

Gospel of Mark Chapter 10 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is "sex, money and power". These are the three words that represent the most likely reasons people focus on their needs and ignore the needs of others. In other words, the reason we put our own desires over others, is because we want better sex, or more money or more power. Yes there are other things, but those three words represent a good summary of the desires of our heart in terms of what we crave for us and opposed to God's desire for our lives.
 - a) If that introduction doesn't scare you away, nothing will. ☺
2. Let me explain further: The first major story of this chapter deals with the issue of divorce.
 - a) What is going on behind the scenes is that some of the religious Jews argued that a man could get a divorce from his wife for any reason he wanted to. Others argued that the only allowable reason for divorce is infidelity on the part of the spouse.
 - b) This debate occurred because some religious Jews really wanted to be with another woman, and they were looking for an excuse to divorce their spouses in order to have sexual relations with someone else. Therefore, some Pharisee's wanted "easy divorce" so they could move on. Others argued for strict divorce in order to avoid this situation.
 - c) The Pharisee's confronted Jesus on this issue. Those Pharisee's were not really interested in Jesus' opinion on this debate, but just wanted Him to take one side or the other in order to get Jesus to lower His popularity.
 - d) Jesus answered the debate question by stating in effect that God's desire is for men and women to leave their parents and get joined to a spouse. In other words, God's desire is for us to "give of ourselves" and put the desires of our spouses over our own desires and in that way, be happy in our marriages.
 - e) This leads me back to the lesson topic. Jesus is teaching us the secret to a happy life. It is not by finding someone new, but by putting other's needs as a priority over our own.
3. OK, after that serious issue, the chapter fails to lighten up. ☹ Jesus now moves on to the issue of power and money. The next major story involves a person who was rich, young and some sort of ruler. This young man states that he has kept the Jewish law since he was a kid.
 - a) It is important to state the fact that Jesus said He loved this young man. Yet, Jesus also told the person to sell all that he had, and come follow Him.
 - b) I get the impression (my opinion) that if the "young ruler" stated he was willing to do that, Jesus would not make him go through with it. The issue is not so much money or power, but the idea that we have to be willing to give up everything in order to follow God.
 - c) When we give our lives to God, we are saying in effect, "Everything we have now belongs to God and it is up to Him to decide what to do with our "stuff"".
 - d) The main point of this story, like the first story, is that if we are willing to put our lives in God's hands and completely let go of control, then we will be much "freer" than if we desire to keep any and all stuff that we have. This again, comes back to the human desire for more "sex, money and power". Our human desires for stuff are never, ever fully satisfied and we can never be happy by having enough "stuff". Therefore, the only way to true happiness is not a vow of poverty, but a vow to put our lives in God's hands and say in effect, it is His problem as to how much stuff (or whatever) I have in this life.
 - e) The underlying point is to learn the concept of letting go of control. That is the true way to deal with marriage and sexual issues, money and power issues. In other words, God is not saying that we can never have this "stuff", it is just that we have to remember that this "stuff" was given to us by God, and ultimately, it is up to Him to decide how much we can have and for how long. Our lives are in his Hands, and therefore, we need to let Him be in control of our desires for these things.
 - f) Believe it or not, with all of that stated, I believe we are ready to begin Verse 1.

4. Chapter 10, Verse 1: Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.
- a) Let's start with that first phrase: "Jesus then left that place". What was that place? The last place reference was "Capernaum". This was Jesus' home base of operations. So why is that mentioned? Because Jesus is now beginning his last trip towards Jerusalem to when and where His death and resurrection occurred. In other words, Mark wants us to know the journey to the next event is now taking place.
 - i) Understand that "Capernaum" is in the northern part of Israel. Jesus now had to travel south by foot to get to the southern portion of Israel, which is Judea.
 - b) The next part of the text says that Jesus crossed the Jordan. What that most likely means is that Jesus traveled south along the Jordan river and stayed on the east side of the river until sometime later when he then crossed back over to what is properly Israel. There is a classic joke in Israel that says, "The Jordan River is the only river in the world with only one bank". ☺ That is because people are always arguing over ownership of the land of Israel, west of the Jordan River.
 - i) We are about to get into a big discussion between Jesus and some Pharisees about the issue of divorce. Before we do that, why does the text mention that Jesus crossed the river? That has nothing to do with the verses coming up.
 - ii) I suspect the text just wants us to know that Jesus left the "Sea of Galilee" region and traveled "around" (east of) the area where the Samaritans lived.
 - c) The rest of the verse implies Jesus got to wherever he intended to go. It says that Jesus was now in Judea, which is the southern region of Israel and yes includes Jerusalem.
 - d) The next sentence mentioned that crowds gathered and Jesus started to teach. In other words, the whole verse is setting us up as a transition from where Jesus was at the end of Chapter 9 to where Jesus starts out here in Chapter 10. Mark, the writer of this gospel just wants to know that Jesus is on the road again, traveling and teaching.
5. Verse 2: Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"
- a) Now we get into the key point of this: A debate between Jesus and some of the Pharisees. One gets the impression that it was not Jesus intent to get into this debate, but some Pharisees (devout religious Jews who belonged to this sect) started this with Jesus.
 - b) As I stated in the introduction, there was a debate among religious Jews over the issue of divorce. There was one popular (Jewish) school of thought that said in effect that a man could divorce his wife for essentially any reason.
 - i) The other school of thought was the only allowable reason for divorce was if the spouse was guilty of adultery.
 - ii) The point is there was a split amongst the Jewish people over this issue. The Pharisees were hoping that Jesus would take a side and lose popularity.
6. Verse 3: "What did Moses command you?" he replied. ⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."
- a) The strategy Jesus took on this issue was to take the debate "to a higher level". Instead of taking sides, Jesus asked in effect, "What does the bible say on this issue"?
 - i) Jesus answered their question with the question about how the bible "reads"?
 - b) The Pharisee's knew their bible well, and said that Moses permitted a man to divorce her wife and send her away. Their answer didn't solve the debate, but just acknowledge what was the issue.
 - i) The Pharisee's answer is a reference to Deuteronomy 24:1. That verse states a man was allowed to write a slip of paper, which in effect divorces his wife. The debate question was what would it take to allow a man to commit such an action. Some said it was only for infidelity and others said it was for any reason at all.
 - ii) In the next verse coming up, we learn why Deuteronomy 24:1 is in the bible.

7. Verse 5: "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶But at the beginning of creation God `made them male and female.' ⁷ `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
- a) Now we actually get into the issue of divorce. Jesus puts an end to this discussion by saying in effect, the reason the Jewish law permits divorce is due to the "hardness of our hearts". Long before the Jewish law was established, in the "first days" of mankind, it was God's intent for a man to leave his mother and father and get joined to a wife.
 - i) Jesus is saying that through the law, divorce was permitted because God understood how stubborn people could be, but it was God's intent for a man to leave his parents (both physically and mentally) and be joined to a wife.
 - ii) Remember that most marriages until modern times were arranged marriages. (Having daughters, I think this is a good idea. ☺) Therefore, loving one's spouse was something one had to learn to do. Further, one had to learn to accept one's spouses good and bad points and learn to live with that spouse.
 - iii) The intent of marriage as God designed it, was to be a mutual decision (again, usually by the parents, not by the bride and groom) and then the newly married couple had to learn to love one another despite their differences.
 - b) Well, as they say, that opens a big can of worms. ☺ While this lesson is not a complete guide to the issue of divorce, let me try to go over some of the biblical points on this issue.
 - c) Let's start with "God's intent". Jesus is saying in effect, that it is God's desire for people to reach a point in their lives where they leave their parents, get married, and then in effect become joined to their new spouse.
 - i) Jesus said the reason that the law, which came many centuries later, permitted divorce is due to the "hardness of our hearts". Translation: We are not willing to be forgiving of people and what they did wrong, and we would rather divorce them than to tolerate how that person has (and is) hurting us.
 - ii) Let me go back to "God's goal": The bible spends a lot of time teaching what is God's desire for our lives and how to live a life pleasing to Him. Included in that topic are a significant number of points about marriage.
 - iii) I am married and God knows my own marriage has faults. I have to admit the most convicting part of this verse to me is the part about being "united to my wife". One fault I have is I spend too much devotion to this ministry and not enough devotion to my wife in comparison. Just reading that phrase makes me realize this is something I have to work on. Understanding that the idea of being "uniting" with one's spouse is not a one-time thing, but a lifetime commitment and a lifetime of working to please one's spouse.
 - iv) In effect, it goes back to the issue of "loving one another", which was Jesus' command for all disciples. If we are married, it is about putting the needs our spouse over and above our own needs and desires. That includes simply spending time with our spouse and working to fulfill their desires.
 - v) I once heard from a devout Jewish person on the radio who said that the ideal marriage is when both people are working to "out do each other" in making the other person happy, or fulfilling the other's needs.
 - a) Since nothing on earth can ever make a person "fully happy", it is a lifelong goal (and a moving target) to be pleasing to our spouses and working to put their needs as a priority over our own needs and desires.
 - vi) My goal here is not to discuss my marital issues, but to get all of us who are married to understand the importance of loving our spouses and putting their needs as a priority over own. Ok, enough on that issue.

- d) Let me ever so briefly discuss the bible and divorce.
 - i) Since it is God's goal for people to "cling to their spouses", divorce does not please God. (See Malachi 2:16). However, if one reads the various lists of sins that are listed in the New Testament, (e.g., Galatians 5:19-20), divorce is never on those lists of sins. In other words, God understands that divorce does happen and He still wants a loving relationship with us despite the effects of a divorce.
 - ii) I am also painfully aware that this is a complicated topic. I have watched two of my siblings get divorced, and several close friends. The point of this section is not to deal with every possible marital issue, but to understand what is God's purpose in designing marriage and God's purpose in allowing divorce, even though divorce is not something God desires for our lives.
 - iii) I also know of cases where men have physically beaten their wives. In such cases I urge the wives to get away. My point is that I don't believe it is God's intent for spouses to just "sit there" and take physical abuse.
 - iv) A man at my church is also a court-appointed marriage counselor. He said that most couples he sees in counseling have already mentally decided to divorce and that his counseling is usually a waste of time. If there is anything I can learn from that fact, it is that God can do what is impossible for us to do. That is why I pray for my wife and my marriage every day.
 - e) Meanwhile, Jesus is finished arguing with the Pharisee's. Jesus' point in effect is that it is God the Father's desire for men and women to be married to each other. Yes, there are exceptions and yes there situations where divorce does happen, but I (Jesus) am just going to focus on God's intent for our lives and avoid the debate over how and when one should get divorced as that is not God's intent for society.
8. Verse 10: When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."
- a) One has to remember that the reason the Pharisee's were asking this question about divorce, is that many of them believed in the idea of a "quick easy divorce" so they could then go and then have sexual relations with someone else they desire. In other words, if society allows quick and easy marriages and divorces, than that society is saying in effect, "Here is how we can get around the problem of committing adultery".
 - b) The underlying issue is not divorce and adultery, but the "hardness of our hearts" in that we don't want to give up our desires and are willing to harm the desires of our spouses in order to make our desires come true.
 - c) So, does this mean if we get divorced, we should never marry again? The short answer is we are allowed to get married again. The more difficult answer is that we have to pray to God about what He wants us to do about the situation. Sometimes couples get divorced as one person becomes a strong Christian after they get married. Paul spends some time dealing with that issue in 1st Corinthians Chapter 7.
 - i) Sometimes our spouse commits adultery. Before we immediately say, "It was all their fault", one must at the least, examine our own lives and ask, "why have I done to cause my spouse to make that decision?"
 - ii) Sometimes a divorce happens that is beyond our control. The secret in such situations is to think about one's own part, what one could have done better in terms of letting go of one's own desires and learn from one's mistakes.
 - d) A good marriage requires hard work on the part of both spouses. Sometimes each spouse gets so busy with other things, it damages the relationship. The secret is to let go of the issue causing the problem and give it to God to fix. I have learned the hard way that when I let go of what I desire in order to please my wife, God usually gives me what I wanted in the first place after I took the time to do what God did desire for my marriage.

- e) Meanwhile, Jesus ends this discussion with the simple comment that anyone who divorces his or her spouse to marry another commits adultery. That is the essence of that verse. Again, that is not a command against remarrying after a failed marriage. That is a command to not divorce so one can then go "fool around" with someone new.
 - f) The goal here is to put all of our desires, including sexual ones into Gods' hands and saying in effect, "It is His problem to work out my marriage and my desires. If I give those desires to Him, He work those things out His way, on His timing for His glory." One may not like how God works it out, but one must accept His desires for our lives are much better than anything we desire.
9. Verse 13: People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.
- a) Right after this "heavy" topic of divorce and adultery, we get a few verses about people bringing their children to Jesus. A key point of this little story is that the disciples tried to stop the children from coming to Jesus. He in turn rebukes the disciples and tells them that in order to be saved, one must come to Him like a little child.
 - b) This story is similar to one from the previous chapter. (See Mark 9:36-37.) So why are these verses mentioned here and how is that relevant to the chapter?
 - i) First remember that the disciples were trying to prevent little children from coming to Jesus. It is not that the disciples were anti-children. It is just that they thought that Jesus' teaching was for only for adults.
 - ii) Jesus counters this argument by saying in effect that in order to be saved one must have the attitude of a little child. It is the idea of completely trusting in God the same way a child is completely trusting in their parents for their needs.
 - iii) In other words, children don't worry about whether or not their parents have the money to provide for them food or clothing. They just trust that those things will be there and their parents will take care of them. God wants us to have the same sort of trust in Him that little children have in their parents for survival.
 - c) The next question is in effect, "Why are these verses here at this point?" In other words, why include this story here in between the story about divorce and the next big story, which is about Jesus dealing with the "rich young ruler"?
 - i) The answer comes back to the issue of trusting God. Some people seek divorce because they seek their own happiness over their spouses needs and they have come to the conclusion that they would be happier without their spouse.
 - ii) Again, I am very aware that divorce is a complicated issue and it cannot be summarized quickly. Since we can't fix our spouses, all we can do is focus on our own lives and "serve" our spouses by working to make their lives better by making them a priority over "us".
 - iii) Back to the text, coming to Jesus like a little child is similar to the concept of letting go of our desires for a better marriage or more money or "whatever". The great secret and challenge of Christianity is trusting God like a child would!
 - d) These verses end with the point of Jesus putting His arms around little children and blessing them. My point here is to remember the importance of children's ministry as well as being loving to the little children around us.
 - i) Given that fact that most Christians do commit their lives to God before they finish their teenage years, tells the importance of children's ministry.
 - ii) Satan is also quite aware about when people commit their lives to Christ and to put it simply, people who are heavily involved in children's ministry are often the center of his attacks to make those adults ineffective witnesses for Christ.

- e) Just as marital issues require us to put those issues completely in God's hands, so those that work with children must also completely put those issues in His hands.
10. Verse 17: As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
- a) OK, just when you think this chapter can't get any more difficult to deal with, we now have the story of the "rich young ruler." This story is told in Matthew and Luke's Gospel as well as here in Mark. Each gospel sheds some different light on this story.
- i) Luke 18:18 say that this man was some sort of ruler. No other details are given.
- ii) Mark says in Verse 25 (coming up) that he was rich.
- iii) Matthew 19:20 says that he was young, whatever "young" means. ☺
- iv) By putting all three together, we get the famous title of the "rich, young ruler".
- b) All we have here so far in the story is that this young man called Jesus "good teacher" and he asked Jesus the question in effect of "What do I have to do to go to heaven"?
11. Verse 18: "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone.
- a) In Verse 18, Jesus just focuses on the phrase "Good teacher".
- b) Jesus point is not that he wasn't good. Jesus point is that He wanted this young man to understand that all humans have faults, and therefore, the only entity that is truly good is God alone. This does not mean that there are not nice people in the world. It just means that all people have faults as we are all born with a "sin disease".
- c) Therefore, Jesus is simply trying to get this man to comprehend that if he wants to seek the one who is truly good, then he (the young man) must seek God alone.
12. Verse 19: You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.' " 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."
- a) This ruler was either Jewish or knew enough about Judaism that Jesus could ask whether or not he desired to keep the commandments of the Jewish law.
- b) Notice he said he has kept the "law" from his youth. He specifically said he has not defrauded anyone. He is claiming he got his wealth legitimately. Therefore, when Jesus says to "Sell what you have" (next verse), it is about selling off what he "fairly" got.
13. Verse 21: Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.
- a) This young man is famous in the bible as the only man Jesus didn't help to "get better" among all the people who have come to Jesus asking for help.
- b) There is a view among the religious Jews of that day in that if someone had wealth, that was a sign they were being "blessed by God".
- c) One thing I am very grateful for, is the fact that the New Testament never says, "You must give up all of your wealth and give it all to the nearest church." Personally I have a hatred of any Christian preacher who emphasizes money over salvation. Preaching the gospel is about salvation and not about coercing people to give to their particular cause.
- i) Ministries that teach, "If you give to God, He will give back to You far more than you ever gave", usually make the ministers rich, and not the givers.
- ii) Don't get me wrong. I am not against giving to our local churches. I believe you should give where you are being blessed and give in areas where one sees people making a difference for God. Christian giving should be a little like picking stocks in a stock-market. One looks for stocks that give the best investment. The same with giving. We should look for ministries that are making a difference for God and then give to help them grow in that ministry.
- iii) That is why I don't solicit money for my ministry and I thank God that He provides for me so that I can keep this ministry going.

- d) Getting back to the verses, the issue is not so much giving but the fear of "not giving". The reason Jesus told this man to give up his wealth is not so the man could be poor, it is so the man would learn to trust God and not his wealth for his survival. This is why I believe if this "rich, young ruler" agreed to give up his money, Jesus would then say in effect, "OK, hang on to money, but remember that all (emphasis on all) of it belongs to God and now you must fully trust in God for your survival and not your "savings".
 - e) As to the rich young ruler, I'm sure his "face fell" because he thought he was doing all the right things and he thought he was financially rich because he trusted in God. The fact that Jesus asked him to give up his wealth is what hurt his feelings.
14. Verse 23: Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."
- a) To read these verses, one has to remember that the disciples probably believed that to have lots of wealth is a sign God is blessing that person.
 - b) With that said, Jesus said it is difficult (not impossible) for someone who is rich to enter into heaven. The issue is not having stuff; the issue is mentally letting go of one's wealth.
 - i) The point is not for us to take a vow of poverty. The point is for us to realize that all we own belongs to God and not us.
 - c) Jesus specifically compares a wealthy person entering heaven to a camel trying to go through the eye of a needle. There are some commentators who say the "eye of the needle" refers to a relatively small hole in a city wall that a camel could squeeze through if one pushes hard enough. I completely disagree with that view. I believe Jesus is talking about a sewing needle that has a small hole at the top end. Jesus is saying in effect it is impossible with those who trust in money to get into heaven.
 - i) So does this mean that if I inherited a lot of money or if I have made a lot of money in my lifetime I can't get saved? The question is, "Are you trust in your wealth for your "well-being" or are you trusting in God?" If He decided to take away all of our savings tomorrow, would you or I still trust in Him? That is the question.
 - ii) There once was a rich woman named Selena, Countess of Huntingdon, (in England) who said after her conversion to Christianity, that she was "saved by the letter 'M'". That is based on the bible verse that says, "Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. (1st Corinthians 1:26, NIV). The verse doesn't say "any" but "not many".
 - d) Let's say we have some money, be it a little bit or a big amount in savings. Is Jesus saying I have to give all of that money to charity and take a vow of poverty? No. Jesus is saying that if we want to spend eternity with Him, we need to say to God in effect, "All I have is now yours", with the "You" being God. That means that we are putting our trust in God for all things. If it is His will to increase our wealth or if it is His will to take it all away, it is His problem, and not ours.
 - i) Let me put it another way: God wants us to be wise with our money and not give it to the first person that comes along. God wants us to seek Him for our financial decisions and use good biblical wisdom as to how to spend our money. It is interesting to consider the bible has more to say about money and possessions than it does about having faith in Him.
 - ii) I can't tell you in a few paragraphs, how to properly handle whatever resources God has given you. I do believe we should financially support wherever God is blessing us and wherever He is guiding us to help, be it time or money.

- e) Finally notice Verse 27 says, "With God, all things are possible".
 - i) If we are willing to put our trust in God, then we also have to trust that He knows what is best for our lives "financially". We have to trust that He has a plan for our lives; He will lead us; and if we are willing to follow Him, He will provide for us.
 - ii) We can only get to heaven by "letting go of control" of such things as money, power, etc. If we seek God, He will make it known to us what we are to do with whatever financial resources He has provided to us in this lifetime.
15. Verse 28: Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"
- a) Peter and most of the disciples were fishermen. They left their business to follow Jesus. Even Matthew who was a tax collector, walked away from his job to follow Jesus. In effect, the disciples are asking, "We have already left everything, what is in it for us?"
 - i) The answer to that question is the next three verses.
 - b) Before I move on, if we have made the decision in effect to "walk away" from whatever we own or have, the key is to trust in the fact that God will take care of us. I don't know how God will provide for my future, but I trust that He will. Think of it this way, "God has not gotten us "this far" to now let us down the rest of our lives.
 - i) Don't get me wrong. I still believe in good financial planning and working hard to provide for my family. I don't know how God is going to work in the future so I do my best with what I have. With that understood, I do my best to let go of control and if God decides to change my plans, I go with what or where God is leading me and trust that He will work things out.
16. Verse 29: "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."
- a) Jesus is saying that if we are willing to walk away from our family and our parents for His sake, that He will reward us a "hundred times over" in this life as well as the next.
 - i) I have met Christians (and there are people who read this bible study) who come from backgrounds where they literally have to leave their families to follow Jesus.
 - b) So what does it mean to receive a "hundred times as much" in this lifetime?
 - i) Think of it this way, if we have given our lives to God, and now are spending time with other Christians, we now should have lots of "brothers and sisters" who are willing to help us in times of need and in the next life as well.
 - ii) It means the new friendships one develops as a Christian is far greater than any relationships lost due to the conversion to Christianity.
 - iii) For the newer Christian who is afraid to tell their parents or "whoever" that they have committed their lives to God, don't panic. God will work on His timing to deal with that issue. Focus on serving "Him" and he will take care of such details.
 - iv) As far as receiving "new brothers and sisters and parents" to make up for the one's lost due to conversion, again, that is on God's timing and not ours. If you or I are committed to following God, then we should "naturally" want to be with other Christians and develop relationships with other believers.
 - v) A sign that one is saved is that one has a desire to be with other Christians. Let's say one is shy and has a hard time developing relationships. The key is just to start attending church and events at that church. Over time, even if one is very shy, such relationships will develop and one will gain far more brothers and sisters who will become far closer to you than anyone and everyone you have lost.

- c) Let's suppose someone on their deathbed truly accepts Jesus as their Savior. How do they have time to accept this reward? In such cases, the benefit comes in the next life, not this one. That is why the time to give our lives to God is always "now" and not at the last possible moment. The friendships I have developed as a believer are far greater than any and all relationships that I was born into (e.g., parents, siblings, etc.)
 - d) I should also state that one should not ignore one's blood-relatives. If such relationships are now dangerous to our survival, they should be avoided, but if that is not the case, such relatives are still our relatives and we should still treat them as family members. If anything our new lives should be a living witness to them.
 - e) Remember that our lesson theme is about "sex money and power". People who are not saved cling to those things as they think those things lead to happiness. Jesus is teaching that if we are willing to give up such things, we will have far greater rewards and in most cases, far greater friendships than everything or anything one could get in this lifetime.
17. Verse 32: They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid.
- a) The story now goes back to focusing on the fact that Jesus and the disciples were traveling from the northern area of Israel, going south and headed toward Jerusalem. The disciples and others following Jesus were afraid as it was now common knowledge that the Jewish religious leaders were jealous of Jesus and wanted Him dead.
 - i) The point is, there is a lot of fear during this walking trip to Jerusalem.
18. Verse 32 (cont.): Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³ "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."
- a) Jesus uses that "time of fear" to explain to the disciples again, that He will be betrayed and killed by the Jewish leaders. Jesus is saying he will be handed over to the "Gentiles", which in this case is a reference to the Roman government leaders. Jesus then explains very bluntly that he will be killed and rise again on the third day.
 - b) So why didn't this sink in to the disciples? This is the third time Jesus explained it.
 - i) For starters, the disciples were still mainly concerned about what is going to happen to them. Therefore, the thought of Jesus rising on the third day probably meant to them that the "Kingdom era" would start and that Jesus would rule over the whole world from Jerusalem.
 - ii) In other words, the disciples were not concerned with Jesus dying for their sins, they were concerned with ruling over the world with Jesus as their leader.
 - iii) My personal guess is that the disciples could sort of "get the part" about Jesus dying and rising again. They didn't get the purpose and they were still mainly focused on their own future and well being. In other words, if Jesus is going to be rejected and killed, what is going to happen to them?
 - c) In many ways, this ties well to our lesson theme. The disciples are concerned about the fact they gave up everything to follow Jesus. He just stated a few verses back that people who give up everything to follow Him will have a "hundred times more" in this lifetime. So, how will that be true if Jesus is rejected, dies and then rises again? I can see where the disciples would be confused on this issue.
 - i) So what does this mean for the Christian? It means to truly "let go" and trust that Jesus has risen from the dead and is right next to God the Father in heaven.
 - ii) It means that if we are willing to "let go of all we have", God will give us far greater rewards in this lifetime than anything and everything we could possibly accumulate on our own while being alive on this planet.

19. Verse 35: Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."
- a) Two of Jesus disciples asked to be seated next to Jesus "when He comes into glory".
 - i) Why are they asking this now? I believe it is because they believe that Jesus will start ruling over the world from Jerusalem right after "rising from the dead".
 - b) In a sense, they are only asking for what was promised to them. If you read in Matthew 19:28 or Luke 22:30, Jesus promised that the disciples would also sit in "twelve thrones" judging the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - i) In other words, these two disciples are asking to have the two seats next to Jesus whenever this "ruling over Israel" process begins.
 - ii) So how does the "twelve" actually rule over the Israelites? Since one of them (Judas) betrayed Jesus, how exactly does this work? My personal view (take it as that) is that it won't be just the eleven remaining apostles and say, Paul deciding the fate of the Israelites. It may be "that way", but that's not how I see it.
 - a) My view is that the church will occupy these 12 chairs ruling over and judging the 12 tribes of Israel. Whether or not the 12 chairs are just for "saved Jews" or just for the apostles or for the whole church is another mystery we are going to have to wait until the next life to find out.
 - c) In the meantime, Jesus has to deal with the issue of these two disciples asking to be seated at the best "place of prominence". Jesus' answer to this question is in the next few verses.
20. Verse 38: "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" ³⁹ "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."
- a) Notice that Jesus does not deny that these "twelve thrones" exist.
 - b) Also notice that Jesus says they will "drink the cup I drink and be baptized the same way". Does that mean that all the disciples will die on the cross like Jesus did? We know that most of the disciples were killed for their faith but did not die the same way as Jesus.
 - c) Here is what I believe Jesus is getting at: Just as Jesus gave up His life for our sake, so our belief in that fact makes us (in a sense) equal with Jesus in that we enter heaven sinless. We become (symbolically speaking) baptized the same way Jesus was baptized in that we fully accept His payment for our sins.
 - d) The next point Jesus makes is that God the Father (not Jesus) decides who gets to sit next to Jesus in heaven. Obviously, I believe more than just 11 of the 12 disciples are saved.
 - i) When one reads the book of Revelation, there are references to twenty-four (24) other thrones around God's throne. (See Revelation 4:4.) Some Christians argue that those 24 thrones don't belong to people, but to some sort of "angelic beings" that protect God's throne.
 - ii) I hold the view that those 24 thrones are for Christians. Somehow, someway, we as Christians will be "individuals" in heaven, but at the same time, can occupy the same space at the same time. Therefore, I hold the view that the church somehow sits in these those thrones.
 - iii) How we physically do that? I have no idea. If my theory is correct, why are 24 thrones necessary? Why not just one throne to represent the church? I don't know, I'm just giving my opinion based on the facts given in the bible.
 - iv) It comes back to the fact the bible focuses on how we are to live our lives "now" on earth and we let God worry about what we are do in our next life in heaven.

21. Verse 41: When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.
- a) In other words, the other ten disciples were mad that they didn't think of asking this question first, before James and John thought of asking that question.
22. Verse 42: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- a) Jesus uses this moment about who sits next to Him (in Heaven) to teach the disciples about the concept of being a good servant. I've discussed this heavily in the last lesson. In essence, in order to be great in heaven, we must learn to be the "slave of all".
 - b) Maybe that is why there are 24 thrones in heaven. (Again, see Revelation 4:4.) One's place of prominence is based on our ability to fully trust God with every aspect of our lives and our willingness to act like the "lowest of slaves" when we deal with others.
 - i) To act like the "lowest of slaves" does not mean we have to quit our jobs and go take on the lowest of jobs. It means that whatever role or position we are called to in life, we have the attitude that we "work for God" and therefore in terms of "prominence" we are no better than the lowest ranked slave.
 - ii) Again, Jesus' one new commandment Christians is to love one another (John 13:34). That means we live with the priority of putting the needs of others as a priority over our own needs. Maybe (I'm speculating again), that is why there are "twenty four thrones of prominence" and we are placed in heaven based on our willingness in this life to be the lowest of slaves to those around us.
 - c) Jesus ends this little speech with a reminder that even He came to serve others and it is the job of Christian believers to do likewise.
 - i) Jesus did not come to earth 2,000 years ago as a great king. He came as the "lowest of low's" to teach us to act likewise. One reason Jesus was born in a manger and never gained any great political or financial prominence is to teach us the proper attitude of the Christian believer: To view ourselves as "having nothing" in that all we have belongs to God. If we are willing to live our lives that way, we will be far better off not only in this lifetime, but in the one to come.
 - ii) That ties well to my lesson theme. It would also be a good way to end this lesson, but of course, we still have a few more verses to go. ☺
23. Verse 46: Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
- a) First, a technical note: There are actually two cities of Jericho. There was the older city that existed at that time, and nearby a newer city built by the Romans. I state that because Verse 46 says they were "approaching Jericho" and Matthew's gospel (20:29) says that they were leaving Jericho. Both answers are correct.
 - b) Anyway, between the two Jericho's was a blind man named Bartimaeus who when he heard Jesus was passing by, he asked Jesus to have mercy on him.
 - c) It is important to note that he called Jesus "Son of David". That is not just a reference to Jesus' family history, but as a title of the Messiah. In other words, this man was calling out to Jesus as the Messiah, the promised King of Israel.
24. Verse 48: Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

- a) This blind man was rebuked by others. I don't think the "rebukers" had a problem with this man asking Jesus for help. They had a problem with calling Jesus the Messiah.
 - b) Notice Jesus does not deny anywhere in these verses that He is the promised Messiah.
 - c) The disciples told this blind man to stand up because Jesus is calling out to Him. At that point, the blind man stands up, throws off his cloak and asks for his eyesight back.
25. Verse 52: "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.
- a) Notice that Jesus just said "Your faith has healed you" and then immediately the formerly blind man could now see. There was no special method of "touching the eyes". Jesus just said he had the faith to be healed and "that was that".
 - i) So does this mean that any blind man (or deaf person or whatever), has the faith to believe in Jesus, will then immediately be healed? The answer is that miracles are up to God and not up to us to perform on demand. Still, we should ask for such miracles and it never hurts to ask. The point is it is up to God, not us.
 - b) Let me ask the more important question: Why is this miracle mentioned here and now?
 - i) I'm sure part of the reason is the disciples remember this miracle happening while they are traveling on the way to Jerusalem.
 - ii) The related answer is that the disciples just heard Jesus talking about dying and rising again on the third day, and I'm sure they were scared about what was going to happen to them during and after this event.
 - iii) Therefore, one of the benefits to the disciples here at this point, is if they see Jesus do a great miracle here, it reassures them that Jesus truly is both God and yes, the promised Messiah to Israel.
26. Let me tie all of this together now:
- a) Jesus spent a lot of time teaching the disciples through a series of events, miracles and preaching that not only is He God, but that we should be willing to give up everything we own and we will receive far greater rewards in this lifetime by "letting go of everything" than by trying to hold on to everything.
 - b) Jesus "indirectly and directly" discusses the three main things that people try to cling onto in this lifetime: "Sex, money and power". In other words, people who live to maximize this life want to maximize these three things. One of the reasons the Pharisee's discussed divorce is a lot of men wanted to leave their wives for "better sex" with someone else. One of the reasons the rich, young ruler" was asked to give up everything in order to follow Jesus, was not about making the man poor and powerless. The idea was about letting go of all of these things and letting God be in charge of all of these things. The idea how to have great things in this life as well as the next is to be willing to completely let go of the desires of this life and trust God to provide for this life as well as the next life. That will bring far greater freedom and power than trying to acquire any and all things that this life could have to offer.
 - i) The "willingness" to live like the lowest slave (in our attitudes) is not only because Jesus told us to do so, but so we can live the best type of life one could possibly imagine, both in this life and in the next life.
 - ii) The willingness to give up everything does not make us poor, it makes us rich. It is the realization that everything belongs to God and it is up to Him to decide who gets "what", and "when" in this lifetime.
27. Let's pray: Father, help us to keep our focus on serving You. Help us to let go of control of the things of this life. Help us to remember that all we have belongs to You. Help us to use whatever resources you have given us "wisely" and for Your glory. Help us to trust that You will provide for us and give us all we need. For those of us who are married, we pray for our marriages. For those who desire to be married, we pray for their future spouses. In all things, guide us as we live to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.