

Matthew 21-06-27b

Let's resume our study now, and here's the thing. We are looking at this context and reviewing what we saw last time because there is an attitude reflected, and that attitude is inherent in making the right choice. When it comes to standing on the finer points of spiritual doctrine and biblical doctrine versus the law of love and the law of sacrifice, which is a part of our age of grace, when in doubt, choose that which seems to most benefit someone besides me.

That's it in a nutshell. So what do we call that attitude where, as it says in Philippians, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, looking out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others. It doesn't happen overly often, but there are times when we have to choose between our own best interests and the interests of others, or our own preference, or our own desire, or even our own application of what we know to be true from the word of God.

If that comes into conflict with the best interests of those near at hand, this is our opportunity to make a good choice, a choice that represents the Lord Jesus and reflects His love. I could do a thing, but I'm not going to do it because I do not want someone in my near periphery to stumble. It's not worth it.

So with that in mind as background, we've now come to Matthew chapter 18. And it's very interesting, you need to put a finger in Matthew 18 and another one over in Mark chapter 9, because it is the telling of the story in stereo. We've got our left eye on one passage and our right eye on the other, and the slightly different picture gives us the real substance.

So in Matthew, at that time the disciples came to Jesus saying, who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? This is a wonderful and almost tongue-in-cheek distillation. Did the disciples come to Jesus? Yes they did. Were they saying who is the greatest? Yes they were.

But when you read that sentence, you think, oh, the disciples had an honest question about who is going to be the greatest. Lord, can you tell us who is going to be the greatest? What Matthew says is true, but when you look at how that came about in Mark, it's almost comical. So again, if you keep your finger in Matthew 18 and turn to Mark chapter 9, verse 33, Jesus came to Capernaum, and when He was in the house, He asked them, notice they're in the house, so much of Jesus' personal teaching for His disciples is not in front of the crowds.

It's considerate, it is thoughtful, it avoids shaming or embarrassing them in front of others. They're in the house. This is a private conversation between Jesus and His disciples, and He says, what was it you argued about among yourselves on the road? What was the argument about, the dispute? They kept silent, for on the road they had

disputed among themselves who greatest.

Notice all the words in italics there. They disputed among themselves who's greatest of us, we, 10 or 11 on the road. So they don't answer the question.

They say nothing. It's too embarrassing, but they should know by now that they might as well have gone ahead and said, because Jesus knows what they were disputing about. So Mark says in verse 35, Jesus sat down, called the 12 and said to them, if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.

If your motivation is to get ahead, if you're angling for position, power, influence, fame, possessions, if you're self-interested, in other words, if your motivation is me, myself and I, you're going to be dead last, bottom of the heap, serving everybody else. Jesus leads with that. That is not recorded in Matthew, but what happens next is, then he took a little child and set him in the midst of them.

And when he had taken him in his arms, he said to them, then we have another difference because Matthew says something that Mark does not say, and Mark says something Matthew does not say. And it's one of the reminders that both Peter, who gave the material for Mark, and Matthew were present on this occasion and remember it firsthand. And Matthew remembers parts of it and Peter remembers parts of it and include those parts in the narrative.

And when you put them together, you get a pretty complete or a more complete view of what actually happened. But what is our context now? What did we just talk about in the first session? Not causing others to stumble. What attitude does that require? I have to have an attitude of self-denial, self-sacrifice.

I'm not going to take things that are rightfully mine. I'm not going to do things I could rightfully do because I'm more concerned about this near at hand observer stumbling when it comes to the things of God, specifically the things of God. Right? It's in the realm of the temple tax, not politics.

What do you think of Caesar? How about that Roman guard down the road? None of that. This is with regard to spiritual things. I don't want someone, I don't want to be an obstacle to someone's growth and spiritual understanding and improvement of that understanding.

I don't want them worrying about what I say or what I do or how I act. And it deflects them from learning and growing in grace and knowledge of the savior. I don't want to be that impediment.

So turn back to Matthew chapter 18 and let's pick up our account. The disciples came to Jesus saying, they did come to Jesus and this is what they were saying on the road, but they didn't come to Jesus to say this. They're embarrassed and they don't want to talk to

Jesus about this.

But they were saying, who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? What is it in Mark? Just two words, who greatest. And when you put these two together, what do we discover? In the Mark account, which of us is the greatest right now? And when you put that with Matthew, if I'm great now, I'm going to be great in the kingdom. Those who are great now will be great in the kingdom.

Those who are least now are going to be least in the kingdom. This is how our human mind works, right? Oh, I'll put this in relatively abstract terms. But you can look around in the world of Christian ministry or Christian denominations or who's got a radio show or a TV show or a worldwide ministry supported by gifts and we'll send you a resource and all the rest of it.

And we would say, here are the great names in Christianity today. And we pull them off the radio, we pull them off the television, we find them. Now, irrespective of a judgment about those ministries, I'm simply pointing out that they are well-known.

There are some wonderful Bible teachers that are well-known. There are some well-known people who are terrible Bible teachers. And that's not just my opinion.

I can prove it. But notoriety or being well-known or having a very expansive ministry that stretches across great patches of the globe is one thing. You could say that by some standard, that is greatness now.

Maybe it's a good standard, maybe not. But what really counts? If you had a choice of being approved and blessed in God's eyes for five years here versus being approved and blessed for the entire eternal future ad infinitum, if you had to choose between the two, I'll either get a blessing from God right now or I'll get a permanent blessing from God that lasts for all eternity. We would all choose, well, why angle for what I can't keep when here I can gain something I'll never lose? Any sane person would choose the eternal blessing that you can never lose, right? It just goes without saying.

And yet, think about what we actually do in practice. We sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously live to please ourselves, to improve our situation here. This would be best for me.

This will improve my circumstance. This will resolve my problem. This will make me feel better, make me do better, make me live better now.

And we, most of the time, don't really think about the fact that by doing that now, we are sacrificing something in the future. By nature, we're very short-sighted. We're myopic.

And the here and now tends to be our reality. So how can we fix that? Well, this is what Jesus is talking about. If we could just remember, if somebody could paint a picture and

say, look, do you realize that this short-term tactical gain here is causing you to suffer an eternal strategic loss? We would think twice about doing this short-term thing.

So it comes down to perspective. It comes down to remembering who we are, why we're here, and what's on the line in our day-by-day decisions. It's not the decision to go to the mission field.

It's not the decision to throw myself on a grenade on behalf of my fellow Marines or something so spectacular and obvious. What determines greatness in the kingdom is the small, daily, mundane choices that add up. All of us have heard, although few of us have heeded, the wisdom that says, if you start saving when you're young, get a bank account that pays even just a paltry percentage and a half of interest or something, and then faithfully contribute, just put in a dollar a month, put in \$2 a month, and just put it in there, never take it out, never spend it, and let the magic of compounding do its work.

And if you start when you're in your early 20s and you just send a few dollars to this very modest interest-bearing account, by the time you are in your 60s and retirement age, there are literally, mathematically, millions of dollars in that account. And yet I never did more than put in a dollar or two a month. But there is a power at work in the financial realm called the magic of compounding.

Compound interest, it accrues interest, and then the interest earns interest. And all of that together earns interest. And it just accumulates and it multiplies and it starts to become exponential.

And by the time you're in your 60s, you can buy yourself a boat and float around the world, buying fine food at restaurants all you want because you had the wisdom to make these small monthly decisions to make a very easy, modest, sacrificial investment of a dollar or two. You know this works. And yet how many of us said, you know what, I'm 22, I'm going to start a bank account that gets interest and a half, you know, percentage and a half.

I'm going to put in, how many of us have paid a dollar or two a month into an interest-bearing account? And now we're in our 60s and we've got fabulous wealth. Why do we not do this? We were told about it. I know people that have done this.

I knew a guy when I was at Fort Sill. He was a captain in the Army, Captain Gordon, wonderful guy, married to another lady captain in the Army. And they would get themselves stationed, you know, the Army would work it out to where they could be stationed at the same post.

And he was really smart. And he explained this to me. And I was in my 20s.

What kind of fool am I that I didn't listen? But he had already been doing this for many years. And he told me, here's the progress I've made so far and projecting into the

future. My wife and I will be able to retire from the Army and never have to work again.

By the time we reach 40, this investment will have provided for all of our needs for the next 40 years beyond that. And I thought, wow, he is really smart and disciplined and thoughtful and informed. And I need to do that.

But then I got sent to Lebanon and, you know, things exploded and stuff happened and I just never got around to it. And now I'm on the grace retirement plan because I didn't, you know, try to be smarter in my younger years. Here's my point.

Think about that example. Now, here we are. We are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are alive right now. The Lord Jesus says, if you are smart spiritually spiritually and recognize that these small daily decisions, these momentary light afflictions, it's afflicting to be sacrificial. It's afflicting to give up something you were kind of counting on or expecting or hoping for.

Thought, boy, this will be great. I've planned for it. I've made arrangements for it.

And then something happens and it doesn't come to fruition. You know, life happens. Like this little piece of wisdom came from a lady when we were setting up the financing to get our house, the house in which we now dwell.

And I said, oh, well, I'm gonna sell my other house and we're gonna take the cash and pay off this note. So this is really a short-term arrangement. All this paperwork we're signing, it's hardly worth the time.

We'll be out of debt on this. We're gonna pay cash. We just need a couple of months.

We're waiting for our house to sell. And this girl who was 15 years younger than me or 20 looked up at me and she said, well, you know, let's go ahead and do this because life happens. Well, of course, life happened and we weren't able to pay it off like we thought we were going to.

And the house took a year longer than we thought it was going to to sell. And there were all kinds of defugalties. So what is the course of wisdom? What is Jesus actually telling us to do here by way of our Christian life? It's one thing to see things in the scripture, something else to go forth and be changed, be different, be a good representative of the Lord in the body of Christ day by day.

Well, this is it. Look at what he says here. Chapter 18 of Matthew, the disciples have been talking about greatness and they're talking about the kingdom.

They're talking about greatness in the future. Jesus called a little child to him and set him in the midst of them and said, assuredly, this is the word amen in Greek. A-M-E-N, amen.

We think that that's just the word you tell everybody you're finished praying with, but it means this is an absolute truth. It's actually a little bit of an awkwardness to put at the end of a prayer because it means verily, verily, you know, verity, verily. These are old words for truth.

Jesus emphasizes this is a really important truth. When he leads with amen or amen, amen, amen, verily, verily is how it gets translated in the King James. But this is good.

Assuredly, let me tell you something that is absolutely universally and importantly true. And then he emphasizes, I'm telling you this. Do you know who I am? Did you read the last chapter? Peter says, you are the Christ.

So this is the Christ talking and I'm telling you an important truth. Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. What a great evangelism verse.

You've got to be converted or you're never going to go to heaven. Is that, see, this is one of those, everyone is going to be afraid to answer questions. Is that what this verse says? You've got to be converted or you're never going to heaven.

Is that what it means? Is that what Jesus is saying? No, it is not. This has nothing to do with salvation, nothing, except that saved people are the subject of this teaching, but it's got nothing to do with how you get saved, what it means to be saved, where you go because you're saved, none of that. None of it is here and we can prove it.

Look at the verse. Very important truth that I am telling you, unless you turn, unless you turn. This is the word strepho, S-T-R-E-P-H-O, strepho.

The reason I point that out, I try to only give you Greek when it's meaningful. If you flip back a page to verse 23 of chapter 16, Matthew 16, 23, Jesus from that time began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised the third day. Very same thing we just had a chapter later, right? Jesus is telling his disciples, don't tell anyone where we're going, don't talk about this.

And his disciples are afraid to ask him about it. Why is that? Because the previous time he talked about this, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. This is Matthew 16, 22, took him aside and began, Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke Jesus.

How scary is that? Yet we do this sometimes when developments happen in our life. And we say, wait a minute, this isn't supposed to happen. This isn't the right thing.

I'm supposed to be blessed. The desires of my heart should be getting fulfilled. I should be mounting up with wings as eagles and I should be looking down from a lofty height on the poor peons who don't have Christ in their life.

And my problems should be getting resolved. I should be on the upward way, gaining new heights every day. There should be milk and honey flowing in the land.

What's the matter here? And we begin to question and in a sense, rebuke developments in our life. We begin to rebuke the Lord and say, why is God letting this happen to me? What's the matter with God that my life is not going better and doing better? And these things that I thought were going to be so easy, why wasn't I able to pay off my house in two months instead of years? It's all seemed so simple. If things had just fallen, if God had just blessed that situation, I could have gone back and said, well, life didn't happen to me.

Look, just as I told you, we've paid it off. We're all good to go. And we unconsciously by questioning the way life is turning out, it is a rebuke.

Well, what happens when you rebuke the Lord? Peter took him aside, began to rebuke him and saying, far be it from you, Lord, this shall not happen to you. Look at verse 23. He, Jesus, turned and said to Peter, Strepho, Jesus turned.

Why doesn't the verse just say, Jesus said to Peter, it says he turned and said. Why is that? Every word in scripture counts. Every single word.

Jesus turned and said. What was Jesus' previous attitude? How did things stand between Jesus and Peter? Just up above verse 17. Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven.

You're blessed because you're listening to the father and you are putting faith in what he says. Blessed are you. And there's going to be further things that are going to happen.

You're going to receive the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Now this statement that Jesus makes, I am sure came up in the discussion on the road. Who's going to be the greatest? Well, we know Peter's in.

Jesus just gave him the keys. He's going to be there and be great. But Jesus, his attitude toward Peter turns when Peter goes off the rails here and decides that the plan of God is not a good plan.

He turns. Well, turn has the same meaning in chapter 18. Unless you turn.

It's not our converted. It's the very same word as turn when Jesus speaks to Peter. It says, get thee behind me, Satan.

Jesus' entire countenance, attitude, and relationship at the moment with Peter turns. It changes. It's different.

When Peter says and believes good things, Jesus has one type of relationship with him. When Peter believes and says wrong things, there is a different reaction on the part of

the Lord. The Lord's attitude changes and it is the same with us.

So unless you turn and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, is this loss of salvation? No. The misunderstanding here comes because people, without good reason, equate entering the kingdom of heaven with having eternal life and going to heaven, as it were, after this life.

And that is not it. If you turn with me quickly to Ezekiel chapter 20, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel chapter 20. Look at verse 33, Ezekiel 20, 33.

"'As I live,' says the Lord God." This is another one of those emphatic introductions like Jesus just gave. "'Verily I say unto you, as I live, says the Lord God, "'surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, "'and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. "'I will bring you out from the peoples "'and gather you out of the countries "'where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, "'with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.'" We're seeing this in Zechariah, in the visions of Zechariah where God is going to judge the nations that have scattered Israel.

And God says, I'm gonna bring you back. I'm gonna gather you out of all these things and I'm gonna pour out my fury, my judgment on those nations. Verse 35, "'I will bring you into the wilderness "'of the peoples, there I will plead my case with you "'face to face.'" There is going to be a judgment where facts will be examined, evidence will be adduced.

"'Just as I pleaded my case with your fathers "'in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, "'so I will plead my case with you,' says the Lord God. "'I will make you pass under the rod "'and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. "'I will make you pass under the rod.'" This was a commonly understood turn of phrase in the ancient world.

Shepherds that had goats or sheep would count them as they went along a path, as they brought them into a fold or into a nook or cranny out in the wilderness. Make sure I haven't lost any during the day. How did the shepherd know that the 99 safely lay in the shelter of the fold, but one was lost in the hills far away? How did he know that? Because he had them pass under the rod and he tapped 98, 99 and there was not another sheep.

One of them is missing. These are his sheep, they belong to him. They are his possession, right? The lost sheep is not a wild sheep.

It's not a sheep that came from unknown forebears. It was a part of the flock and it got lost. He goes to find the lost sheep.

The son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. And we say, well, the lost or the unsaved who have never come to Christ. No, Jesus came to Israel to seek and to save God's people who had strayed from God's path and God's law.

That's why he came vis-a-vis Israel. Now he has other purposes of redemption and atonement that apply universally. But for Israel, I have come only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

That's what he tells the woman who asks him for healing for her daughter. So I will cause you to pass under the rod. I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

Look at verse 38. I will purge the rebels from among you and those who transgress against me. Rebels and transgressors.

Who in Israel is not a transgressor? Wouldn't this mean that everybody is going to be purged because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Everyone is a transgressor. What does God mean here when he says a rebel and a transgressor? These are those who have transgressed and not done anything about it.

They have not claimed God's grace. When you bring yourself to God and confess and are cleansed and restored and brought into the bond of the covenant because you want to be. Our version of that is 1 John 1, 9. We confess our sins.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. You read the rest of 1 John. We are not sinners.

We have no sin when we avail ourselves of God's cleansing grace. God forgets about it. We should forget about it.

The past is the past. Forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We forget what's behind.

We're not burdened and anchored and held back by sin or its consequences. It's in the present and in the future. We move forward, looking up, looking ahead, looking to Jesus in that hope of our finished faith, our completed faith.

Well, here, when God passes Israel under the rod, there are those who have repented, who have done the Psalm 51 thing, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow against thee and thee only have I sinned. And God separates sin from those individuals as far as the east is from the west, which is really cool because you keep going east, going east, you never come to the west because you're always heading east. If he had said north and south, it would have been a different thing.

The sins are impossible to catch. They're always too far away. But those who are rebels and transgress against me, I will purge, verse 38.

I will bring them out of the country where they dwell. This is a picture of resurrection of Old Testament saints. They will be raised up.

They're going to be brought out of death and the grave. They're going to be brought out from wherever it is that they died, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. You can be resurrected and not be in the millennial kingdom.

Guess what? You can be resurrected as a Christian and not be in the kingdom of heaven. If it was a universal place, it wouldn't be called a kingdom. It wouldn't have walls and gates around its capital.

There is the kingdom and being in the kingdom. And there is being outside the kingdom in the millennium and in the eternal future kingdom of the father. There are those who will be outside.

We've studied it many times. As for you, verse 39, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, go serve every one of you, his idols. And hereafter, if you will not obey me, but profane my holy name no more with your gifts and your idols.

For on my holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord God, there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land shall serve me. Some will be in, some will be out. Those who want to keep messing with idols, putting something ahead of God and his plan and his purpose are going to be outside.

But the house of Israel in the land will serve me. There I will accept them. And there I will require offerings and the first fruits of your sacrifices together with all your holy things.

I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. Then you shall know that I am the Lord when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised my hand in an oath to give to your fathers.

There you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled. And you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of the evils that you have committed. Then you shall know that I am the Lord when I have dealt with you for my namesake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings." Why? Because they have confessed, they have repented, they have been cleansed, they have allowed God to restore them and to bring them into the land.

Some do that and some don't. Well, that's the same thing we have in Matthew and Mark. So Matthew 18, once again, Jesus says, "'Unless you turn and become as little children.'" I wanna read you something by a man named Besser that I thought was really good in this regard.

He wrote, I don't know how many, sometime in the 1800s. But here's what Besser says, "'To turn thus is to become as little children, to become like the one that was being held in Jesus' arms. It came at the call of Jesus' kindly voice just because it was a child, without any conscious gratification because of its own tractableness.'" Because it came

when Jesus called, it doesn't take any pride in that.

"Just because it was a child, it in all simplicity allowed this kind man to do with it what he pleased, without thinking what an excellent child I am, that I am thus set before these men. Jesus calls the child and the child responds to his call and comes, not with any thought that aren't these men going to think I'm a wonderful honored child because I came when Jesus called. Child has no thought of that.

It allowed Jesus to take it into its arms and to caress it, feel itself a beloved child, knowing nothing of its loveliness. This child in the arms of Jesus is for the disciples an illustration of what excellence in the kingdom of God is. To permit," now this is the part I really want you to hear.

It meant a lot to me when I read it. "To permit oneself to be called, led, loved, without pride and without doubt in simple trust, that is child likeness, even as this is the nature of children who possess nothing, but need everything, who are able to do nothing, but receive everything, to earn nothing, but receive everything as a gift. Thus must all who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven become by conversion, by turning." Let me read that again.

"To permit oneself to be called, led, loved, without pride and without doubt in simple trust, that is child likeness, even as this is the nature of children who possess nothing, but need everything, who are able to do nothing, but receive everything, to earn nothing, but receive everything as a gift. Thus must all who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven become by turning." And that's why Jesus set that child in the midst. There's a lot of child likeness that is not pertinent.

Jesus will use children in another context and saying, well, we piped and you didn't dance. You know, we called and you didn't come out to play. We played the flute and you didn't sing.

Children can be ugly, children can be cruel. I was cruel to fellow children when I was a child and my fellow children were cruel to me when I was a child. There's a lot of really bad things that children can be and do even when they're little.

So what aspect of child likeness is Jesus focusing on here? It is this aspect that when Jesus calls this child, it comes to him completely innocently. He takes it into his arms and onto his lap. And he says, this right here, this example of behavior is what I'm talking about.

If you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, compare that to what they were talking about on the road. How great am I? How well thought of am I? What marks of greatness have already been apparent? And notice too that the disciples are talking about who will be greatest in the kingdom. Jesus says, if you're not like this little child in this respect of

coming when you're called without any thought of how great you are, you can't even enter.

Look at what he says. You will by no means enter. And this, oo may, by no means, you will not, this won't happen.

This is the strongest negative in Greek. It's the same one that Peter used with the Lord Jesus in the passage we just reviewed, where he said, Lord, this will by no means happen to you. Oo may, this will absolutely not happen.

Jesus says, if you don't have the humility and the selflessness and the thoughtlessness when it comes to how great you are that this child has, you will by no means absolutely ever enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, how do I know this is not about salvation? Are we saved based on how humble we are? How uninterested in greatness we are? Is that the basis of our salvation? No, salvation is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. By grace, you are saved through faith.

Doesn't say by grace, you are saved through humility. By grace, you are saved by denying yourself and taking up your cross. This is not talking about salvation.

You can be saved just like Israel can be gathered out of the nations from which they've been scattered, but yet to enter into the kingdom, to pass under the rod and go in and enjoy those blessings and proximity to the presence of God and the power of God and the opportunity to worship and to serve God and to reflect his glory is reserved for those who have the humility to love, to deny self, to act for the benefit of others. Jesus calls the child, the child says, Jesus wants to see me and he just comes. He has no thought for the disciples, no thought for the other children.

He's not interested in his own greatness. Jesus says, this lack of interest in your greatness is a requirement if you are even going to enter, by no means will you even enter if you don't get over this, how great will I be attitude. Therefore, whoever humbles himself and Jesus sharpens it to a fine point here.

This is about humility and it's not being humbled or being bowed down or having our knees knocked out from under us by circumstances. Humbles himself as this little child. If we consciously look and say, where is the path where I can sacrifice something of my own on behalf of someone else? Here's a choice, what path should I choose? Isn't this practical? Isn't this something that can guide us in day by day, hour by hour living? We always have options.

Well, is this the selfish option? Or if by changing my priorities and arranging my schedule and my efforts a little differently, someone else can benefit. I will let what I wanted to do or what I wanted to have or what I wanted to have happen, I'll let that go because here's someone whose interest would be served. Living with that attitude, that is the key.

It is the conundrum. It's the, people would call it an irony. It's a little bit of a misnomer, but it is unexpected.

It's a reversal of expectation that by denying yourself greatness in this life, you are given greatness in the next. By trying to lay hold of greatness in this life, you're leased in the next. The very thing you most seek in the short term goes away in the longterm.

And what you give up and forbear and let go now is granted in multiple exponential form in the next. And whoever receives one little child like this in my name receives me. That's fraught with meaning, but very quickly, people say, well, if I don't look out for myself, I'm gonna be taken advantage of.

If I don't ensure my own interests, I'll just, I'll be robbed blind. I'll never get anywhere. I'll never have anything I'll be taken advantage of if I don't look out for myself.

Jesus says, we need to be looking for people of humility and looking out for them. And if you receive one of them in Jesus name, you're receiving him. God is looking out for us.

God will never suffer the righteous to be moved. You're not going to end up regretting being selfless and in looking out for others who you recognize as selfless. If we would all be selfless and all look out for each other's interests, nobody's interests would fall short because instead of one person looking out for Sam's interest, everybody would be looking out for Sam's interest.

Instead of you looking out for, fill in your name here, interest, everybody. Would you rather have you alone trying to serve your interest or have everyone you know looking out for your wellbeing and trying to help and make things better? Which is better, a community that lifts each individual up? Isn't that the goal of all of this political and social unrest that people want individuals to have a better life? Well, come to Christ and live the life that Christ calls us to. Every social problem is solved.

Every setback is met. Every need is filled in Christ and in the body of Christ. Why try to do it in the way of the world when we can have the supernatural gold in the fish's mouth power of God to do it? Well, these stumbling blocks, remember, lest these tax collectors stumble, go hook the fish.

Jesus is gonna return to that in verse six and following in chapter 18, and we'll see that next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it speaks to us of the opportunity we have to be lifted up by your grace and your power instead of seeking to do it ourselves.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths and examine our own lives, that your Holy Spirit will illuminate our circumstances, our goals and our values, and help us to not just hear and understand what Jesus is talking about, but to actually live in this way, to invest the capital of time that you give us in an eternal future in a way that vindicates and

justifies the Lord Jesus and the effort that he put into teaching us and will reflect your glory in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.