

Lesson 17: Chapter 19 & 20 “Where is your treasure?”

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_19.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 18 focuses on humility, forgiveness, and unity in the Christian community. It emphasizes that true greatness in God's kingdom is found in humility, like a child, and the importance of seeking out lost sheep (those who have strayed from the church). It also underscores the need for unreserved forgiveness, even for repeated offenses, and outlines a process for addressing sin and restoring those who have erred within the community.

Memory Verse:

19:26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Lesson Opener:

Where is your treasure?

The streets of Cairo were hot and dusty. The tour guide took us down an alley, past Arabic signs to a gate that opened to a plot of overgrown grass. It was a graveyard for American missionaries. He pointed to a sun-scorched tombstone that read: "William Borden, 1887-1913."

Borden, a Yale graduate and heir to great wealth, rejected a life of ease to bring the gospel to Muslims in Egypt. Refusing even to buy himself a car, Borden gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars to missions. After only four months of zealous ministry in Egypt, he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25.

After describing his love and sacrifices for God, the inscription on the grave ended with a phrase I've never forgotten: "Apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life."

The guide took us straight from Borden's grave to the Egyptian National Museum. The King Tut exhibit was mind-boggling. Tutankhamen, the boy king, was only 17 when he died. He was buried with solid gold chariots and thousands of golden artifacts. His gold coffin was found within gold tombs in a burial site filled with tons of gold. The Egyptians believed in an afterlife--one where they could take earthly treasures. But all the treasures intended for King Tut's eternal enjoyment stayed right where they were for 3000 years until Howard Carter discovered the burial chamber in 1922.

I was struck by the contrast between these two graves. Borden's grave was obscure, dusty, and hidden off the back alley of a street littered with garbage. Tutankhamen's tomb glittered with unimaginable wealth. Yet where are these two young men now? One, who lived in opulence and called himself king, is in the misery of a Christless eternity. The other, who lived a modest life on earth in service of the one true King, is enjoying his everlasting reward in the presence of his Lord.

Tut's life was tragic because of an awful truth discovered too late → he couldn't take his treasures with him. William Borden's life was triumphant. Why? Because instead of leaving behind his treasures, he sent them on ahead."



Lesson Goal:

God can make the impossible possible.

Lesson Body:

Chapter 19:

Marriage and Divorce (19:1-12)

Ch 19 marks a turning point in this gospel, Jesus finished His ministry in Galilee and began His journey to Jerusalem. The Pharisees approached Jesus again to "test" Him, not to learn His true identity but to discredit Him with the people.

Some Jewish Rabbis allowed divorce only in case of adultery, while others allowed it for any trivial excuse, like the wife not cooking well. The Pharisees wished to test which school Jesus was following for the divorce.

Jesus explicitly affirms the sacred nature of marriage and that the marriage covenant between a man and a woman is unbreakable. Polygamy, homosexual unions and free unions are not defined as marriages and are offenses against the dignity of marriage.

They argued that Moses allowed divorce. So, Jesus said, Moses indeed permitted you to put away your wives on account of the hardness of your hearts, and to prevent a greater evil, lest through your cruelty you should kill them; but in the natural law signified by verse 8 "but from the beginning, it was not so.", referring to from the beginning of creation.

People cannot be lifted from moral corruption to a high standard at once, God let humans grow in morality gradually.

Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler (19:16-22)

The rich ruler seems to have come with sincerity, but without a strong intention to leave his worldly goods and possessions, believe that Jesus was the Son of God and follow Him.

Our Savior, correcting his misconception, tells him that God alone is good, insinuating thereby, that he should believe Him to be God, or not address him by the title of “good teacher”.

When Jesus reminds him of the commandments, the young man responds that he has lived in accordance with those commandments and asks what is lacking in his life; he is asking what he can do above and beyond obedience to the Law to please God.

Jesus intended to bring out the fact that the young man had made an idol of his riches. He loves God but not enough to be willing to give up all his material possessions to follow Jesus from place to place. He would like to be a disciple of Christ but was not ready to pay such a price.

Jesus wished to show the young ruler that he had not kept the full law, thus, to show him that he needed a greater pursuit of righteousness.

With God All Things Are Possible (19:23-30)

"How hard is it to get a camel through a needle?" It's very hard. In fact, it's impossible. But Abraham and David were very wealthy. The disciples, like many of the Jews of their day, believed that those who were rich were those who were righteous.

And so, when this rich young ruler came to Jesus, asking how to obtain eternal life, these disciples saw this man as a godly man, whom God had blessed greatly with wealth. When Jesus turned this man away, the disciples didn't know what to think. And then Jesus begins to discuss how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were thinking, "If the rich, the most blessed of God, can't enter, then nobody can enter." And so, the question comes, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus responds to this question in verse 26 "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."



Jesus is simply saying that salvation is impossible for those who trust in themselves and in their wealth. The Lord does not say that a rich man shall not enter, but that he shall enter with great difficulty.

Peter literally "left everything" to follow Christ. The apostles denied themselves even the desire and tendency of possessing anything. Jesus assures them that they will share in a rich spiritual inheritance. Jesus tells us that everything we give up will be rewarded many times.

He will make it up to you in abundance! No one will ever get to heaven and say, "Boy, I gave up my house on earth, and all I get is this tiny apartment?"

Chapter 20:

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-laborers-vineyard.html>

Peter, in verse 19:27, wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven in this parable. The design of this parable was to show that the Gentiles, though called later than the Jews, should be made partakers of the promises made to the Jews.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—represents God, whose grace and mercy are shed abundantly upon those of His choosing.

We are all sinful and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but His grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness. Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Savior, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

The message in verse 16, “the last will be first, and the first last,” is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all—an eternity of bliss in heaven. The thief on the cross, whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as St. Paul. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different levels of rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life can be achieved by all equally.



Greatness Is Serving (20:17-28)

The two disciples didn't yet get what Jesus was talking about in verses 17-19. The warnings about Jesus' sufferings went in one ear and out the other. It seems James and John thought Jesus was going to Jerusalem to set up a kingdom, take His throne and not to die. They made quite a big request of Jesus. Grant that we may sit, one on your right and one on Your left.

He first replies by asking them a question, verse 38. In other words, "Are you willing to follow me to the end? No matter what the cost is?" This was what Jesus required of His disciples. He didn't promise material benefits, prosperity or power. What He offered was the living water, the bread of life, the way to the Father. And He wanted faithful, committed followers who would follow Him to the end. In fact, this is what it would cost. Jesus knew the persecutions these disciples would face and wanted them to be ready.

They answered they were able to suffer like Jesus and He told them that they would. St James was the first apostle out of the twelve that suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem, (Acts 2) and St. John at Rome was put into a cauldron of boiling oil and later exiled to Patmos.

While our Lord does have the ability to give what the disciples asked [sit on the right and left], He could only give it according to His Father's will and the laws which He had fixed. Christ answers them as if He was saying, it is not mine to bestow, because you are not yet deserving, because of your pride in seeking to be preferred over the other apostles, I need you to be humble and heaven will be prepared for you as well as others.

The other ten wanted the recognition and status that John and James were asking for. It seems that all of Jesus' teaching on humility and letting others go first hadn't taken hold yet. They still desired to be the greatest, to be the top disciple.

World leadership is about commanding others what to do. God wants His people who are leaders to lead by example, to lead by serving, to put others first, and to do it with no desire for personal credit.

Greatness is not making others feel small to build ourselves up. Greatness is building up and helping others.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

<https://sermons.rvbc.cc/sermons/2004-037>

Why is it hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom?

1. Riches can make you proud: The rich think that they are the ones who worked the hardest, have talents, and are better than others.
2. Riches can distract you: When you are wealthy, there are many opportunities for you. The more you have, the more you need to manage the things you have.
3. Riches can satisfy you: The rich in this world can so enjoy this life that they have little to look forward to in the life to come. Not only a sense of satisfaction and self-reliance on wealth that keeps people away from God but also the sense of attachment to things that makes them comfortable whether they are rich or poor. Following Christ requires letting go of these things and sacrificing our comfort which the rich young man refused to make.
4. Riches can deceive you: Like the seeds that fell on the land with thorns, they choked them. Riches can deceive you and cause you to think "Is God really important?"

When you compare each of us to each other, we don't seem to be too rich. But when you compare Americans to those in the 3rd world countries, you will find that all of us are very rich. There are billions of people in this world who only make a few hundred dollars a year. There are many who live in poverty. They eat simple meals, sleep on simple beds and wear simple clothes because they can't afford anything else. There are many who have no opportunity to escape the poverty into which they were born. They have little in this world. As a result, they have little to be proud of, and little to be distracted by. They have little that will give them satisfaction. Of course, it doesn't mean that all poor people are close to God, but it might be easier for them than the rich.

Do you know one of the reasons why there are so few coming to Christ today in America? It's because they are probably wealthy and don't need God. They have their job. They have children. They watch their favorite shows. They have their fun-filled vacations. Everything seems to be going pretty well for them, and they are quite satisfied with life. Now, why do they need Christ? They have everything that they need right here on the earth.

Many churches now are like the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church [Rev 3: 16]. They think that they have it all. They are self-sufficient. Is there is chance for us to go to heaven?

Yes, because God initiates salvation. God brings salvation to pass. If it is impossible with men, it is possible with God, then how could we go to heaven? Is it going to be because of what we do only?

No, because God makes it possible. Salvation is a gift of God; it is not something one can just work for or purchase.

Human efforts alone cannot save a man but are needed along with God's grace.