doing something. Read with me, from verse 20 again. All these I have kept, the young man said, what do I still lack?

[11:15] Jesus answered, if you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come follow me.

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Can you see what Jesus is doing here in these short few verses? He's saying, your problem is, your problem is, that you think you've got this.

This man's wealth, it's what he lives for. It's what he worships. It's what he thinks is the solution to his problems.

So Jesus says, if you really, if you really want in, you don't need to do, you need to become. You need to become dependent.

Like the little children that we met in verse 13. Jump back with me to verse 13. Let's read it together. Then, people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on and to pray for them, but the disciples rebuked them.

[12:25] Jesus said, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Actually though, we've seen children before, haven't we, as we've journeyed through this section of Matthew's gospel back in chapter 18.

Flick back with me. Chapter 18, verse 3. And he said, truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see, these children, it isn't that children are cute and innocent. That's not why he grabs that illustration. I mean, this one is. This is our little girl, Bethany.

She's six and I love her so much. She is, normally she's bouncing around. She is full of energy. She's full of laughter. She's full of noise.

Lots of noise. She is loud. And loud, let me tell you, is not cute. Loud is definitely not cute at six in the morning on Saturday when rest is what is desired by everyone else who shares the house or the block or the suburb with her.

[13:50] Cute and innocent is not the picture. This guy's cute too. I like him. He's our youngest. His name's Nathan. And as you can tell, he's a dinosaur.

But I mean, look at this face, right? The thing is though, you know what's going to happen five minutes after this photo's taken? Well, probably three minutes after, one minute, ten seconds after this, is he's going to run around the room roaring like a dinosaur because dinosaurs roar and he is a dinosaur.

And that's all really fun and game until, until he's roaring at full volume into the face of his six-year-old sister. At which point, cute and innocent is neither of the things I would use to describe this little guy.

I mean, he does have the most adorable dimples, the most beautiful laugh. But yeah, he's a dinosaur. Now, it's not that children, I'm laboring the point here, it's not that children are innocent or cute.

It's that they're dependent. Here's the same little guy. He's dependent, which means when we get to the beach and he's cold, he gets to wear migraine coat.

[15:03] Okay, he's dependent. He needs help. And in fact, he needs help for every aspect of his life. He's dependent. Jesus is saying, entering his kingdom is about depending on him.

That's why this man leaves sad. He walks away. But it's also, did you notice this? It's also why the disciples are shocked.

Did you see it? Back in chapter 19, verses 23 to 25, let's read them together. Then Jesus said to his disciples, truly, I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, who then can be saved?

Jesus is not, Jesus is saying it's impossible to do enough, right? It's impossible to do enough to get into his kingdom.

[16:17] Impossible. And that's the point. That's the point of the whole needle thing, right? You might have heard the stories of, oh, that's a gate and a wall and the camels could only get through and, you know, I have a needle here.

Here's a needle. Does anyone have a camel? Like, it's not like, you know, I struggle with these. You get the thread and you've got to kind of lick it and put it through and then kind of get through and pull it through.

It's not like you start with the tail of the camel and then once you've got the tip of the tail through, you just keep, it doesn't fit, right? That's the point.

That's why the disciples are shocked. Jesus is saying it's impossible. It isn't hard. He's not saying, oh, just kind of, you know, lean into it, kind of knuckle in, let's just work a bit harder here.

He's saying you can't do it. You can't. But man, do I try? Like, I mean, don't you? Do you see how this story works? How, this young man, he comes to Jesus and his question, what must I do to inherit eternal life, it actually comes off our lips.

[17:33] What must I do to get eternal life? Because just like this young man, we're Mr. and Mrs. Independent, aren't we? We make our plans, we set our goals, smart goals, preferably, we determine our lives because we've got this.

We've got it. And just like this young man, we are people of wealth. It may not seem like it, especially if you've kind of been to the supermarket recently and filled your trolley or bought petrol, but we are wealthy.

We're wealthy, we're wealthy, independent people and I've got this. Thank you very much. And Jesus is saying here, it is impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven that way.

Impossible. It is impossible to enter eternal life that way. That's why the disciples are shocked and they ask our next question, who then can be saved?

Who then can be saved? You see, this third, this third question, it acts like a bridge. See, on one side of the bridge, eternal life. It's impossible.

[18:46] No one can do enough. It's devastating, really. On the other side, eternal life, it is possible. It is possible with God because it isn't about doing, it's about depending on Jesus.

Accepting the offer of life that he holds out for everyone that will trust him. It's being saved by the free gift of God. That's saved by grace.

Have a look with me from verse 25. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, who then can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. See, salvation, eternal life, entering Jesus' kingdom, it's all possible.

Everything this rich man, this rich young man wants is right here. It's right here. The only thing you need, dependence. like a child.

[19:55] This is what Christians call grace. And Paul, one of Jesus' right-hand men, he explains it this way. Oh, where are we there? He explains it this way.

Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, for it is, by grace you have been saved, through faith. And this is not from yourselves.

false. It is a gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. This, this, this is how we can be saved.

This is how we can enter the kingdom, by grace. We, we don't do a thing, not a thing. And eternal life is ours for the taking.

You see, this grace, it drives poets and songwriters, it drives them nuts, they cannot just, to express the riches of what grace is.

[20:54] Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

Or, one of the beautiful songs, I understand you've started singing here at PCBC English, and we're going to sing it soon, together, here's some of the words, come and find your hope now in Jesus. He is all he said he would be. Grace is overflowing from the Savior's heart. rest here in this wondrous place.

Do you see what it means to be saved by grace? Do you see? There's nothing more spectacular than this. There's nothing more wonderful. There's salvation by grace.

It causes angels to marvel, it causes multitude from every people and language and nation and tongue to break into song. This is the most spectacular miracle ever performed so can we stop for a second?

[22 : 03] Can we just stop? Can we stop all our doing and trying to get eternal life and instead could we just reach out and take hold of grace?

Have you done that? I can ask have you done that? Because did you see Peter's question? It's so helpful.

He's sitting there watching over the shoulder of Jesus and he watches this young man come up what must I do to inherit eternal life? And then he watches this young man walk away sad and he's wondering what's in it for me?

What's in it for me? For us? So he asks Jesus verse 27 read it with me. Peter answered we have left everything to follow you what then will there be for us?

That's our final question. You see Peter the disciples they've given up a lot to follow Jesus and Jesus he isn't vague he's not dismissive he certainly isn't critical at this point is he?

[23 : 24] He reassures he comforts have a look at verse 29 this is beautiful and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake Jesus says will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life you see entering this kingdom it'll be costly maybe friendships or family relationships will be strained maybe broken for some it'll be devastating won't it maybe it's a material cost walking away from everything you know to follow Jesus the costs are real if not for you then for the person next to you or in one of the other seats here tonight the costs are real but so are the blessings in Jesus kingdom

I hope you can see this future glory absolutely this future glory that's the thrones these twelve thrones that the disciples will sit on judging the twelve tribes of Israel ruling in eternal life that's all to come but there's a taste of heaven right now Jesus says there's a taste of heaven as we become part of a whanau a family of believers brothers and sisters fathers and mothers to one another a family who love each other sharing what we have for the good of each other it starts opening our lives eating food together sharing life with one another becoming brothers and sisters sharing one another pain is that how you share in this church in this family of God's people called PCBC English are you looking for are you open to connection a few years ago we were living in

Wellington and our lease came to an end we had nowhere to go and I remember sitting in someone else's house someone else's house around in their dining room and we're sitting there while they prayed and they were praying that their house would become our house that their kitchen table would become our kitchen table that their couch would become our couch that their fridge would become our fridge their home became our home for a season I remember sitting there and tears welling up because we had nowhere to go and I hear of the same heart here at PCBC English a few days ago earlier this week I messaged Pastor William to say look I'm in a bit of pain I'm hoping it'll still be fine to come and do you know what he said he didn't say can you let me know in a few days time he didn't say what's the plan if you can't he said do you mind if I share this so that we can pray for you that's beautiful isn't it so thank you for praying but I'm sure it runs deeper than that

I'm sure it runs deeper than that here but we've got to ask ourselves let's make sure that we feel the weight of this not just there's some good examples kind of pat ourselves on the back but can we feel the weight of what this looks like to be in a whanau like this a church family have you become disconnected over the last few years disengage maybe even are you in danger of becoming a little disinterested have you drifted away from God's people rather than towards them have you become have your relationships here become shallow maybe even a touch stingy rather than kind of vulnerable and open and generous there's a point which COVID accelerated that but is that something going on in our hearts that's the question we've got to ask ourselves isn't it how can I share in the lives of the people here my whanau for those of you that this is your whanau pcbc english how can I share in that because we've received grace we've received eternal life trusting in Jesus and depending on him to save if that's happened then we're family we're brothers and sisters

and mothers and fathers to one another are you ready for that kind of family to love richly to share radically are you ready to offer and receive that kind of love sometimes we don't want to receive it do we let alone offer it are you holding back you know you don't want anyone to get too close and they might see the real me can I encourage you take a small step just take a step find that person the one person to open up to find that brother or that person to be a brother or sister to and let them be that to you in return maybe stick around are we doing snacks are we doing snacks a thing here every week because a few weeks ago I was here there was a cake man it was good stick around for cake and snacks don't kind of bolt for the door ask someone if are you free for coffee this week but as we finish finish whether you've been following

Jesus for years now or whether we're still working out who he is we have the same problem don't we we have the same problem it's our deep seated need to do something rather than to accept something and that puts us in real danger it puts us in real danger can I show you something did you did you catch this young man's dilemma as we read as we kind of heard the story he's kept the commandments he's done it all right he's so stressed have I done enough am I there yet what else needs to be done before I can say yes I've got eternal life like how can I know if I've got there can I even get there that's his stress his anxiety that's the problem with trying to do enough do you see there's no assurance but not with grace not with grace if we're saved by grace if we enter the kingdom of heaven by grace it depends on an infinite

[30 : 48] God instead of my broken inadequate performance and if it depends on an infinite God then we have absolute unshakable assurance don't we because his grace is all we need when I turned up at that airport all those years ago to the customs desk and you know that they ask on what grounds should I allow you to enter the United States of America well if I'm standing there and I say I'm a decent guy like you know I can do this no that's not going to get me in on what grounds should I allow you into the United States of America well I have here by the authority and grace of homeland security a visa waiver that has been extended a welcome that has been extended to allow me to enter the

United States of America that's going to go a whole lot better isn't it a lot better that'll do the trick but how much better how much better to have a welcome extended to enter the kingdom of heaven by the authority and grace of the king himself the servant king the Lord Jesus that's what's being offered to us today won't you take him up shall we pray together Lord Jesus Lord Jesus we can hear that same question come off our own lips the question of this rich young man what must I do to inherit eternal life for many of us we can't stand there and say well I've done it all what else do I lack it's painfully obvious as we look at our lives that we have fallen short in every way possible and so we ask that question who then can be saved or more personally how then could

I be saved because of your grace Jesus thank you for your grace your mercy your love your offer to enter your kingdom based on nothing that we've done but based on our dependence on you and what then will there be for us or what indeed to know you to be a part of your kingdom to enjoy the glory to come of eternal life and now to be a part of a whanau of your people who love each other richly and lavishly and to do that ourselves father help us to take hold of that grace with both hands and to delight in the assurance that comes knowing that our salvation has nothing to do with our broken performance but everything to do with your grace amen