

God's Servant Honors Humility

Mark 10:13-45

When I was a senior in high school, my then girlfriend, Kimberly, gave me a book for Christmas. The LORD used this book, "Improving Your Serve" by Chuck Swindoll in many ways to help me understand more of what it means to follow Jesus. That same Christmas, I gave Kimberly an album from the Christian singer Evie entitled "Unfailing Love". I thought that the record was spiritually inspiring, yet also not so subtle in its declaration. I digress, back to the book. 😊

In the chapter entitled, *A Case for Unselfishness*, Swindoll shares a poem from Walter Rees that convicted me as a 17-year-old and continues to do so today. Rees writes:

"I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 dollars worth of God please."

Jesus often confronts this spirit in us. It is a spirit that wants God to be close, but not too close. We want the LORD involved in our lives . . .
Involved enough to protect us from physical harm,
Involved enough to help us succeed in our work and relationships,
Involved enough to comfort us when we are hurting,
Involved enough to forgive us when we sin against Him.
Involved enough to secure a home for me in heaven . . .

BUT not so involved as to submit all of our hopes and dreams to Him . . .
Not so involved as to forfeit our own personal goals . . .
Not so involved as to lose our very self in Him.
Not so involved as to change our basic way of life.

We are willing to pay for God's involvement in our lives . . . factoring in inflation we might say today "I would like \$20 worth of God please."

But we want the Lord's involvement in our lives to be affordable . . . something that does not cost us to the point of stretching us. We want God's involvement without having to trust Him with everything.

Friends, how much of God do you want? Do you want whole life transformation? Do you want new birth? Do you want to live for eternal glory? Do you want to be made into the image of Jesus? If you want more than a paper sack full of God, Jesus helps us today in Mark 10:13-45.

Central Idea: God freely offers the Kingdom of Heaven to everyone. We obtain the gift of God's Kingdom through placing everything in Jesus' hands.

Jesus' message to us is not one of cold obligation. Jesus is not saying, "Give everything to God because He demands it from you." Jesus is saying, "If you knew how valuable God is, you would want more than a little of Him. If you knew how great God's kingdom is, you would joyfully give everything to obtain it."

Are we interested in receiving the Kingdom of God, then let us sit at Jesus' feet to learn how we might find it.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are completely. . .

Quality #1: Trusting in God. (vv. 13-15)

*And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.**" And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them." (Mark 10:13-16 [ESV](#))*

Mark describes an occasion where Jewish parents are bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed by Jesus. These parents know that Jesus has something eternally important that their children really need. So these parents take time out of their busy lives to gather up their children and bring them to Jesus.

These parents know that their children need help to get to Jesus. How will they receive spiritual gifts from Him unless they take them? **The children are too little** to march out on their own to find Jesus. **The children are too young** to know how to get to Jesus or WHY they need Him so desperately.

In Mark's Gospel, we find several stories where Jesus specifically interacts with children. In each case, Jesus accepts the invitation to do a miracle in the life of the child.

In Mark 5, a leader of the synagogue named Jairus who pleads with Jesus to come to his house to help his daughter who is dying.

In Mark 7, a Gentile mom from Syrophoenicia begging Jesus to rid her daughter of a demonic spirit.

In Mark 9, a dad brings his son to Jesus to cast out a demon in his son.

In each of these incidents, the children are brought to Jesus by their parents.

Each of these parents were very different from each other. One is a leader in the synagogue. One is a Gentile woman. The last is just a common man . . . one of the crowd.

But each parent has two essential characteristics in common:

- 1. Each one realizes that they are helpless to give their children what they need for life.**
- 2. Each one believes that Jesus is able and willing to give what their children need for life.**

These parents in Mark 10 are of the same mind! This is why they are bringing their children to Jesus.

Parents, let me ask you a question: are you bringing your children to Jesus? Do you recognize that you are not able to give your children all that they need for life? Do you believe that Jesus is able and willing give them what they need? **The application of this passage directly calls parents to bring their children to Jesus.**

How do I bring my children to Jesus?

- 1. Pray over them daily.**
- 2. Read the Bible to them daily. Let God's Word loose upon their souls!**
- 3. Teach them the meaning of the scriptures** so that they know the different between sound doctrine and false doctrine . . . between light and darkness. (A good catechism will help you if you do not know where to begin.). Take time to talk about practical and vital matters related sin and God's judgment; related to the One True and Living God who exists in three Persons; related to the cross and Jesus' substitutionary atonement, related to the need for faith and repentance, related to heaven and hell, related to

sanctification and about worship, related to the authority of the Bible. Children are not born with the knowledge of such truths. We must teach them.

4. **Help them to love Jesus' church** so that they benefit from God's new community. A child that loves the local church is a child that learns to love what Jesus loves.
5. **Set an example by being a devoted follower of Jesus.** Perhaps our example of faith is the most potent means of bringing children to Jesus.

Truth: Friends, the eternal happiness of our children rests upon their connection to Jesus. Let us do all in our power to bring them to Jesus.

In the story, the disciples think that children are too insignificant to take Jesus' time. But Mark tells us that Jesus becomes "indignant". That means He is angry to the point of showing it. Jesus turns to his disciples and says,

"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

We tell the children to behave like adults, but Jesus tells the adults to become like children! Jesus says that children are a powerful illustration of God's grace in our salvation.

In what ways are children a pattern for every person who enters God's kingdom?

1. Neediness. Children know that they cannot provide for themselves.
2. Humility. Children regularly ask for help and provision.
3. Faith. Children believe that their parents will give them what they need . . . free of charge!

If we combine these three words into one: TRUST.

Truth: The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are childlike in their humble trust in God.

This past week Kimberly and I spent four happy days with our three grandchildren who live in Colorado. When they woke up, we woke up. When they ate, we ate.

When they played, we played. We did everything together. So we had 24/7 view into their little natures. Over and over again my grandkids would say by words or gestures:

Papa, would you read to me?

Papa, would you carry me?

Papa, would you play with me?

Papa, would you come with me?

Papa, would you buckle me into my car seat?

Papa, would you pitch to me?

Papa, would you slide down the slide with me?

Papa, would you swing me on the swing?

Papa, would you help me?

Children are not too proud to ask. They ask boldly. They ask frequently. They ask persistently. They ask confidently.

Truth: Children are God's illustration teaching us that we must come to Him helpless. Children teach us to ask in faith, and that God freely gives kingdom life to all who ask.

One commentator writes, "We enter God's kingdom by faith, like little children: helpless, unable to save ourselves, totally dependent on the mercy and grace of God. We enjoy God's kingdom by faith, believing that the Father loves us and will care for our daily needs. What does a child do when he or she has a hurt or a problem? Take it to Father and Mother! What an example for us to follow in our relationship with our heavenly Father! Yes, God wants us to be childlike, but not childish!"

We must give up the notion that something in **us** makes us fit for heaven. We must give up the idea that our moral achievements in this world give us access to God. No one enters heaven on the merits of their own actions. No one earns a place at the Father's table.

The only possible way these children could ever be in heaven would be by sheer grace, right? Sheer grace, that's the only way anybody will ever be in heaven. And yet the children come to Jesus. They come in humility. They come in faith. And Jesus reaches out and holds them and blesses them.

O friends! Jesus teaches us that we belong to God's Kingdom when we grow smaller . . . when we become helpless . . . when we come to Jesus and ask Him for His blessing.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are completely. . .

Quality #1: Trusting in God. (vv. 13-15)

Quality #2: Detached from the world. Attached to Christ.

A young man approaches Jesus. He is a very important man in the community. He has been successful in business and he has earned a reputation for being honest. He is on the list of the most successful under 40 in the whole region. Yet something in his life is missing. He knows that there has to be more to life than what this world offers. He is concerned about his soul. So he comes to Jesus with a question about the kingdom of God.

““Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”” (Mark 10:17 [ESV](#))

Well, the question is all wrong from the beginning. The young man forgets that an inheritance is not based upon one's merit, but upon one's relationship with the Father. Imagine a young man coming to you and asking, “What must I do to become an equal heir with your children over your estate when you die?” What an odd question!! You would likely say, “There is nothing you CAN DO. You are not part of my family and the inheritance that I am passing down is for my children.”

None the less, Jesus answers:

And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”” (Mark 10:18-19 [ESV](#))

The young man has a **“scale theology”**. Most people do. He believes that God takes a scale on judgment day and if our good works outweighs our bad works then we will get into heaven. **So Jesus gives the man the scale.** The scale requires absolute obedience to God . . . the scale requires nothing on the “disobedience” side of the scale. Jesus lists the commandments.

Remarkably, the man measures himself on the scale and says:

“And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”” (Mark 10:20 [ESV](#))

What is this man’s problem? He is not like a child. He is not helpless. He is confident in his own righteousness. He is not aware of the depth of his own sin. He is not conscious that the love of this world that controls his heart.

Question: Are you confident in your own righteousness? Do you feel yourself to be succeeding on the scale of your good works outweighing your disobedience to God?

If so, you must become like a child or you will not enter the kingdom of God. You must feel the helplessness of your sinfulness and guilt before the LORD.

Truth: As long as we think that we are measuring up to God’s standards, Jesus cannot be our Savior. Our ability to profit from Jesus requires us to see the depth of our offense against the LORD.

Jesus is not angry or frustrated with this man. He is the classic illustration of where well-meaning, good-intentioned sinners are in their thoughts about God. This man is not indifferent to spiritual things. He is simply ignorant of the ways of God.

“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him,

How Jesus loves this man. Though ignorant of his own sin, Jesus heart is full of love toward him! He sees our inward struggles with self-rule and our push to produce righteousness and instead of turning away from us in disgust, He turns toward us in mercy!

and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”” (Mark 10:21 [ESV](#))

Jesus knows that this man’s heart is tied to this world. And that as long as this man holds on to the things of this world, he has not room for God’s grace.

Illustration: Imagine a child on the beach with hand full of sand. He loves the sand. You come with jewels and gold and offer to give him wealth beyond measure. But you tell him that there is no room in his hands for your gift. He must drop the sand in order to receive your wealth.

God's gift of salvation is readily given to anyone who comes to Jesus with empty hands. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In order to receive the treasure that Jesus freely gives, we must empty our hands and hearts of the things that are worthless.

Question: Are your hands too full of this world? Have you emptied your heart of the things that pass away so that you can receive the treasure from God that lasts forever?

"Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." (Mark 10:22 [ESV](#))

For all his desire to inherit eternal life, he loved his silver more than his own soul. Dante calls this The Great Refusal.

The missionary, Amy Carmichael, tells the story of her conversation with a Hindu queen in her palace. The queen shared her spiritual hunger. As the conversation develops, she presses Carmichael regarding what was necessary for salvation. Amy attempts to deflect her, saying she should wait.

But the queen is determined to hear it then and, as she insists, Amy tells us,

"I read her a little of what He says about it Himself. She knew quite enough to understand and take in the force of the forceful words. She would not consent to be led gently on. "No, I must know it now," she said; and as verse by verse we read to her, her face settled sorrowfully. "So far must I follow, so far?" she said, "I cannot follow so far." From Preaching the Word commentary by Kent Hughes.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked

at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:23-27 [ESV](#))

I think most people would rejoice if your employer came to you on Monday and said, "We are tripling your wages!" It would not be wrong to thank God for that bountiful provision. **Yet Jesus reminds us that an increase in money is actually a spiritual disadvantage.** Think of some reasons why wealth is a spiritual disadvantage:

-Wealth makes us feel independent and secure. Our riches make us feel safe from most of the anxious cares that God uses to move us to Him in faith.

-Wealth tempts us to consider that we are capable of providing for ourselves. We subtly take credit for the riches we have . . . thinking our talent, our wisdom, our hard work provides all we need. Forgetting that we have NOTHING apart from the Lord's good favor.

-Wealth hinders our humble reliance upon the LORD. We seldom pray with depth of need, "Give us this day our daily bread." Because we already have bread stored for years and years to come.

-Wealth tempts us to love the things of this world. The temporary joys of shiny things directs our hearts away from the infinite value of God.

-Wealth opens the door to many temptations that we otherwise would not experience.

Wealth may be good for our bodies, but it is not good for our soul!

All of these disadvantages and more hammer away at our faith. Jesus is blunt with His warning: *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven."*

And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:23-27 [ESV](#))

Question: Has God performed the impossible in your soul? Has He shown you of surpassing value of Jesus the Messiah? Has He convinced you that if you have Jesus, you are rich beyond compare and that if you do not have Jesus, then you are infinitely poor?

Truth: No one who forfeits this world to gain Jesus loses. All who place the things of this world behind us to follow Jesus will gain infinitely more than we can imagine.

*Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, **for my sake and for the gospel**, who will not receive a hundredfold **now in this time**, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, **and in the age to come** eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*
(Mark 10:28-31 [ESV](#))

Friends, consider this promise and be encouraged! We are not promised an easy road here. This present life is full of leaving . . . leaving house, brothers, sisters, mom, dad, children, lands. But Jesus promises that **NOW IN THIS TIME and IN THE AGE TO COME** . . . those who follow Him will experience the joys of Jesus' care and provision and love and blessing. Yes, there is sorrow and suffering in following Jesus. **Jesus does not hide that truth from us!** But the promise . . . look at the promise! Know that the Lord will not abandon us in our losses, but rather Jesus meets us in them with His provision and love. Sorrow may last for a night but there is eternal joy in the morning!

Truth: Jesus is not asking us to make an empty sacrifice for Him. Jesus is calling us to make a wise decision to receive the greater treasure that He offers rather than hold on to the treasure of this present world.

Is it worth it to detach ourselves from the kingdom of this world in order to gain the kingdom of heaven now in this time and forever in the age to come?

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are completely. . .

Quality #1: Trusting in God. (vv. 13-15)

Quality #2: Detached from the world. Attached to Christ.

Quality #3: Centered on Jesus' death.

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him

to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”” (Mark 10:32-34 [ESV](#))

This is the third time that Jesus brings up His death and resurrection. While the Kingdom of God is received as a gift from Jesus . . . received by faith alone apart from our works. The gift of the Kingdom cost Jesus everything.

Jesus tells His disciples of the cost that He endures for their sake for three reasons:

Reason #1: Jesus wants us to know the depth of His love for us.

Reason #2: Jesus wants us to know the weight of our sin.

Reason #3: Jesus wants us to keep His cross always in view.

Truth: We grow in kingdom life when we know His love, know our own sinfulness and fix our eyes upon Jesus’ cross.

If a person is to belong to the Kingdom of God, he/she must look to the cross of Jesus as the means of entrance.

The cross is the place where our sins are fully punished.

The cross is the place where our soul is washed perfectly clean.

The cross is the place where Jesus’ love is felt and received.

The cross is the place where our pride is undone.

The cross is the place where we lose ourselves and find God.

The cross is the place where the devil is defeated.

The cross is the place where death loses its forever sting.

The cross is the place where resurrection power is unleashed.

The cross is the place where eternal life is secured.

The cross is the place where sinners are made sons and daughters of God.

Let us gaze upon the cross of Jesus and not avert our eyes from it. Let us keep the cross ever in view. Illustration: RITCH. Cross-centered life.

Jesus wants us to know that His life was not taken from Him. He could have avoided Jerusalem and avoided death. But He went to Jerusalem IN ORDER THAT He would be delivered over to the religious leaders, IN ORDER THAT He would be condemned as a criminal, IN ORDER THAT He would be mocked, spit upon and flogged, IN ORDER THAT He would be killed on the cross, IN ORDER THAT He would rise the third day.

Jesus knew that the only way that He could offer forgiveness is by PAYING FOR OUR SINS. He willingly receives the punishment our sins deserve. He lovingly becomes a curse in our place. He graciously sheds His blood to make atonement and to reconcile us to God. Jesus KNEW ALL THAT before He came to earth . . . before He is born of a virgin.

Friends, Jesus died for you! If you follow Jesus, it is such a small thing to live for Him.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14 [NIV](#))

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Quality #4: Given to serving.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.

All the teaching about the kingdom of God made the disciples think about the kingdom of God. This is good. Yet there is a problem. They are still thinking of life in the Kingdom as one of competition and personal glory. They are also forgetting that Kingdom life often requires much tribulation on earth. **They are using earthly wisdom to answer a heavenly question.**

Before we criticize the disciples too severely, let us know that their problem is the result of spiritual growth. They have grown in faith to the point of valuing the Kingdom of God more than the Kingdom of this world.

Many professed Christians do not relate to this dispute, not because we have more faith than the disciples, but because we have less faith than the disciples. A person tied to this world is not tempted to desire to sit at Jesus' right hand in His glory. This problem is only experienced by those who THINK A LOT about God's eternal kingdom and who are convinced that Jesus will receive eternal glory.

But the disciples have it wrong and Jesus corrects their perception.

*And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. **But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:35-45 [ESV](#))

Jesus serves us. He is our servant. It must be so. Because we have needs that we cannot meet for ourselves. If the King is the one who dons a towel and washes the disciples' feet, how much more will we?

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 2:3-5 [ESV](#))

The Kingdom of Heaven belong to those who are completely given to serving one another. The people of the world look at servants and kind of feel bad for them. "Poor servants, I guess that they did not make it big enough in life to be the ones who are served by others."

Jesus turns this upside down . . . Jesus looks at those who DO NOT serve and feels bad that they are the ones missing out. Jesus points to servants as the ones who are exalted forever and ever.

Truth: Jesus' call to servanthood is NOT a call of personal responsibility. It is a call to personal gain!!

What does this serving heart look like at home or in the church family?

--Serving means that we see the needs of others.

--Serving means that we act to care for the needs of others.

- Serving means that we do not expect reward from people.
- Serving means that we are content if only God notices.
- Serving means that we rejoice to be able to give to others.
- Serving means that we are not controlled by the demands of others
- Serving means that we do not complain when the service we receive is below our standards.
- Serving means that we do not push others to do more.
- Serving means that we lower our expectations on what others should do for us.
- Serving means that we forgive when others are selfish.
- Serving means that we do not evaluate the worthiness of the people we serve.
- Serving means that we are led by God's Spirit and not by others expectations.
- Serving means that we think of ourselves less and less.
- Serving means that we think of Jesus more and more.

Friends, do you desire more than \$3 worth of God?

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CONCLUSION: RANSOM FOR MANY. The payment has been made. Are you free?

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