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Kingdom of God (Part 7)



Kingdom of God - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses entering the Kingdom of God and emphasizes that it is not an easy task. He highlights the need to prioritize the Kingdom and put aside earthly possessions and desires. Additionally, he mentions that obeying the Ten Commandments is not enough to enter the Kingdom, and it requires a mind set towards pleasing God and a born-again spirit. Finally, Gregg uses parables to illustrate the importance of being prepared for the coming of the Kingdom.

Transcript

We're going to talk tonight about entering the Kingdom of God. We've talked about many aspects of it, but we have not yet talked about how one gets there from here. If you are not in the Kingdom, you need to know how to get into the Kingdom.

And there's two aspects of this, of course, because the Kingdom has a present phase and it has a future phase, and we need to be concerned about entering the Kingdom in its present phase as well as entering the Kingdom in its future phase. Now, by the present phase, what I mean is taking part in the program that God is involved in right now, God's present activities in calling to himself subjects of his kingdom, or to change the metaphor to use a very popular Pauline metaphor, members of his body, which is the church, to become serviceable to him. Many times when we think of the Kingdom of God or even just what Christianity is about, we might think it's primarily about us.

It's primarily about us getting to heaven and not going to hell. Primarily about us getting all the good things that we crave and that God is, you know, the great dispenser of goods, including eternal life and joy and peace and all those good things. And we think especially in terms of after we die, having a better situation because we are Christians than we would have had were we not Christians.

But all this focus on the future phase of the kingdom can often eclipse and much to our detriment, the proper attention given to the present phase of the kingdom. And that present phase has a lot more to do with what God wants us to do. Now, when I say what God wants us to do, I don't want to give the impression in anything I say tonight that God

expects us to earn our salvation.

We do not earn our salvation, but the truth is there are things we are expected to do. And if we don't do them, we are negligent. There is a price to pay.

There is a judgment. There is a reckoning. And God calls us into a kingdom that has already been established, has been around for 2000 years, approximately since Jesus started it up and has been growing like a originally a mustard seed, growing into a great tree to fill the whole earth or like leaven, as it was originally in a lump of dough, that's grown into a great influence throughout the whole lump of human society.

We have come in at a stage that is relatively late. And yet we have come into a project that God has been working on continually for 2000 years and will continue to work on until he draws the curtain. And it's the end of the world and Jesus comes back.

So we need to enter into this project because that's what God has in mind. Those who will enter into the kingdom in its future phase must be participants in its present phase. And the Bible clearly teaches this.

And we're going to look about how how do we enter into the present phase of the kingdom? And also we're going to look at what it means to enter into the future phase. And by the future phase, I'm talking about, as some passages speak of inheriting the kingdom of God. Now, what we inherit is still ahead of us.

We are in the kingdom of God. We've been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear son, according to Colossians 1:13. If we are truly Christians, we have come in to the present phase.

But the future phase is that which we look forward to inheriting. And inheriting the kingdom speaks of the the eternal kingdom of Christ, where we will reign with him in the paradise of God forever and ever. That's the future aspect of the kingdom.

Sounds good. Actually, the present phase sounds good, too, but it's not that easy. And that's what the Bible clearly teaches.

If you thought that by signing up to be a Christian, if assuming you did at some point decide to be a Christian in your past, you've already considered yourself a Christian. If you thought you were signing up for the easy or the scenic route to heaven, this is, I'm afraid, a truncated view of what the Bible teaches on it. There certainly are consolations in Christ.

There certainly is righteousness and peace and joy, things that are worth far more than anything you'll ever give up to become a Christian. But that doesn't mean that's all there is. There's also a cost.

There's also responsibility. There's also expectations. And so we'll be looking at what does it mean? How does one enter the present phase? And of course, how will one enter the future phase of the kingdom? Before I answer that question, we need to ask, how important is it that we enter it at all? Now, I'm sure you think it's important because it is.

But do you know how important how important does God think it is? How important does Jesus tell us that it is in Luke 13, 23 through 27? Because then one said to him, Lord, are there few who are saved? Now, that's an interesting question. He doesn't answer it directly. But his answer is relevant to the question.

They said, are there few who are saved? And he said to them, strive to enter through the narrow gate. For many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Now, before we go any further, is that the experience you've had in becoming a Christian? Did you find that you had to strive to enter? Did you did you go through some narrow gate that many who would try to get through would not make it through? If not, then maybe maybe there's something about this entrance in the kingdom that has not been presented to us very thoroughly.

When we're evangelized, perhaps. So he says, many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able when once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door. And you begin to stand outside and knock on the door saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

And he will answer and say, I do not know you, where you're from. Now, interestingly enough, the people who are trying to get in are calling him Lord. And he says, I don't know where you're from.

You're not from here. This isn't your home. You belong elsewhere.

So he says, many years ago, probably 30 years ago, I was reading through Luke and I came across this verse and it just struck me because I've been a Christian for I've been a Christian now for 40. Fifty years, I've been a Christian 50 years this year and I got saved for and I'm 54 this year. And I was evangelical Baptist raised, knowing the gospel, receiving the gospel, even preaching the gospel in school.

In junior high, I preached the gospel and I was there. You know, I mean, in the youth group of the Baptist church I was raised in, I was one of four out of about. Probably 70 or 80, I was one of four that really was probably a Christian.

The others were there because their parents were there, it appears, from the way they behaved in high school. But through high school, I was preaching the gospel. You know, I was serious.

But it was after that time that I came across this verse. She said, strive to enter into the narrow gate because many will try and will not be able. And I was thinking, well, the way the gospel was presented to me, there really wasn't there were no obstacles except

maybe my pride.

But my pride would keep me from wanting to. This is somebody who want to and can't. Because they haven't done what they're supposed to do.

Now, I'm assuming that he's talking here about entering the future phase after Jesus comes back and we go into eternal glory. I think it's that which many will try to get into and won't be able to. But why not? Well, whatever it is they didn't do, we better find out what it was they didn't do because we want to be among those that did.

And that may require that we put some effort, some attention to it. We need to strive. Strive is a word that is very strong.

This strive to enter has haunted me for 30 something years. And I'm glad it has. It has inspired me.

And I hope it will inspire you also. In Mark 9. Verses 43, 45 and 47. Jesus said the same kind of thing three times.

He said, if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better for you to enter into life maimed rather than having two hands to go to hell or get Hannah into the fire that shall never be quenched. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life lame rather than having two feet to be cast into Ghana, into the fire that shall never be quenched. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Now, notice the first two illustrations says enter into life. Third time he says enter into the kingdom of God, which clearly is, you know, synonymous. He's talking about entering the kingdom.

And he's indicating that it may be an extreme measure that you would have to take to enter the kingdom. Now, it's possible if you are raised in a Christian environment, you're more or less conditioned toward Christianity, that it won't be so traumatic. It won't require as much.

But it's also possible that if you are raised in a Christian environment, you're taking for granted that you're a Christian. And in fact, there are hands and feet and eyes that need to be plucked out. Now, I hope you understand.

Of course, he's not talking about literally maiming yourself. At least he's not recommending it because he said, if your eye, if your hand, if your foot would cause you to sin, you should be rid of it. If that's what would keep you from entering the kingdom.

But your eye doesn't cause you to sin. Your foot and your hand don't cause you to sin.

Eyes and feet and hands may be instruments of sin, but what caused you to send Jesus taught elsewhere is your heart out of the heart.

Come adulteries and fornications and blasphemies and idolatries and so forth. You said it's out of the heart. So Jesus is not saying you should really cut off your hand and he's certainly not saying you should cut out your heart.

He is saying that if there is anything even as valuable to you as your eyes or your hands or your feet. That would prevent you from entering the kingdom. Then you need to be ruthless because parting with that is a much better bargain than parting with eternal life and parting with the kingdom.

All right, that's what Jesus clearly is saying. What could it be then if he's not turning eyes and hands and well, how about certain ambitions? Certain goals you've always had for your life that if you followed God, you'd probably have to sacrifice those. Maybe certain relationships that you really want those relationships, but you know that if you follow God, he's calling you away from those relations.

Maybe certain possessions. Who knows? Could be anything. Anything that keeps you a hobby.

A sport that keep that draws you from God. It'd be painful beyond measure for you to cut it off and have done with it. She said, don't worry about the pain.

It's worth it. Better for you. It's better to enter into life to the kingdom, maimed or lame or blind.

Or without whatever that thing is. Then to keep it, keep that for yourself and end up in Gahana. Pretty important.

Jesus has given us the impression it's kind of essential. It's the top priority. Remember, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these things will be added to you.

We don't have that here, but of course, that's Matthew 633. How about this one? Matthew 16, 24 through 26. Then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Now, what does it mean to deny yourself? Does it mean you've got to drive an older car and deny yourself a comfortable car? Does it mean you've got to live in a shack and deny yourself a comfortable home? Well, no.

Self-denial in that sense is different than what he has in mind. To deny self doesn't mean to deny yourself some good thing. You know, something that you would like to have and you have to say no about it.

Now, there are times when, of course, that would be the case, but that's not what to deny yourself means. What it means is to say no to you. Remember, there was a time that Jesus in Luke chapter 9 encountered a man.

He said, I will follow you wherever I go, but let me first go and say goodbye to those in my household. Another said, let me first go bury my father. Let me first? No, can't let you do that.

Unless you forsake all that you have in your own life also, he said in Luke 14. You can't be my disciple. You've got to have you last.

Yes, last. If you were fortunate like I was to grow up in Sunday school, you learn that where joy is. What is joy spelled? J-O-Y, which stands for Jesus, others and you, your last.

That's how to have joy. Jesus has got to be first. Others are second and you are way in the end.

And that's where joy is. I'm not saying that that acrostic proves the theology, but it is certainly biblically true. And I would say living that way has confirmed beyond any question to me that that is joy.

That's where joy is found. Jesus is first. Others next.

And I'm last. Deny myself. Put myself last.

Say no to myself. And yes to Jesus and to the needs of others. What does it mean to take up a cross? Well, it might mean any number of things.

But remember, the disciples at this point didn't even understand that Jesus was going to die on a cross yet. This was not known to them. So how were they supposed to understand what it means to take up a cross? It didn't mean wear a little cross around your neck.

And now I'm bearing my cross around my neck with a chain. It's silver. That's not what it means to bear a cross.

What does it mean to bear a cross? Well, in Israel, they knew because the Romans crucified people on a regular basis. And the Romans would put the cross beam on his shoulder and he was to bear it to the place of execution. Bear his own cross.

Carry it to the place of execution. But you know what? What if he refused? What are they going to do to him? Kill him? A man didn't have to bear his cross. They could make it

miserable for him if he didn't.

But hey, it's already miserable. It's going to get worse. No matter what he does.

What if the guy just said, I'm sorry, if you want to crucify me, you're going to have to carry me. Because I'm not going on my own strength. Well, that man is asking for more abuse, of course.

But the truth of the matter is he can stand for his rights or whatever if he wants to. He won't gain them, but he can resist. A man carrying his cross, though, was saying, I give up.

I'm going to die. I deserve to die. Or if I don't deserve to die, at least I'm accepting my fate.

I'm accepting the fact that my rights have been canceled. And I'm accepting death. I'm not fighting it.

I'm carrying my cross. And Jesus said, you have to be there. You have to be saying, OK, my rights, they're canceled.

I'm a condemned person in the flesh. My flesh has been condemned. That's why I'm a Christian.

I've been born again into a new life that is not condemned. But the flesh life that I live is still under condemnation. And I have no right to claim any of my rights.

I'm willing to be in the role of a condemned person in terms of my desires, my flesh and bear a cross. But then Jesus, of course, says, what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? Obviously, the rhetorical question implies it's not any gain at all. It's a real bad bargain.

If you gain the whole world, some of you people might know people or might be people who own millions of dollars. And there's no sin in earning millions of dollars. God bless you.

But I've always wondered, what does a person with a few million dollars, what are they going to do with it? I mean, what's it going to do for them? I don't make, you know, I don't make very much by American standards. I won't tell you what I make, but it's it's pretty basically low income. But I have everything I could want.

If you added a million dollars, I don't I don't have anything I need. I don't have anything it could do for me. I could give it.

That'd be fun. It's always fun to give, of course. But there's nothing a million dollars could do for me because a much smaller amount does everything for me that I want

done for me.

I don't have anything I want. And so if you gave me a billion dollars, it wouldn't change my lifestyle in any way that I can figure out. Every time my my income increases, I just increase the percentage of the amount I give.

Because I don't need anything more than what I have. And I wonder, these people have billions of dollars. How do they expect to enjoy it? How do they expect to spend it? What's it going to do for them? I imagine it just doesn't for their ego, because it really you can't spend it.

I mean, you can buy houses all over the world with if you can't live in all of them. You can buy a Learjet if you want to, but you can't spend all your time in the Learjet. Might get placed a little faster than waiting in the airports that way.

But the fact is the man who's got a billion dollars or if he had all the money in the whole world, he hasn't got anything that's of particular value in the long run. It's just something he wants for irrational reasons. Now, if you're way in debt and you need to pay off your house and you've got kids to raise, you say, I wish I had more money.

That's not irrational. But if you just want to gain the world, what are you going to do with that? But suppose you could get it all. But you lost your soul in the process.

What did you gain? You've gained nothing of value and you've lost that which is of eternal value. Obviously, entering the kingdom of God is more valuable than anything else you could pursue. And anything you need to forsake in order to get in there, do it.

Here's a quote that comes from an atheist. Actually, it was reading this quote by this atheist that inspired C.T. Studd. He went as a missionary to Africa.

He was a wealthy, famous sports star in England. He gave it all up and went as a missionary because he read this quote by an atheist. I don't know who the atheist was, but the atheist said, If I firmly believed, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, then religion would mean to me everything.

I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labor in its cause alone.

I would take thought for the morrow of eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences would never stay my hand or seal my lips.

Earth, its joys and its griefs would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to

look upon eternity alone and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Now, when I read that, I get two thoughts.

First of all, this atheist probably flatters himself. He gives himself a lot of credit for being consistent. But the other thing I think of is that what he's describing would be consistent.

If you believe what Christians claim to believe, such sacrifices and such behavior would be consistent with that belief. Whether that atheist would in fact live that way if he believed such things, we will probably never know. But I'm skeptical.

A very small number of Christians who live that way, and yet all of them, if they were atheists, might say, Well, if I believed in Christianity, I'd do all this, you know. Well, we do believe in Christianity. At least we say we do.

And if we do, this would be a consistent mindset to have, to say, It doesn't matter if I gain the world or lose the world. It doesn't make any difference. That I don't lose my soul is what matters.

That I gain eternal life and the kingdom of God. Well, there are people who will not enter the kingdom of God, no matter how much they strive at the end. 1 Corinthians 6, verses 9 through 10.

Paul says, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Really? Like what? Well, do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. Well, you might say, Well, that leaves me out, because I fit two or three of the things on that list.

Well, hopefully, you would have to say, used to. And that's what Paul said about his readers. We don't have the I didn't take the quote that far.

But the very next verse in 1 Corinthians says, And such were some of you. But you are washed. He goes on, says you've been saved, you've been cleansed.

You're not that you're not these things anymore, because if you were, you wouldn't get into the kingdom of God. Those who are covetous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Covetous.

What's that mean? That means you want stuff that you don't have. You covet. Drunkards, revilers, people who are sharp tongued and harsh with people verbally.

If you're a real Christian, this is what you used to be, not what you are now. The Bible says we are not these things anymore. Paul said such were some of you, but you're not

those things anymore.

You don't commit homosexual acts. You don't commit adultery. You don't fornicate.

You don't get drunk. Now, you might say, but I know some Christians who do some of those things. Well, the next question is, do they repent? Because Christians do fall.

If you have a background in drunkenness, you might fall a few times after you've gotten saved, too. Maybe quite a few times. The question is not, do you ever stumble? The question is, what do you do when you found that you're on the ground, stumbled? If you're a true Christian, if your heart is Christ, you'll repent.

You'll say, God, forgive me, and you'll get up and try to not do that anymore. If you fall again, you'll do the same thing again. Repent and so forth.

A true Christian will always repent. It may be that you find covetousness is a thing you've wrestled with for years. But if you recognize it as a sense of God, forgive me, help me out of this, then you are not in your heart a covetous person.

You're struggling against temptations to covetousness. And sometimes might even fall to those temptations. But you're not a drunkard if you're fighting against drunkenness.

You're not a fornicator if you're striving to be sexually pure. That's very important to know. A person who is not going to inherit the kingdom of God is somebody who's not striving to stop being any of these things.

This is just who they are. They're a fornicator. They're an adulterer.

And you will indeed find people in the church who are doing these things and not repenting. And they are not going into the kingdom of God. I don't care how long they've been in the church.

I don't care how high their name stands on the tithing list or whatever. They're not going to enter if they are unrepentant fornicators, unrepentant drunkards. I know churches have drunkards on their board of deacons.

God has standards here. And a person who thinks he can have all this and heaven, too, is fooling himself. And Paul wants that to be very clear.

And if it's not clear enough there, he says it again. Galatians 5, 19 through 21. Now, the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousy, outbursts of wrath.

Selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like. Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now, it's clear that he's not

saying you can still practice them, but now that you're a Christian, you know, the grace kind of redefines you as belonging to the kingdom of God, even though you're practicing these things.

No. If you're practicing them, you're not going in. Now, if you fall and repent, then you're not practicing these things.

You're practicing repenting. There's a big difference between walking in sin and stumbling into sin. Walking is what you do on purpose and consistently with some defects.

Perhaps stumbling is what you do on occasion, but never on purpose. James said in James chapter three or I think it was, he says, in many things we all stumble. Yeah, we stumble.

And when we stumble, it might look like some of those things there when it happens. But the question is, are you stumbling inadvertently into this kind of behavior occasionally? And as anyone who stumbles, they get back up again and they are embarrassed and they think, I don't want to do that again. I better watch for that crack in the sidewalk next time I go by here so I don't do that again.

A person doesn't want to stumble. If this is like stumbling, something you don't want to do, then it's not describing you're practicing it. Practicing it is where that's what you do as a practice.

Ephesians 5, 5, as if Paul thought we didn't get it those two times in First Corinthians or Galatians, he says, For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. A verse that makes it clear that the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God are synonymous with Paul, but also confirms what we've been seeing here. So it's very important to know the kingdom of God, but there's some people are not going to get in there.

And he didn't say unless they've been baptized. He didn't say unless they've made a confession of faith. He said those who practice these things are not getting in.

Christianity is supposed to change your practices, supposed to change the way you live. It won't change it a hundred percent because you also got a flesh you're wrestling with and Paul said the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And so you don't always do what you want to do.

The question is, what do you want to do? What is it you want to do? Do you want to live a holy life? Do you really want to? If so, then when you fall, you will get on your face and say, God, I didn't want to do that. I want to live a holy life. And you'll mean it.

And you won't do it just when you get caught by your friends. You won't do it just when

you're confronted by the pastor. You'll do it as soon as you know you've sinned.

You'll be on your face saying, God, that you know, that's not what I want to do. You see, you can't always do what you want because there's a flesh listening into the spirit. The two are contrary to each other.

You will stumble sometimes. The question is, what do you do then? Just stay down there living that way. No, you get up in your pen.

Otherwise, you practice those things that will keep you from inheriting the kingdom of God, according to Paul. Now, let's talk about who will find it difficult to enter in. We just talked about who won't get in at all.

There are some who will find it difficult to get in. The deck is stacked against them. Matthew 19, 23 through 24.

Jesus said to his disciples, Assuredly, I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again, I say to you, 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. Now, you might think I'm laying on pretty thick about money.

I didn't make this up. I don't write Bibles. I only teach the Bible.

And so I have an obligation to say what's there, even if other preachers don't want to mention it because it's often not popular in certain crowds. Jesus indicated if you are rich, you're going to have trouble getting in the kingdom. He didn't say you won't get in.

You're going to have trouble. Now, you might say, well, if it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, then for sure, again, doesn't that mean you won't get in? Camels do not go through eyes of needles. And the disciples actually asked him about that.

Well, who can get in there, Lord? And he said, well, with man, it's impossible. But with God, all things are possible. God can overcome even this, even this.

But in saying that, it doesn't mean we should just say, oh, well, then I don't have to worry about this. Right. Well, if I don't have to worry about this, why did he say it? Why do you say it twice? He obviously wanted you to know about this.

Actually, in Luke chapter six and verse 20, Jesus said, Blessed are you poor. Yours is the kingdom of God. And he said, Woe unto you rich, for you have your consolation.

I won't go into all the things Jesus said about rich people. But let's let's just put this way. He didn't say encouraging things about rich people in his teaching.

Not anywhere. But he did. The one encouraging thing he said was, although it's difficult

with God, all things are possible.

I would call myself a rich person, but you would call me a poor person if you saw my lifestyle. But the point is, I'm rich compared to people in India and in many parts of the world. And most of you are probably richer still.

And the more we have, the more obstacles we have. It's not a sin to have money. But it can be an obstacle.

And we better see it that way instead of seeing it as something to court and to desire. As something to beware of. Jesus said in Luke chapter 12, Beware of covetousness for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses.

Beware of that. It's a scary thing. To miss out on the kingdom of God.

Now, why would it be that it'd be hard for a rich man to enter? Apparently, there's something about the kingdom of God that requires other pursuits than what a rich man generally pursues. And Jesus said elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, where your treasure is, what? Your heart's going to be there. Well, you're not going to get into the kingdom of God if your heart's not there.

So Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth. Where moth and rust can corrupt and thieves break through and steal. But lay up treasures for yourself in heaven.

How do you do that? Well, he made it very clear to the rich young ruler. Sell what you have, give to the poor and you'll treasure in heaven. Now, again, I'm not saying that everyone needs to sell everything they have.

I haven't. I haven't sold everything I have. But if God called you to you, you need to have such a heart as if he did, it wouldn't be traumatic to you because you've already signed them over in your heart.

You've signed yourself and all that you are and all that you have over him. If you have riches, your only problem now is to say, what does God want these riches to do? If these are God's riches, not mine. Now, does he want me to have a big house? Very possibly.

There are people who should have big houses. I don't judge another man's servant. He'll answer to God for what he does.

But I'm saying that if you have a big house, I have a little house. Maybe it's because you should have a big house and I don't need one. I don't judge anybody for their lifestyle.

It's not my problem. It's your problem if you've got the money, not mine. You're the one with the problem.

But it doesn't mean you're not going to be saved. It just means you've got a burden.

You've got a burden and you better recognize it as a burden and say, God, what is it I'm supposed to do with all this stuff you gave me? One of the Puritan writers, William Law, said, if your obligation was to walk across the Grand Canyon on a tightrope, you might spare yourself the luxury of doing it in golden slippers.

There's no sin in wearing golden slippers. You're going to walk tightrope. It's just not real wise.

It's not conducive to success. And Jesus indicated that if you got a lot of money, there's no sin in that. But it's not real conducive to keeping your heart on the values of heaven, because where your treasure is, your heart's going to be there.

Jesus didn't say maybe he said it. So he said also to the Pharisees in Matthew 21, 31, Jesus said to them, assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God. Before you.

So here's someone else who can have a serious problem, not the tax collectors and the harlots, the Pharisees, the religious people. Now, why would that be? A harlot's not going to get into the kingdom of God. No, not as long as she's a harlot.

Fornicators won't enter. But a harlot or a tax collector generally isn't very sanctimonious, usually isn't very self-righteous. Usually it doesn't have a lot of self-confidence in terms of how they stand with God.

In fact, they usually feel pretty guilty. They usually feel pretty small. They usually feel kind of ashamed around polite society.

These people who can feel shame about their sins are much more winnable than people who think they're pretty cool, who think that they're clean, who think they got nothing wrong with them. So anyone who finds it easy to live a moral life is going to have that as an obstacle to become concerned about. Not that you have to find it hard.

It's just you have to realize that if morality comes easy for you, what will be hard for you to do is to be nonjudgmental toward the people that Jesus hung out with. The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a friend of sinners because of the company he kept. He said, well, they're going to get into the kingdom before you are.

You know why? Because they're not calling me a friend of sinners and avoiding me like you are. They know they are sinners. Remember what Jesus said about the woman, the sinful woman who wept and washed his feet and wiping with her hair? He said her sins are many.

Therefore, she loved much because he that is forgiven, which loves much. If you think you're pretty clean and you're not aware of having been forgiven much of anything, even, you know, you, your theology says you had to be forgiven. So you said the words,

Lord, come into my heart, forgive my sins and so forth.

You went, jumped over the hoop, stepped over the line that they drew for you to step over. But if you never really sense that you are a sinner. Then it's possible that you don't really have a deep and thoroughgoing awareness of your need for God.

Like a tax collector or a harlot might. And if you don't, I'm not saying you should go out there and be a tax collector or harlot for a while and then come back. It just means just like if you have riches, if you have a lot of social.

Respectability. Moral reputation. Those are the kinds of things that can prevent people from really doing the thing that has to be done.

To come to Jesus doesn't stop everybody, thankfully, but that has those problems, but it is difficult, Jesus said. Now, what does it take to enter the kingdom? Well, let's talk about entering the kingdom in its present phase right now. Suppose somebody is not a Christian, not in the kingdom and they want to come in.

What must they do? If you're like me, raised in a church like I was raised in and we had a chalkboard here, I could say, well, let's have each of you tell me. What would you tell somebody if they said, how, what must I do to be saved? And we'll write it down on the chalkboard. I wonder how many people would say the same things the Bible says.

I really think that in many respects, the things the Bible says about this are not the things that are on our list. And in many cases, the things that are on our list aren't even mentioned in the Bible, like accept Jesus into your heart. There's nothing in the Bible that says anything about accepting Jesus into your heart.

It's not a biblical expression. And what does it mean? What does it mean to accept Jesus in your heart? It's possible that we use that expression for a reality that is called by some other name in Scripture. But I'm not sure what that reality is.

When you tell a little child, ask Jesus in your heart or someone who's an adult but doesn't have any more spiritual understanding, that little child, ask Jesus in your heart. What do you think? A little tiny Jesus comes and lives inside of their heart. Some children think of it that way.

They do. And those who are mature people who know, well, it can't mean that. Well, what does it mean? A great big Jesus comes and lives inside my heart.

Where does it talk about this in the Bible? You have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God. You have to be born into the kingdom. Starting over with a new citizenship in a new land, in a new life, as a new birth is what it requires for every person to be in.

Matthew 18, 3 says, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted, changed and become as little children. Well, you get born again, then your child again, see. You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven, or as he put it in a more familiar passage, perhaps, John 3, verses 3 through 6. Jesus answered, said to Nicodemus, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Now, there's the in the present phase, the kingdom is a spiritual thing.

And to be a citizen of a spiritual thing, you have to have a spiritual birth. You have to be born spiritually into that spiritual realm, because otherwise you've just been born of the flesh. You've just been born of water.

You've just had a natural birth. You need an additional birth to that. You need to be born of the spirit to be in the kingdom.

All right. Well, what do you have to do to do that? Well, God's the one who birthed you, but he doesn't birth everybody. There are certain things that are we're supposed to do and might as well find out what they are.

Mark 1, 14 through 15 says about Jesus. Now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying the time is fulfilled in the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

Now, there's two parts to Jesus gospel presentation, an announcement and an ultimatum. Right. The announcement is the time is fulfilled in the kingdom is at hand.

That's an announcement. That's the information. That's the good news.

That's news. The other part is what you're supposed to do about that. You're supposed to repent and believe the gospel.

So repentance and faith have got to be on our list here. In Acts 17, verse 30, it says, God, in times of ignorance, winked at people's disobedience. But now he commands all men everywhere to repent.

This is not an invitation. This is an ultimatum. He commands everyone to repent.

He's the king. They are in rebellion against their king. They stand to lose everything if they don't repent.

And he says, therefore, I'm commanding you, repent. You've got to do it. It's not an option.

What does it mean to repent? Some people think repent means that you stop sinning. If you think that repent means stop sinning, you're going to be afraid that you're not a repentant because you haven't stopped sinning. Or you will pretend like what you're doing now isn't still sin.

People do that sometimes, too. The truth of the matter is we need to be honest. Even those of us who have repented still sometimes sin.

But what does repentance do then? The word repent, metanoia in the Greek means to change your mind. Before you were a Christian, you saw your sins, but you weren't alarmed by them. You weren't alarmed by your sins.

Everybody around you was sinning. Your sins didn't seem to you particularly heinous. You might have felt guilt about some of the sins you did, but you looked around and said, well, nobody's perfect, you know.

And besides that person I did that mean thing to, they had it coming. They aggravated me. I mean, we always are able to rationalize, excuse our sins when we're not Christians and say, well, you know, I got some sins, but hey, what I do isn't worth hell.

It's not as bad as what those people over there are doing. That's what you think before you're a Christian. When you become a Christian, you repent, you change your mind about sin.

And you know what it looks like then? You say, my sins are heinous. My sins are intolerable. My sins are worthy of hell.

My sins, I can't even say they're not the worst sins in the world. Paul himself after repentance said, I'm the chief of sinners. And he probably really wasn't.

But in his own heart he was. Because when a person is repentant, he says, there's nothing excusable about any of my sins. I am a rebel against the Holy God.

And sin is an intolerable thing. And I change my mind permanently when I repent and say, I will never again approve of sinning. I might fall into sin through weakness, but if I do, I'll never approve it.

I'm going to repent of it. And I'm going to try what I can to never do that again. And if I do it again and again and again, I'll repent every single time because my mind is set against my sin and in favor of God.

You see, before I was a Christian, my mind was set toward pleasing me. That's the mindset of a non-Christian. When I became a Christian, I had to repent and turn around, change my mind.

And now I'm set for pleasing God. And therefore, before I was a Christian, the things that

irritated me were the things that didn't please me. Now that I'm a Christian, the things that irritate me are the things that don't please God.

I don't even consider it necessary for anything to please me. Who am I that anyone should please me? Oh, no, we've got to be careful about that. That's low self-esteem.

Yeah, well, you bet it is. You know, I had someone say, well, what should I do if I have low self-esteem? What should I do about it? I say, thank God for it, because too few people do. Jesus said, bless are the poor in spirit, the beggars in spirit, those who have the lowest view of themselves because they're in touch with reality.

There's also is the kingdom of heaven, he said. I don't think I'm worse than anyone else. So if we're talking about self-esteem, I don't think I'm worse than you necessarily.

So I don't feel bad around you. I don't feel inferior. I don't measure myself against you because you're not the person I can be measured against when I go to heaven.

On the day of judgment, God said, Steve, I think you did better than 30 percent, but worse than 70 percent. That's not going to even come into picture. The fact is, I'll be judged by the standard of Jesus Christ.

How did I do? Not well enough. Not well enough. So what do I do? I'm grieved, not by things that displease me.

When I repent, my mindset is nothing is supposed to be pleasing to me necessarily. I mean, it's great if I have pleasure. I don't I'm not saying that I don't have any pleasure.

I love I love life. I'm as happy as anybody I know, I think I can't I can't imagine anyone being happier. But the truth of the matter is, I'm happy because I'm not expecting people to please me.

I'm not expecting the world to please me. I'm not expecting my conditions to please me. All I care about is, does this please God? And if something doesn't, that's what bothers me.

If something in me doesn't please God, I hate it. That's what repentance does. It changes your mind and it changes everything.

In your world. Okay. And believe the gospel.

I don't have time to go into this in detail. We're almost going to run out of time. I hope that as Christians have heard enough about faith to know that we're justified by faith.

We are. We're justified by faith. But what that means is, of course, that when you have repented, you no longer putting your trust in yourself.

You're no longer putting your trust. That's faith is trust. No longer putting your trust in other people.

You're not putting your trust in your money or your connections or your reputation or your good health. You're not putting trust in that. You put all your trust in Jesus Christ.

You don't figure anything is going to get you into heaven except Jesus. Nothing's going to get you anything. With God, not can't trust in your works.

You can't trust in your goodness. You can't trust in your Christian family background. You only one thing you can trust in.

Only one thing is going to get you through the gate, and that's Jesus. And so you repent of your former attitude. And as a result, that repentance, you believe now repentance of faith are mentioned together in three places in the Bible.

In all three places, repentance mentioned first. And that's because faith is a result of repenting. It happens at the moment you repent.

I used to trust in me. I repent. Now I trust in Jesus.

That's what repentance brings about. I have to have these. I have to repent and believe or else I have not made a motion.

Haven't done the basic things you said you have to do to inherit the kingdom of God. Repent and believe the gospel. Well, there's also something else.

Jesus said in Matthew 28, 18 through 19. He came and spoke to him, saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and Holy Spirit, baptizing them.

Baptism means that when you go into the water, you're changing loyalties. You're changing citizenships. Paul gives the example of the Hebrews coming out of Egypt.

They'd been part of the Egyptian society for 400 years. They were going to change. They're going to become the kingdom of God.

Now they're going to come out to Mount Sinai. God can make a covenant. They're going to be God's kingdom in the Israel phase of the kingdom.

And Paul talks about that transition they made when they passed through the Red Sea, says in 1st Corinthians 10, 1 and 2. Moreover, brother, and I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud and passed through the sea. All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. He saw their passing through the sea as a picture of baptism, like our baptism.

Why? Because we were part of Egyptian society, too. But we've come out of that and now we're citizens of a new kingdom. And there's a transition which is marked by water baptism.

They pass through the water. So all early Christians pass through the water. Now, baptism is not considered to be all that important to modern Christians in many cases.

And this is a shame because the Bible makes it basically a command. If someone says to me, can you be saved without being baptized? I'm going to say, well, first of all, why wouldn't you be baptized if you're saved? If you're saved, that means you become a disciple of Jesus. A disciple does what he says.

He said to be baptized. Why in the world would you describe yourself as a disciple if you don't get baptized when he told you to? Why would you say, Lord, Lord, and not do the things he says? To me, it's it's a it just doesn't connect. Maybe some people have not heard that they're supposed to be baptized.

I certainly didn't understand that when I was a little kid. I didn't get baptized. I was about 12.

But and when I did, I still didn't understand what was going on that much. And I could appreciate the fact that someone may really love the Lord and never have been really had to communicate to them. He commands you to be baptized.

But once it has been communicated, it seems to me everyone who really loves what it'll do it in the early church. There was no one who didn't know to be baptized when the gospel was preached. And people said, what must we do? One of the things that they were told is be baptized.

When Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch were talking, Philip preached Jesus to him. And when they came to a body of water of some kind, the Ethiopian said, here's some water. What prevents me from being baptized? Well, how did he know anything about being baptized? Well, because Philip had been telling about Jesus.

He must have told him. And Jesus tells us to be baptized. You see, we we commonly tell people you pass from death into life when you say a sinner's prayer.

Maybe sometimes people do pass from death into life when they say a sinner's prayer. I won't say that. So we're not.

We don't read of any sinner's prayer in the Bible. There's one by the public. And he said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

But we don't read any sinner's prayer as a means of conversion in the Book of Acts or elsewhere in the scripture. We do read a baptism in the early church. If you said, OK, I

want to be a Christian, they said, OK, here's the water.

Come on, right through there, right through there. On the other side of that water, there's a place called the kingdom of God. You're here in Egypt right now.

You need to go to the kingdom. And the water is the way through. That's how they practice it.

You will never find in the Bible a person being baptized as much as one day after the conversion. Everyone in the Bible who's converted got baptized the same day. It was considered mandatory.

OK, now, what if you don't get baptized because you didn't know better? Or what if you don't get baptized because, you know, you'd like to. You know, you die in a flaming airplane accident and you've just caught to God in the last minute and you get baptized in fire instead of water. Well, God knows.

I mean, God is not a legalist. God is not going to bust people on a technicality. But the truth of the matter is, if you are a disciple, he commands you to be baptized.

If you don't get baptized, what argument could you make that you're a disciple? If you know that Jesus told you be baptized, you don't. It's commanded. And it is the outward sign that God gives for you to communicate to yourself and to the world that you're passing out of Egypt and you're going into the kingdom.

And that's the passageway through. In Acts 8, 12, when Philip preached in Samaria, it says when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. When he preached the kingdom of God, they knew because he mentioned it.

They better get baptized. There's something else besides repentance, faith and baptism. And it's Acts 2, 38, the first sermon Peter preached.

They said, what must we do? He said this. Repent. We've seen that.

Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. We've seen that, too. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is what caused you to be born into the kingdom of God. Jesus said in John 3, 5, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. The spirit of God is the one who has to come into you and regenerate you.

That's being born again. He regenerates you. Paul said in Romans chapter eight, I think it's verse nine.

If anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he's none of his. Receiving the spirit. Now, I believe perhaps many people receive the spirit without knowing that's happened.

I'm not saying that you necessarily have to go do something additional to get the Holy Spirit, though, in the Bible, they did use the laying on hands. It certainly isn't always used. Household of Cornelius didn't experience that way.

But Paul did say in Romans 14, 17, the kingdom of God right now in the present phase is not eating and drinking, but it's righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you're in the kingdom of God, you have to be in the Holy Spirit and you'll experience these benefits of righteousness and peace and joy. So you repent of your sins, you believe in Christ, your water baptized and you receive the spirit.

And that is the entrance. Into the kingdom of God, you know, we see all those things in the book of Acts. We don't see in the book of Acts many of the things that evangelicals practice now, but we see all these things quite regularly.

Paul met some men in chapter 19 of Acts who didn't quite understand the gospel. He preached Jesus to them. They obviously believed it.

He water baptized them, then laid hands on. They were filled with the spirit that that's the procedure when you believe someone to Christ in the book of Acts. Now, I'm going to talk about how to prepare to enter into the future phase.

Now. You might say, well, I'm in the present phase. Doesn't that automatically, you know, give me the ticket to the future phase? We better look at what the Bible says about entering the future phase of the kingdom, because you might be able to judge that way, whether you're in the present phase or not.

Because it's it's not. Presented as if it's the easiest thing in the world. In Matthew 7, verses 21 through 23, Jesus said, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you depart from me. You who practice lawlessness. Now, there's a lot of people who think they're Christians.

They call Jesus Lord, Lord. They do things in his name. Some of them apparently do remarkable things in his name.

More remarkable than I do. I don't prophesy or work wonders, and I've not very often cast demons out of people. But even if I did, that wouldn't give any assurance that I belong to Jesus.

I never knew some of these people. Now, he's not saying charismatics aren't going to heaven. He's not saying casting out demons and prophesying doing wonders is bad because Jesus did all these things.

And afterward, the apostles did all these things. He's just saying these are not. He's not saying these are bad things.

He's just saying they're just not the kinds of things that prove that you belong. Remember what Paul said in first Corinthians 13. If I spoke with tongues, the tongues of men and angels, or if I could prophesy or had all faith or had enough faith to work to move mountains, but I didn't have love.

It's nothing. So just having gifts of the spirit or power or saying, Lord, Lord, these are not the things that determine whether you're entering or not. You enter if, as the first verse there says, those who do the will of my father in heaven.

So then what is the will of the father in heaven? Well, we're going to talk about a lot of that next time, but certainly it involves loving one another. And it involves particularly that it's his will, not yours, that you're consciously endeavoring to do. You know, it's it's one thing to say, well, I keep the Ten Commandments.

OK, but you're serving yourself. You don't break the Ten Commandments, maybe, but your your your whole life is on your own agenda. No, it's it's not about keeping the Ten Commandments.

It's not about prophesying or casting out demons. It's not about saying, Lord, Lord, what it's about is doing the will of God as a way of life. It's what you do.

Not my will, but God's. I don't just say that at times of crisis in my life or times of special inspiration at church when there's a really great sermon. This is what I must be thinking when I wake up in the morning and when I eat my food and when I make purchases and when I relate with my kids or my friends or my enemies.

Not my will, but God's. If my life is about what I want, this is this is not me. If my life is about what God wants.

Then I'm no doubt part of this thing. In Luke 6, 46, he said, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and you don't do the things which I say. So the things that he said, you might want to take a look at some of those.

We love to read Paul because we misunderstand him enough to think he was like us. If you'd known him, you'd be offended by him because he was more like Jesus, things like you. But he said things that were so comforting in some cases, not all the things were comforting.

But Jesus, on the other hand, he's kind of abrasive. Well, if you don't do the things he says, he doesn't think you really call him Lord in a sincere way. And that's going to matter when you want to get in to the future phase of the kingdom.

You might want to take a look at what Jesus said. You might want to read those gospels with your eyes and heart open for several times. It's my main focus in my whole life.

In fact, you can see almost everything I quote is from the gospels here. Luke 19, verses 11 through 19, says now they heard these things. He spoke another parable because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

Obviously, the future phase, the ultimate eternal phase. They thought that was coming right away. Therefore, he said, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

Jesus was going to go away for a long time and then come back with his kingdom. The future phase of it. So he called 10 of his servants, delivered to them 10 minutes and said to them, do business till I come.

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us. Well, there's the difference. He has servants who are doing his business and he's got others who say we will not have this Mandarin over us.

That's what exists right now. So it was when he returned, having received the kingdom. He then commanded these servants to whom he had given money to be called to him that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, Master, your Mina has earned 10 minutes. He said to him, well done, good servant, because you are faithful and very little have authority over 10 cities. And the second came saying, Master, your Mina has earned five minutes.

Likewise, he said to him, you also be over five cities. We won't read further in that because it's a long story. But eventually said those people who said they don't want me to rule over and bring them here and kill them in my sight.

But what about the ones who made it in? Well, they were the ones that when they saw what he had put in their hands, they said someday he's going to come back. He's going to ask me what I did with this. And it's going to be a lot less embarrassing if I can say I've turned what you gave me into 10 times as much than if I have to say I turned into five times as much.

But that's even better than saying I turned it into nothing. And, you know, everything you have mean is are, you know, a denomination of money in Scripture. But we're not talking only about money.

Money is just the just the medium of the parable. This are any assets we have we got from God. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the father of lights.

James tells us in James chapter one, everything we have is from God and everything we have belongs to God. And everything that can be used for anything is to be used for God. Your time, your money, your talents, your friendships, whatever you've got that can that that can be a force for some result is God's.

And the result he wants it for is to bring profit to his kingdom. If you come back, say, God, you gave me only this much, but I use it best I could. And your kingdom is five times, at least this little corner of it that I was managing five times ahead of when you left with me.

He's going, wow, you rule over five cities now forever. You don't have to come up for reelection. This is eternal.

If you say, well, I've improved it 10 times, you'll say, wow, you get 10 cities. I realize half of us don't believe this, but Jesus did say it. I don't mean to be rude when I say we don't believe it, but if we did, we'd be doing things differently, wouldn't we? Wouldn't we be investing every asset we have more toward being able to say when he comes back, Lord, here's what you gave me.

Look how much has been produced for your kingdom by what you gave me. That's what Jesus is telling us. There's other parables.

Boy, there's much here who then is a faithful and wise servant, Jesus said in Matthew 24, 45 through 51, whom his master made ruler over all his household to give food in due season. If God has given you stuff, it's so that you'll give his household food in due season to support his family, his project. Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find doing what he said to do.

Assuredly, I say to you, he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart. Now, notice it's the same servant under consideration.

It's not there's a good servant and a bad servant here. There's one servant. If he is faithful, he'll be ruler of everything.

If that same servant is evil. And says, my master's delaying is coming and begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he's not looking for him.

And at an hour in which he's not aware of and will cut him into the sounds rather gross children. Hold your ears. He'll cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

There should be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Same servant has two possibilities. Possibly to be ruler over everything or to be given his portion with the hypocrites cut into.

Experience weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 21, 43, Jesus said to Israel, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it. The kingdom will be given to those who bring forth the fruits of it.

So what we need to be doing is bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom, managing his stuff. Stewarding, stewarding his assets, bringing forth the fruit of righteousness. The fruit in the parable of the vineyard is righteousness, according to Isaiah 5, 7. So Jesus said in Matthew 5, 20, I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Well, how can your righteousness exceed the righteousness of them? It can be more sincere than theirs. You can't do more righteous deeds than they did. They were career good deeds doers.

You can't do more good deeds. Well, maybe you can, but some people can't. But you can do better deeds better in quality because they come from your heart instead of being just surface righteousness.

There's three parables in Matthew 25. One of them is a parable, the talents very similar to one of the mean as we considered. One of them is the parable, the sheep and the goats.

And you remember when the son of man comes in his kingdom, he separates everyone into sheep and goats categories. He says to the sheep, you fed me when I was hungry. You clothe me when I was naked.

You visit me when I was in prison and sick. And they'll say, Lord, when do we see you in these conditions and minister to you that way? You'll say in as much as you did it to the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me. He said, blessed are you, my father, inherit the kingdom that's prepared for you.

He says to them, they inherit the kingdom because they did unto him the kinds of things that that people want done to them. And he said, you did it to my brethren. You did it to me.

Tending his brethren, tending his flock. Ministering to the sick of his people, supporting the poor of his people and so forth. These are the things that he talked about doing.

That obviously qualify you for entrance. The other parable I want to mention in Matthew 25 is the ten virgins, ten bridesmaids. We're going to go out to meet the bridegroom.

They're supposed to have their lamps burning. They don't know when he's coming. Five of them bring enough oil in case he delays.

Five don't. He does delay. Five of them are out of oil.

They don't have their lamps burning. Five of them still have their lamps burning. They go into the kingdom with him.

The others go looking for oil. And when they come back, the door is shut and they don't get in. That's the parable.

What's it about? It certainly tells us this. If you want to enter the kingdom of God, you better keep the lights on for Jesus. Jesus is going to come.

You don't know when he's going to show up. Like Motel 6, keep the lights on for him. And you've got to keep shining.

You've got to keep full of the spirit. You've got to keep the light of the gospel emanating from your life and from your actions so that when he comes back, he'll see that light and he'll recognize you belong in the kingdom. And those whose lights have gone out, they're not getting in.

Be prepared. So, you know, what does it take to get into the future aspect of the kingdom? It takes being a good steward of what God's given you or entrusted to you. It means bringing forth the fruit of righteousness in your life, of more deep righteousness that comes from your heart.

We'll talk about more what righteousness is next time. That's our last lecture. But that's not all we're talking about next time.

But it's a heart righteousness as opposed to an external hypocritical righteousness like the Pharisees had. Tending God's brethren, taking care of the brethren, and keeping the lights on. And those are the things that I find the New Testament teaches about qualifying to enter in.

We'll let you go at this point.