

# OpenTheo

## Luke 18:24 - 19:27



### Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg analyzes Luke 18:24-19:27, discussing various topics such as how people may turn to Christianity when going through difficult times, the importance of praying even when God already knows our needs, and how Jesus restores those who have gone astray. Gregg also examines the parable of the talents, where a nobleman entrusts his servants with money to invest while he is away and expects a return when he returns, noting that the parable highlights that one's acceptance of faith is a key investment to enrich King. Throughout his analysis, Gregg provides insightful interpretations of the scripture passages and encourages listeners to trust in God's sovereignty.

### Transcript

We left off about halfway through Luke chapter 18, and so we're coming back to the middle of that chapter. And the part where we pick it up is the immediate sequel to the part where we left off. That's not always the case.

Sometimes portions of the chapter will not be immediately connected in any special way with the previous material. But this time it is, because where we left off, the rich young ruler had been invited to become a follower of Jesus, but at some expense to himself, a cost that he was not willing to pay. In chapter 14, Jesus had said, you need to count the cost, with reference to being a disciple.

He said, unless you forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple. In Luke 14.34, and in the verses before that, he talked about building a tower, and how that no one really who has any common sense would start building a project like a tower unless they first check to see if they have the finances to complete the project, or at least a line of credit. They need to have some way of guaranteeing that they're not going to end up half done and run out of resources.

And that's how it is in being a disciple. You need to count the cost from the beginning. So when the rich young ruler wanted eternal life, Jesus said, well, here's what you can do.

You need to sell all you have and give to the poor, and then you can come follow me.

And the man did not want to do that, but Jesus gave him the opportunity to count the cost. He didn't say, well, come follow me, and I'll tell you in a little while what I'm going to ask of you.

I actually was at an evangelistic meeting where an evangelist did that very thing. He said, how many of you here don't know that you'll go to heaven when you die? And some people raised their hands because their friends had brought them, and they weren't Christians themselves. And they said, okay, everyone who raised your hand, come on down here, and I'm going to tell you what you've just committed to.

Well, they hadn't committed to anything. He hadn't even asked them to make a commitment. He said, how many of you don't know that you're going to go to heaven when you die? So he assumed if you're in that category, you're saying you want to be a Christian, but you don't even know what's involved.

I'll tell you what you just committed to. Let me tell you what it means to be a Christian. Well, even if the latter part of what he said had been accurate, this might have worked out because they didn't have to get started on the Christian life without hearing.

But this was kind of a greasy grace kind of a preacher, and he didn't really tell them at all what it will cost to be a Christian. In fact, no man can tell you all that it may cost because no one can see the future, but it might cost you everything. You have to be prepared to forsake everything because God might, in fact, require everything.

A lot of times people, they become Christians, and then when God begins taking things from them, their marriage, let's say, or their children, or something of great value to them, they just figure, I didn't sign up for this. I'm out of here. I'm not going to serve a God who does that kind of thing to me.

Well, they didn't count the cost. You've got to realize that God can take anything he wants. That's the conditions of you coming to him.

You're totally sold out. You forsake all. And he then is the one who decides what should be done from that point on with everything you have.

And if he takes it, that's his business. Well, the man was told this right up front, and upon hearing the cost, he decided, no, that's not something I'm going to buy. I'm not going to do that.

Not at that cost. And so when he left, in verse 24, it says, When Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, he said, How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

And those who heard it said, who then can be saved? But he said, the things which are

impossible with men are possible with God. Then Peter said, See, we have left all and followed you. And he said to them, Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left houses or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time and in the age to come everlasting life.

Jesus begins by reflecting upon the sorrow the rich man had when he left. The man went away sorrowful. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, he made this comment, Very difficult for someone like this man here to come into the kingdom of God.

It's going to cost everything, and the more you have, the more it's going to cost. If you have very little, forsaking everything is not an issue. You got there's nothing to get rid of.

There's nothing to forsake. You're already destitute. The poorer you are, the easier it is just to say, Hey, I'm in.

You want everything? That's not much. I don't have much to give up. The more we have invested in this world, the harder it is to just lay it all down and surrender it all.

And that's what Jesus means when he said it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And he did say, famously, he said this, everybody knows this saying, It's easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. You probably have heard preachers sometimes say that this reference to the eye of the needle is a reference to an actual gate in Jerusalem.

That during the daytime, the city was accessed through large portals, large gates in the city walls, which were easy to go through, of course. But at night, it is said by some that these gates were locked up for the protection of the city. And if you came at night, once those gates were locked, there was still the possibility of entering.

But there was only a small gate. And that this was referred to as the eye of the needle, this little gate, because it was so small, it was difficult to pass through it. In fact, they say if a camel wanted to go through this gate, it would be very difficult because he couldn't even walk through it, the gate was so small, he'd have to get down on his belly and unpack his baggage off his back, and he could just maybe barely fit through this gate.

And that this is what Jesus referred to when he talked about the difficulty of a camel going through the eye of a needle, he's referring to this gate in Jerusalem. In fact, there is no historical record of any such gate in Jerusalem. It cannot be verified that that anecdote has any validity at all.

I think people are drawn to that particular explanation because it makes it at least possible for a camel to go through. Difficult, but possible. Sure, the camel may have to be divested of all of its baggage, and that Jesus is saying essentially to come into the

kingdom of God, you have to be willing to get rid of all your baggage, but it's at least something you can do.

But the disciples said, well then who can be saved? And Jesus said, with men it's impossible. He's not talking about something that's difficult, but that's impossible without the grace of God. Only God is capable of working in the heart in such a way as to get somebody to meet all the conditions necessary to live in the kingdom of God.

Now that sounds like a very Calvinistic thing to say, but that's okay. The Bible says a lot of things that sound Calvinistic. That doesn't mean they are.

A non-Calvinist like myself has no difficulty acknowledging that no one can be saved unless God draws them. Nobody can come to Christ unless God has first convicted them of their sin, has first given them some kind of incentives, some kind of an awareness. God is always previous.

The most staunch Arminians agree that there's a thing called prevenient grace and that no one comes to God unless it is because of kindness that God has done in their lives and bringing conviction and so forth. That's true. Without God doing that, you can't get anyone saved.

But God can do that. God can convict people about that. Now, in my opinion, and this is the non-Calvinist part, I believe that when God is drawing someone and giving them incentives to come, they can still resist.

But nobody comes without being drawn, Jesus has made very clear. And so God is the one who's going to get a rich man saved if he's going to get saved at all. But then that's true of poor men too.

It's just that it's less predictable, less likely. It's more difficult to find a rich man who's willing to respond to that. Here, the rich young ruler is a good example.

Certainly the grace of God led him to feel convicted of his need to enter the kingdom of God, to get eternal life. There was prevenient grace in his life. He came running to Jesus, a thing that dignified Jewish men didn't usually do, run.

This man was really eager to be saved. And he had done most of the things that Jesus said a person would need to do. But it turned out that when he heard the terms finally, he was not willing to meet those terms.

So God had drawn him, but he still had the final veto in his own case. I can choose not to do this. And the drawing is of God.

And it's impossible to get somebody saved unless God is drawing them. But it's possible even when God is drawing them, I think, for that person to say no. Jesus said that was

the case with Jerusalem in general.

He said, how many times I sought to gather you, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you wouldn't come. So a person can be drawn and resist. But no one can come without being drawn in the first place.

Now, by the way, I should mention that in, I believe it's, if I'm not mistaken, in the Aramaic version, there's a different reading. It doesn't say it's harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, but it's harder for a cable or a rope to go through the eye of a needle. It's very possible that this is actually his original words and that somehow the word rope and camel, which resemble each other in Aramaic, got confused.

And I'm not really sure how much I can assess the likelihood of that happening. But even if he's saying it's easier for a rope to go through the eye of a needle, it's still impossible. You can't thread a needle with a rope.

It just can't be done. So, of course, for a camel to go through is a much bigger obstacle, but it's equally impossible whether it's a rope or a camel. You can't do it.

You can't thread a needle with a rope. Some think that the rope is a better, a more likely original saying of Jesus and that the camel is something that came in through some misunderstanding, the Aramaic. After all, you do thread a needle with something that is at least sort of like a rope, only tinier.

And so he could be saying you can't thread a needle with a rope. But in any case, it's not important what his original words were since they make the same point. And that is riches are not an asset when it comes to entering the kingdom of God.

If anything, they are an obstruction. They are something that makes it more difficult, even impossible, without God's intervention. And so Peter's response was, well, Lord, we're not rich men.

We've forsaken everything. You told this man to forsake everything and he didn't. Well, we have.

So I'm just kind of curious. How's it going to go for us? What are we going to get out of this deal? It's interesting that Peter had, in fact, forsaken all without knowing the answer to that question. He's asking now.

When he forsook all that he had, it wasn't because Jesus made cheery promises or threats. It wasn't because Peter thought, well, I'm going to get such and such, so I'm going to leave my nets. He wasn't motivated selfishly.

And he forsook all that he had without even knowing, you know, what's this going to mean for me later on? He just knew Jesus called him and he obeyed. But later, like

anybody else, he's wondering, well, I'm kind of curious about this. You know, I am making a sacrifice that this guy wasn't willing to make.

Am I going to be, you know, OK? And is it going to turn out well for me? I don't think there's anything wrong with Christians wondering what heaven is like or what the rewards will be. The fact is we're not told much about it. The Bible doesn't tell us very much what we will be like or what we will have for the sacrifice we make.

And we have to be willing to make those sacrifices without knowing for sure. We have to be motivated by something else than simply calculating the advantages to ourselves. We respond to God because of God, because we recognize his authority and we realize that we should follow him.

It's a secondary consideration what we will be rewarded. Now, Jesus does talk about rewards, and therefore there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with contemplating rewards. But when those become the first consideration, we're more likely to decide things on a selfish basis.

And it's interesting that all this time Peter and the other disciples had been with Jesus, having earlier forsaken everything to follow him, they had not received any teaching about specifically what they're going to have, what they're going to get out of the deal, which means they were serving him without particular incentives along those lines having been offered to them. But Jesus doesn't mind telling them, there is something good for you in this. Now, interestingly, in Mark and Matthew, he doesn't say many times more, he says what? A hundredfold, a hundred times more.

There are some people who argue that this is a principle that if you need money, give money and God will give you a hundred times back as if there's some kind of a mathematical relationship to what you surrender and what you get back. Like you can calculate, okay, I need a thousand dollars, so I better give ten dollars to the Salvation Army. Then God will give me back the thousand dollars I need, it's a hundredfold more.

But we can see from this, because this is the parallel, when Jesus said a hundredfold, he just means many times more. Hundred is a nice round number, it's a big number. It's a really big number when you consider it as the return on an investment.

If he said you get ten times more, anyone would invest in a scheme that guarantees a thousand percent, ten times the return. But Jesus makes that ten times more than that, a hundredfold more. Now, he's not giving that as an exact figure, and Luke recognizes that.

He's just saying many times. Hundred is just a round number, not to be taken statistically. And this is, of course, the case when Jesus also says in another place, don't forgive seven times, but seventy times seven.

It's not intended to be mathematically calculated. It's an impressionistic statement. Far more than you would imagine.

Far more than you'd even be able to keep track of. Now, what he's saying here is, you may feel that you've forsaken everything, Peter, and you may feel that as a result, you're the loser. But in fact, you're the winner, because in the rest of your lifetime, you're going to receive far more back than what you've forsaken, and you've got eternal life in the deal, too.

Now, what does he mean you'll receive many times more in this present time? Well, it may be simply a statement that could easily be calculated. All the ways God's going to provide for you, food and lodging and the things you need, ultimately, over the long run, it's going to be a lot more than what you've already given up. Doesn't mean you're going to have a hundred houses, but you might have occasion to live in a hundred houses of other people, because in the body of Christ, no one considered the things they had were their own.

They had all things common. You had one house you gave up, and now every house in the kingdom is yours. It's a place you can stay.

Every Christian will bring you into their house. Everyone will be a brother or a sister or a father or a mother to you. You have a new family, and it's a hundred times greater than what you've given up.

It could be that that's what he's saying. In any case, he does say that you're not going to be the poorer as a result of having forsaken everything. You'll be better off, ultimately, and most especially, because in the next life, you'll have eternal life as well as the things that you receive in this time.

I'll also point this out. Those who say that you can manipulate God to give you money by giving, and he has to give you a hundredfold back, Jesus didn't say everyone who's given a denarius is going to get a denarius back. He said those who have forsaken everything, houses, lands, family, this is not people who make a token contribution.

They can do it in order to get back a hundred times more, but rather he's saying those of you who have forsaken everything are in a category that will receive blessing from God in a very large way. You'll have many more brothers and sisters, a much larger family in the kingdom of God than what you left behind, more houses at your service, at your disposal, I should say. And this is true.

I've found it to be true. I've stayed in at least scores of houses in the years I've been in the ministry. People who take me in, they give me a room, they feed me and stuff because we're a family, really.

Some of these people are people I don't meet until they take me into their homes, but

then by the time I leave, it's clear that I'm welcome in their home. And so Peter certainly found that to be true in the apostles. No doubt wherever they traveled, the Christians wanted them in their homes.

So if you forsook a house, well, you've got hundreds of houses now. If you forsook a family, you've got a much larger family now. God is not going to let you come out behind in this deal.

If you give up something for God, or more probably, if you give up everything for God, you'll find that what he gives you back ends up being far more than what you gave up in the first place. In Matthew, Jesus adds another thing, and he says, You twelve who followed me in this life, in the regeneration, you'll sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This is in the parallel to this in Matthew 19, but Luke doesn't bring it up, so we won't go into that.

Now verse 31, Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. And they will scourge him and put him to death.

And the third day he will rise again. But they understood none of these things, even though he had said the same thing to them twice before this, they still didn't understand it. He had mentioned these same facts to them at Caesarea Philippi, and then he had said the same things to them when they were coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration.

And now this is the third time he gives them this information, and they've heard it three times, but they still don't know what he's talking about. They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

Which means that even though Jesus predicted all these things, the events still caught them by surprise. When Jesus died, they didn't know that was going to happen. When he rose from the dead, they didn't know that was going to happen, even though he had predicted it.

Because it says they were hidden from them, not by Jesus certainly. Jesus didn't hide them, he said them plainly. Something in them kept them from seeing it.

Their eyes were blinded in some way, their minds were darkened. And perhaps it's because of all the presuppositions they had. They believed they were right in the crest of the kingdom coming right now.

Jesus was going to drive out the Romans, he's going to rule, all the nations will come and honor Israel. These are the Jewish expectations for the Messiah. The disciples were quite



convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, so they had every reason to think these things were happening.

The idea of the Messiah dying and rising again, that just wasn't in their presupposition. So when he said it, it just kind of went over their head, because it just didn't fit their paradigm. It's possible for God to say something very plainly in his word, and it just goes right over someone's head, because they have a different paradigm, a different set of interpretations, they've already adopted.

And what he said doesn't fit. But they don't know that it doesn't fit. They just figure, I don't know what that means.

I don't know what he means by that. Certainly can't mean what he seems to be saying, because that just isn't the way things are. And that's how some Christians are, I think, with their own theology.

They're so committed to a theological system, that when they see a scripture that plainly contradicts it, they don't understand it. It's hidden from them. Not hidden by God, hidden by their own prejudices, by their own inability to change their mind, or to accommodate new information into their bigger belief system.

And the disciples exhibit that very trait in this passage, as many disciples today still exhibit that trait. Not on the same subject, but on other things that the Bible says very plainly. Then it happened that he was coming near Jericho, I'm sorry, that as he was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.

And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet. He was causing a disturbance by his exuberant prayer. But he cried out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Now, Son of David is a term that means Messiah. So he is professing his conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to him.

And when he had come near, he asked him, saying, what do you want me to do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. It's interesting that Jesus wouldn't know that that's what he wanted. Here's a man who's clearly blind.

They have to lead him by the hand to come to Jesus. Jesus would know he's blind. He would know that he wants to be healed, but he lets him ask specifically.

I have a good feeling. I know what you want. In fact, I do know what you want, but I'll let

you ask so that what I do will be a specific answer to your prayer.

I believe that God, you know, Jesus said God knows what we have need of before we ask him. People sometimes take that and say, well, then why should we bother to pray? If God knows what we need before we ask, why doesn't he just provide it? And the answer would seem to be because he wants to respond to prayer. Why would he want to do that? Well, maybe he's pleased to hear us specifically ask for things.

It's our way of expressing verbally our dependence upon him. It's a humble thing to do to ask for assistance, to ask for something from someone. Proud people don't like to ask people for help, don't like to ask for assistance, and it's a humbling thing to ask.

God may like for us to humble ourselves and ask. More than that, he might specifically want us to ask so that when he provides it, we can see it as a direct answer to our prayers. That is, if things were provided for us just in the matter of course, and we never prayed for them, and frankly, some of them are, we might not recognize them specifically as special mercies from God.

And that is no doubt why we often forget that all the things we enjoy are special mercies. We just take them for granted. We didn't ask for them.

We were born in a free country. We were born where there's prosperity. We were born where there's clean water and indoor plumbing, and where there's food that's safe to eat, and there's peace in our borders.

I mean, we were born in this. We didn't even ask for this. And sometimes we might forget that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.

But we can't make that mistake. When we specifically ask for a thing and it's given to us, then we say, wow, there is a God. And so God, who can and often does provide things for us without us even asking, often waits to be asked specifically so that when he provides the specific thing, we can't miss the connection.

Oh, this happened because I asked for this very thing. And it builds our faith in God. It builds our appreciation for God because we recognize it as his generosity to us, whereas other things that are equally his generosity, we don't see as clearly because we didn't ask.

They're just kind of part of our environment. So he actually obviously knows what this man wants, but he says, what do you want? Ask me very specifically. I want to hear you ask.

He said, well, I want my sight. Lord, I want to receive my sight. Then Jesus said to him, receive your sight.

Your faith has saved you. Notice saved here probably refers to provided what you asked for, saved you from a condition of blindness. Saved is a very general term in the scripture.

It can mean rescued, delivered, and other things besides what we normally think of as saved, although of course it means that too. He was no doubt saved in the most important sense too because of his faith. But in this case, he may be saying, your sight has rescued you from your plight of blindness.

And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus. Again, that immediately that Luke uses sometimes. Mark uses it even more.

Mark uses it about every other verse in his first chapter. Everything's immediate. But the point here is, of course, to say that this man didn't generally, and over a gradual period of time, recover, and then people attributed it to Jesus, even though, who knows, it might have happened over time without Jesus.

It happened immediately upon his saying it, which is what made it impossible to dissociate Christ's command with the result. And so he followed Jesus, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, they gave praise to God. Now we don't read that everybody that Jesus healed followed him afterwards.

Lots of people Jesus healed, we have no record of them following him. This specific case says that this man became a follower of Christ. And that is probably why Mark actually knew the man's name.

If you look at Mark chapter 10, the parallel, Mark, of course, writing at a much later time, in chapter 10, verse 46 says, Then they came to Jericho, and as he went out of Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat at the road begging. This blind man is given a name in Mark, he's not in Luke, but Mark probably knew the man, or at least the congregation. The Christians knew the man.

In all likelihood, since he did become a follower of Jesus, his person and his story were familiar in the early church, and his name was known. And very few of the people that Jesus heals is their name given, but when it is given, it's almost certainly because they became familiar people, known by name in the church later on. And this is their story of when they met Jesus.

By the way, it's kind of interesting, Bartimaeus means son of Timaeus. Bar means son of, and Timaeus, Bartimaeus means son of Timaeus, but Mark says blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. That's a redundancy, but he assumes that his Gentile readers who don't know Hebrew don't know that Bartimaeus means son of Timaeus, so he actually says, this guy we call Bartimaeus, he was the son of someone named Timaeus.

Sort of like Bartholomew, Bartholomew means son of Tholomew. He had another name

too, Nathaniel in scripture, but Bartholomew seemed to be what they called him. It's like calling, but like my in-laws are named Peterson, son of Peter, really, and sometimes people are called by their last name, so they often called this man, apparently he went by his last name most of the time, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus.

But the point I'm making is Mark alone gives his name, which may mean that Mark and whoever he was associated with knew this man well enough to give his name. Neither Matthew nor Luke actually mention his name. In fact, Matthew does something a little surprising.

He says, there were two blind men there. We don't get any evidence of that from Mark or Luke, but in chapter 20 of Matthew, Matthew 20, verse 29, says, Now as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, Lord, son of David.

And the story goes on, and he heals both of them. Why do Mark and Luke only mention one when there were two? Well, there were two, no doubt, but possibly one of them, and not the other, became a follower of Jesus. And the one who did is Bartimaeus.

And because he became a known member of the church, Mark and Luke tell his story, because this is the story not only of how he got healed, but how he became a follower of Jesus. It's his testimony of meeting Jesus and coming to the church. Since one of them did not, perhaps, become a follower of Christ as a result of this, he's not mentioned.

It's not denied that he was there, but it's just he's not mentioned. His story is not as important to Mark and Luke, because he didn't become a follower of Christ, as Bartimaeus did. That's my assumption.

Now there is a problem that needs to be resolved. This is one of the cases where people think they find contradiction in Scripture, because if you look at Matthew 20, 29, and Mark 10, which we looked at a moment ago, verse 46, and our passage in Luke, look at Matthew first. It says in Matthew 20, 29, now as they departed from Jericho, as he was leaving Jericho, he encountered these blind men.

However, in Luke's version, we read in chapter 18 and verse 35, it happened that as he was coming near Jericho, that he encountered the blind. So Matthew says it was as he departed from Jericho, Jesus had already been in Jericho and was leaving, and encountered these people on the outside leg of his trip. Luke says it was as he's coming near to Jericho, he's approaching Jericho.

So this is different. But look what Mark says in Mark 10, 46. It says, then they came to Jericho, and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, he met them.

So Matthew mentions only him leaving Jericho, Luke only him going toward Jericho, Mark

mentions both. He went into Jericho, and as he was leaving, he met these men. Now, it's hard to know exactly how these differences in the accounts came to be, but it's obvious that it's the same account.

It's obvious it's the same story. And this has been explained in a number of ways. One suggestion has been that as Jesus approached Jericho, these men were on the road that leads in, crying out to Jesus.

But that he then, without healing them, he went on into Jericho. And by the time he was leaving, they had gone around or through the city and were waiting for him as he came out, and he encountered them again as he came out. This is one way to harmonize these things.

As he was going into Jericho, these two men were crying out to him. But he didn't heal them until he went out of the city. Maybe it could even be the next day or so.

He encountered them again. It is a way to solve the problem. It may seem a little contrived, but it's not an impossibility.

And Mark, after all, mentions both his going in and his going out, and in connection with this. But he does mention Jesus healing them as he went out. He does not deny that he had heard them crying out for mercy as he went in at an earlier point.

So we're left not knowing for sure. One explanation that's sometimes given is that Jericho was destroyed and rebuilt on, frankly, a number of times. It's one of the oldest cities in the world, is the city of Jericho, one of the most ancient.

And it has been built on more than one site at different times. So there are now ruins of Jericho in two different places. And some say Jesus was traveling out of one Jericho and approaching the other Jericho, that he was actually encountering these men between the two Jerichos.

So when Mark and Matthew say that Jesus encountered these people as he left Jericho, and Luke says as he was approaching Jericho, Matthew and Mark are talking about one of the Jerichos, and Luke is talking about the other Jericho. Anyway, I mean, again, this could seem very contrived. It might seem counterintuitive.

But the truth is, it is a possibility. The actual, most, you know, honest truth is we don't know. We don't know why there's the difference in these accounts.

But it is possible to conceive of answers that make sense. And this is something to just, this is almost a lesson in dealing with passages in the Gospels that seem to be contradictory to each other. In almost every case, there's a reasonable answer.

Sometimes there's two possible answers. Sometimes even more than two possible

answers. We don't have to know which is the right answer for solving the discrepancy.

The fact that there is one suitable answer or more is enough. It's not necessary for us to know which one explains why this discrepancy is given. But the fact is, no one can argue that there's a necessary contradiction here.

After all, almost all scholars believe that some of these writers knew each other or had access to their works. Most think that Mark was the first one to write and that Matthew and Luke had access to Mark. That being so, you know, it'd be unlikely that they would contradict each other.

And they may be recording a different aspect of, you know, a different day. He went into Jericho and one day came out another day and encountered these men both places. Or two Jerichos.

These, you know, possibilities cannot be decided between. Nor is it absolutely necessary for us to know which of the explanations works best. But we can see that because there are plausible explanations, even more than one, that at least any charge that these men contradicted each other is kind of emptied of any validity.

Speaking of Jericho, in chapter 19 it says, Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector. And he was rich.

And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. This is probably the only person in the New Testament whose size is mentioned for us, that I can recall. But it's significant to the story because the crowds apparently lined the streets and everybody was taller than him.

He couldn't get, he couldn't see over their heads. So he was nonetheless determined to see Jesus. So he ran ahead, anticipating the route Jesus was going to take, found a tree and climbed up into it.

A sycamore tree to see him, for he was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. So he made haste and came down and received him joyfully.

But when they saw it, they all murmured saying, he has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner. The man was a publican, a tax collector. So very much an outcast.

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor. And if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham.

For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. This story is a Sunday school story. I mean, it's a true story, but it's one that we learn in Sunday school because there's something kind of quaint about this little man being so determined to see Jesus.

He has to climb up in a tree. Little kids kind of like that imagery, hearing about it. Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he.

He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see. That's a Sunday school song. So it becomes so familiar to some of us that we almost, you know, just pass over to say, oh yeah, I remember that story.

Let's go on to something else. There are some interesting and important features of the story, though. It is, of course, another instance of Jesus befriending somebody who's a sinner, who's an outcast.

But in that sense, it's not unique. There are many stories of Jesus standing up for somebody who's a sinner or otherwise an outcast. And this is one of them.

There are some other interesting features. He saw the man up in the tree and knew that he was obviously fairly determined to see Jesus and make some kind of assessment of Jesus. Apparently, he already had a high view of Jesus.

And enough so that he would climb up in a tree to see him. More like a kid's thing to do, but here's a little man. He was so eager to see Jesus, he acts like a child and climbs up in a tree.

But Jesus looks up and calls him by name and says, Zacchaeus. Now, we might think because Jesus is God, he knows everybody's name. So, of course, he knew the man's name.

And perhaps by calling him by name, Zacchaeus would be impressed. Wow, you must be God, you know, or something like that. However, there's nothing in this that indicates that Jesus knew his name supernaturally.

It's possible that he did. But there's also more going on in the story than is recorded. This is told in great brevity.

It's not unimaginable. In fact, it's not even unlikely that when Jesus got to the place where the tree was and looked up and saw there was a man there, other people looked up and said, what's Zacchaeus doing up there? You know, I mean, Jesus could easily have heard the people murmuring saying, look where Zacchaeus is. I mean, by Jesus calling him Zacchaeus, we don't know that he knew that by supernatural means because people knew Zacchaeus well and no doubt would be commenting to each other.

Wow, look at that. Zacchaeus is up in the tree. But what's interesting is that Jesus invited himself over for dinner.

And he didn't wait to be invited. He dealt with Zacchaeus as if Jesus was his Lord and able to give instructions to him and expect to be followed. As if Zacchaeus was already a believer in his lordship and could be said, okay, you're entertaining me tonight.

I mean, you can do that if you're in a relationship with people who expect that they're supposed to do whatever you say. And it seems like Jesus presupposes that this man recognizes him as the Lord and therefore is not going to be put off by him inviting himself to his house. And the fact that Zacchaeus came down and received him joyfully means that he wasn't offended by Jesus' forwardness and saying, you need to feed me.

I need lunch. I'm using your house. Your wife's going to cook for me today.

I mean, that's kind of a rude thing to say unless you've got some kind of presupposition about the relationship you have with this person that they recognize you as the person who's calling the plays. You're the one who's saying what's going to happen. And you say, yes, sir.

Yes, Lord. And Zacchaeus apparently already had that commitment that he just did exactly what Jesus said without question. Now, this caused Jesus to be criticized because he was again associated with the wrong element, a publican.

Jesus didn't care. Jesus welcomed criticism for doing the right thing. He didn't mind.

I mean, he probably didn't like people criticizing because it showed how wrongheaded they were. But he was never embarrassed by the choices he made to associate with people that were outcasts. And in that respect, Jesus is no doubt a model that is not often followed by Christians because we often are very self-conscious about what people think of us and the company we keep and so forth.

And Jesus is not like us in that respect. And obviously we should be more like him. People said Jesus has gone to be a guest with a man who's a sinner.

Now, we read of their saying so, but we just don't read of Jesus answering. It's almost like Jesus ignored it. He ignored the criticism.

He was doing the right thing and he didn't care what people said. Then Zacchaeus stood and said, look, Lord, I give half my goods to the poor. And if I've taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.

Under the law of Moses, if you stole somebody's lamb and you were caught, you had to restore fourfold, four lambs for a lamb. If it was an ox, you had to restore five oxen for an ox. So petty theft had lighter penalties than large items being stolen, but they were



penalties.

And repentance is seen in action. And in this particular case, he makes his voluntary decision to make restitution. Now, he didn't wait to be taken to court and have a judge say, you have to repay fourfold.

No one could probably even prove that he had stolen. The tax collectors were able to collect taxes at a rate that no one could verify if that's what they really owed or not. The Romans hired these guys and required that they collect from each person a certain amount and give it to the Romans.

But no one else knew what that amount was except the tax collector. He's the government official. He's got the records and he can add his own commission all he wants and no one would know.

And many of these tax collectors really ripped people off and that's one reason they were really hated. They were also hated because they were collaborating with the enemy, the Romans. But they were hated also because they took advantage of their power and got themselves rich at the expense of their own countrymen dishonestly.

Now, Zacchaeus apparently accepts the fact that this was the case with him. He says, If I have, but he means, I know I have. What he means is, in any case that this is so, I'm going to restore fourfold.

They can't get me in court, but I'm doing this voluntarily because it's what I want to do. I want to make things right. I want to restore restitution to anyone I've wronged and in addition to that, I'm giving away half of what I have.

Now, Jesus said that was okay. Now, he told the rich young ruler to give everything away, but Zacchaeus only was going to give half away and make restitution for crimes he'd committed and Jesus said that's enough. He said salvation has come to this house.

Jesus knew that this man was repentant because the man voluntarily wanted to make right what he'd wronged. Restitution is something that Christians may need to contemplate as a function of repentance. Because many times our sins have caused some kind of lasting injury to other parties.

Not always. Some of our sins don't hurt anybody directly. They just hurt God and for the most part, there's nothing we can do to undo that.

But in any case where our sins actually have injured other parties, in a way that can be restored, anyone who truly repents will have it in their heart to restore what someone else has been cheated out of. And so, this man's desire to make restitution was proof that his heart was changed. And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house because he is also a son of Abraham.

He's also one of God's people even though he was fallen. He was lost. He's been recovered.

A son of Abraham is somebody who originally belonged to God through the covenant with Abraham. And this man is someone that God had lost. He's a son of Abraham but he had wandered off.

And he says, for the son of man has come to seek and save what was lost. What he's saying is this man was not of some kind of other inferior species. He was not some subhuman being like the other Jews saw him as.

He was one of themselves. He was just like them but he just wandered in the wrong direction. And that's what we sometimes forget when we see people who are really horrendous people.

Take an Adolf Hitler or a Charles Manson or someone like that. We just see them as the horrible thing that they are or became. God sees them as somebody who wasn't always that way.

They're a human being like us. They were born a little baby just like you were born a little baby. They weren't born killing people.

They weren't even born wanting to do that. Something happened. Something is broken in them.

Something went wrong. They made wrong decisions and they probably compiled more and more wrong decisions and eventually they become really horrible wicked people. But God sees this guy.

This guy is viewed as a horrible person by his community but he's a child of Abram like the rest of you. As such he belongs to God and there's every reason to recognize that he is something that God has lost that was once his and I've come to recover what is lost. Likewise when we see people who are broken and of course one of the big things now in the Evangelical Church although I think it's not as big as people think it is is the way Evangelicals feel toward homosexuals.

When I say I don't think it's as big as people think is many people think that the church is very hard on homosexuals. I haven't really encountered a church that is. I don't think I know any Christians that are really hard on homosexuals but I do know Christians have some problems with them still.

Homosexuals as an element coming out publicly in our community is still new enough in the lifetime of us older people anyway. We're not used to it. It's not something that happened when we're young and we do sometimes have adjustments that we're trying to make in our attitudes but I still think that all the Christians I know agree that we

should love them and that we should have compassion on them.

But any difficulty we have with them because they're different than we are we need to understand they weren't born different. They were born the same as us and our children. Something happened to them and now they're different than we are but God saw them from the beginning.

God still sees them as the same person who was born a little baby. He sees all the things that happened to them and the choices they made that were wrong and so forth. Every person that we would think of as doing something or committed to something that we think is evil, they're just like us.

I mean they've gone the wrong way and Jesus still sees them as the same person before they went away. They had to be brought back and Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, a Jew. He wasn't acting like one.

He had betrayed his Jewish countrymen but he was still a Jewish man and he'd gotten lost and Jesus came to restore those who've gotten lost. Now as they heard these things, he spoke another parable because he was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Interesting.

This is again an instance where Luke tells us something about the reason for Jesus giving a particular parable. Luke helps us out a little bit here. The other gospels often just tell the parable but Luke writing to a particular Gentile named Theophilus does not expect the man to be adept apparently at interpreting parables so he gives him sort of a cliff's notes or sort of a brief summary at the beginning of what this parable is going to be about and what its purpose is.

As he did, for example, in chapter 18 verse 1. He told this parable to the end that men ought always to pray and not to lose heart or the parable about the publican and the Pharisee. He said he gave this parable because some people were congratulating themselves for being righteous and they despised others. Here, this parable is given for a specific purpose.

Now whatever the other elements of the parable may be and there are other lessons we'll be able to get from it. The main lesson is that some people thought the kingdom of God is going to appear immediately and this parable is saying it's not so. And so he said a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, which are, you know, some amount of money and said to them do business until I come. But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying we will not have this man to reign over us. And so it was that when he returned having received the kingdom, he then commanded his

servants to whom he had given the 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 ten minas. And he said to him well done good servant because you were faithful in a very little have authority over ten cities. And the second came saying master your mina has earned five minas.

Likewise, he said to him you also be over five cities. And another came saying master here is your mina which I have kept put away in a handkerchief for I feared you because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.

And he said to him out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank that at my coming I might have collected it with interest.

And he said to those who stood by take the mina from him and give it to him who has ten minas. But they said to him master he has ten minas. For I say to you that to everyone who has will be given and from him who does not have even what he has will be taken away from him.

But bring here those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them and slay them before me. Now this parable it resembles in many respects the parable of what's called the parable of the talents. And that is found in Matthew 25.

It's not the same parable but it's clear that Jesus taught similar parables on different occasions emphasizing different points. In Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents it says that he gave one of his servants, this is Matthew 25, 15, to one servant he gave five talents to another two and to another one. And so in the parable of minas he gave each servant the same amount although they produced differing results.

One man with one mina being more capable or more diligent earned tenfold on his investment. Another only fivefold but still pretty good profit. Another one didn't do anything with it at all.

Now in the case of the talents different amounts are given to different servants. And the first two servants managed to double what they got. So it's a slightly different economic here and it's different details.

In fact in the parable of the talents there's much less detail than there is given in the parable of the minas. Because in the parable of the minas, unlike the talents, the man in question is a nobleman who goes away to receive a kingdom. Now it's hard to see this as referring to anything other than Jesus himself going away as he did when he ascended into heaven to receive his kingdom and to return, which he will return.

Now receiving the kingdom is exactly what Jesus went to do. He went to heaven and he was enthroned. According to Daniel chapter 7, the vision that Daniel saw in chapter 7 and verse 13 and 14, it says, I was watching in the night visions and behold one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.

He came to the Ancient of Days and they brought him near before him. Then to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.

Now there was, of course, a kingdom mentioned earlier in Daniel chapter 2 that shall not be destroyed. He said, now this one that's given to the Son of Man, that's the one that will not be destroyed. But what is this talking about? When it talks about him coming in the clouds of heaven, we usually think of this as a reference to the second coming of Christ.

And therefore some people think when Jesus comes back, he'll be given a kingdom. However, this Son of Man is not coming from heaven to earth in the clouds. He's coming from earth to heaven in the clouds.

He is seen being brought to the Ancient of Days, not from the Ancient of Days. He's being brought into heaven. Daniel's vantage point is from one in heaven watching Jesus ascend through the clouds.

Remember when Jesus ascended in Acts chapter 1, he disappeared into the clouds from the disciples' view. Well, on the other side, he's seen coming in those clouds to heaven and he's brought near to God. He's given a position at the right hand of God, a throne.

And he's given dominion and a kingdom so that everyone should serve him. This is true since Jesus ascended into heaven. Everyone should serve him.

He said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. That means everyone should serve me. Everyone should obey me.

I have all authority in heaven and earth. That was at his first coming. That was at his resurrection and ascension.

The Bible makes it very clear in the New Testament that Jesus, when he ascended, sat down at the right hand of God in a position of authority and power. He did come to heaven through the clouds. He did receive a kingdom.

And Jesus is speaking of that very thing when he talks about the nobleman who leaves his servants and goes to receive a kingdom. And he later returns. Now, this probably in the earthly scene is referring to somebody like, say, Herod, who went to Rome and received an appointment as the king of the Jews.

This would be a familiar scenario to his listeners. Someone who was not born a king, not of royal birth necessarily, but he's given kingship by the Caesar or by somebody else. And now he has received a kingdom.

And this was not an unfamiliar scenario. People that pleased the Caesar who were noblemen or otherwise petty officials in some capacity were often elevated to the position of king over some domain in the Roman Empire. So this is a picture apparently of Jesus going to heaven and receiving a kingdom and to return.

Remember, he tells this because he wanted to correct the notion of some people who felt that the kingdom would appear immediately. So he goes away to a far country. This would require some time to travel.

And he's basically saying, you think you're going to see the manifestation of the kingdom right now, but actually the second coming of Christ, where his kingdom is manifested, is still ahead of us. There's a long time. Now, the kingdom was given to him 2,000 years ago, but it hasn't been manifested yet.

Just like David was made king when Samuel anointed him at his father's house as a boy, he was made king. But he wasn't manifested to Israel as king until much later after Saul was killed and the people hailed David as the king. He is the true king, and some people recognized David as king, even in those early years.

There were 400 men, then 600, who followed David even when he was persecuted by Saul. So also, there are some who recognize Jesus as king, and rightly so, he is. But the world doesn't see him as king.

When he returns, that's when his kingdom will become manifested to all and undisputable. In the meantime, he has left his servants here to invest his stuff, to promote his interests, so that when he comes back, we will have something to present him. What did he give me? Well, he expects me to use it for him.

In the parable, it's money. And no doubt, in real life, it can be money too. Some people have money, some don't.

If we have money, that's a stewardship. If we don't have money, we have something else. Most people who don't have money might have leisure, or they might have other things, opportunities that they can use to enrich the master, to promote his kingdom.

And some servants do that well. Some do better than others. With a single mina, one made ten minas.

With a single mina, another made only five. But the idea is that everyone was going about their master's business while he was gone. Now, when he left, his subjects, some of them, said, we don't want him to be our king.

This would represent the fact that when Jesus ascended to heaven, the Jews, his subjects, his former subjects, rejected him, said, we're not going to follow him. We have no king but Caesar, they said to Pilate. Jesus isn't our king.

And so, of course, when he comes back, he slays those who refused his kingship. Some people would apply this to the 70 AD, when, of course, the Jews who rejected Christ's kingship were wiped out by the Romans. But I think there's more involved than this.

Because when Jesus did wipe out Jerusalem in AD 70, he didn't give his reward, he didn't make his servants rulers over five cities and ten cities. I think this is looking beyond that. This is looking to the place where Christ returns, his kingdom is made visible, he comes back enforcing his authority, which he does not currently do in the same manner.

And he kills his enemies who have resisted him, and he rewards his servants. Now, there's one servant who didn't do very well because he didn't try. Now, we can only speculate what would have happened if this servant had invested his money and hadn't made a profit.

Let's just say he made a bad deal. He was afraid that that might happen. Perhaps he was afraid even more that he might lose the investment and have less to give his master when he came back than he was given.

And he saw his master as an austere man who would probably punish him if he didn't make a profit for him. Now, Jesus indicates that the master says, well, I'll judge you out of your own mouth. He'd say, I'm an austere man.

If you think I'm an austere man, you probably should have been more afraid to produce nothing. You could at least make low-risk investments, like put money in the bank. You don't make much off of it, but there's not much risk either.

Generally speaking, you don't lose your investment. Your capital doesn't disappear when you put money in the bank. You might get very little off it, but you don't lose it either.

Better to get something for your master than nothing. If you don't have the courage and the faith to make high-risk investments, which can yield tremendous returns, like laying your life on the line as a missionary, for example, so that a whole tribe of people can be brought to Christ, that's making a high-risk investment of your life. But it can produce a great deal.

If you don't have the faith to do that, why not at least a small investment? A minor investment. Some kind of investment. Not just sitting around doing nothing.

Not deciding that my Lord's away, and I'll just ignore the business He gave me to do. I'll do what I want to do. After all, there's a lot to lose here.

He's an austere man. Now, Jesus is not necessarily teaching that God should be viewed as an austere man. But to those who neglect their responsibilities, His dealings with them can be fairly severe indeed.

And anyone who is wise enough to fear God and to know that He does enforce His assignments that He gives to people and punish those who don't keep them, would seemingly be motivated to do at least something. This man just didn't really care. This man was apathetic.

The man who invested a mina and only got five back, he didn't do as well as the guy who got ten back. But he was given reward nonetheless. A different reward.

He got five cities instead of ten. But that was still an elevation of his status under his king. The one who didn't do anything was just apathetic.

So what Jesus is of course saying is that God has given everybody something to do. And some advantage to invest. And these investments are supposed to be made to enrich the king.

When he comes back there will be a rewarding of those who have done well. In this respect. And those who don't do anything with it, they'll lose even what they had.

The initial investment will be taken from them as well. And given to someone else. So this is really in many respects similar.

In some details and certainly in the general meaning. To the story of the talents in Matthew 25. Which has been covered when we went through Matthew.

But this story has an added reason for being told. Because it introduces the element of the nobleman going away for a long time. Going away on a long journey.

And coming back and his servants being required to occupy themselves profitably during that time. And Jesus told that parable because some didn't know that there was going to be this delay. Some thought the kingdom would appear immediately.

And it wasn't going to appear immediately. It was already here. And in chapter 17 Jesus had said the kingdom of God does not come with observation.

You can't say lo here it is or lo there it is. But the kingdom of God is already in your midst. It is here.

But it hasn't been observed. It's not appearing yet. But it will.

When Jesus returns. His kingship is a reality that we accept by faith. We don't see him on the throne.



But we've been told that he's there. We don't see his authority exercised completely in the earth. But we have been told that he's been given all authority.

And those who take that by faith actually obey him and follow him. And take seriously the stewardship that he's given us. And realize that there may be a wait.

He's gone on a long journey. It may be a while before he gets back. But he will be back.

And when he's back he's going to elevate those faithful servants to the positions that he believes they have essentially earned by their faithful stewardship. And that is the message of that particular parable.