Matthew 19 • Nothing is impossible with God

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We're going to read the first 12 verses before we open in prayer, and then we'll cover the rest of it too. It goes like this. *"Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.*

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." 7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

10 The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."" (ESV)

We're going to stop there for right now. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father we thank You for the opportunity this morning to gather in Your name and to just take some time to be in Your presence. Thank You Lord for that wonderful worship time. And just really pray that as we get into the Word now that You would speak words of grace, insight, and instruction.

Lord, these are challenging passages and so we pray that You'd help us to really lay hold of them. And we ask for Your Holy Spirit to do a work in our hearts. And we ask it in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Amen.

It's fascinating to me that this subject, this issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is just as controversial today as it was back in the days of Jesus, because there were all these debates that were raging back then concerning what was lawful as it relates to divorce. And so there was a longstanding debate.

And the various rabbis had various positions on what was allowed in terms of, divorcing; a man divorcing his wife. And so these guys bring this question, they put it to Jesus, *"Is it lawful to divorce"* your wife for any reason? Any reason at all? And that's the way they put it to Him.

And there were some rabbis that would have said, yes, yeah. Even if she like burned dinner, you can give her walking papers. By the way, women didn't divorce men. It was only men divorcing women. Haven't we changed? You've come a long way, baby, sorry. But anyway, sometimes, every husband in the room, you've seen your wife give you that look once in a while, haven't you? That Luke says, I think I'm going to have to let you go.

So they asked the question of Jesus and I suppose it was fairly natural for them to want to know where Jesus stood on this particular question because it was a huge debate. But I love, I just love how Jesus brings it back to the original authority of the One who created marriage in the first place.

And in verse 4 He says, *"Have you not read…"* And that's a great way to respond to a question like this. *"Have you not read…?"* In other words, you guys have been raised on the Scriptures you literally.

Do you know that when they taught young people to read back in those days they taught, it was a Scripture. It wasn't a, they didn't have a Dick Jane and Sally book. They gave them the Scriptures to learn how to read.

He's asking them, and it's a legitimate question, *"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast* (and hold fast) *to his wife, and the two shall become one…'"* And He goes on to say, *"So they are no longer two but one flesh."*

And then He gives that statement, which I like to use even when I do weddings right before or right after I pronounce a man and a woman, husband and wife. I repeat the statement, *"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."* But that's a statement that doesn't make everybody feel comfortable necessarily.

In fact, it makes some people noticeably uncomfortable because it's fairly in your face. There's not a whole lot of room here to wiggle. And we like wiggle room, especially when it comes to things that are hard to do.

But anyway, I just love how Jesus refuses to really even enter into the debate necessarily but instead, He brings it all back to the beginning. He says, let's go back, let's go back. Let's talk about marriage because you see we take the things that God gives us and we start to treat them like they're ours.

And we forget that marriage isn't ours. It's His. He created it. He came up with it. The whole institution was God's idea. Man never sat around one day around the kitchen table and thought, we ought to do this. We ought to come up with something where we bring men and women together for life.

This was God's institution, God's ordination of marriage. And yet we've messed with it. And so Jesus brings it back to talk about God's original intention in marriage. And what He is saying and make no mistake about it. He is saying that divorce is incompatible with God's original design. Okay.

And now that doesn't mean God doesn't allow things, that go beyond His original intentions. I mean, God never intended death to be part of His original design, and yet death entered in. Why? Because of sin. God never intended divorce to be part of his original design for marriage, but it entered in. Why? Same reason. Sin. Okay?

People get divorced because of sin. Right? We can come up with all your fancy names about, we're incompatible or we just, I don't know, whatever you put on the paper, it comes down to a three letter word, s-i-n. And that's the point of really what Jesus is saying.

And even though it is not God's, it never was God's original intention for divorce to be a part of marriage, it would be really tough to find somebody in this room who has not been touched by divorce. It has been absolutely rampant, and it's heartbreaking.

You'll notice that Jesus doesn't try to soft pedal this thing, and His words are really rather uncompromising, in terms of what marriage ought to be, versus what, we've made it, and so forth. And as I said, that lack of compromise never sits very well with people.

And you'll notice that there's interesting reactions to this. First, we have the reaction of the Pharisees in verse 7, where it says, well "*Why then did Moses*

command one to give (our wives) a certificate of divorce and… send her away?" And I want you to notice their language there. *"Why did Moses command us…?"* And what they're referring to is a passage in Deuteronomy 24. Let's put it up on the screen and we'll read it together. A two part thing here. It says,

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (ESV)

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, (and they debated what *some indecency* meant for hundreds of years) *and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce*

It goes on.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (ESV)

…and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

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Now, what did you see as the context of that fairly lengthy passage? Well, the context is passing a woman around, like she's less than a human being. And how wrong that is. That's the context of the statement. And yet what the Jews got out of that was, Moses commanded us to give our wives a certificate of divorce.

The first thing Jesus does is He corrects their language. Look at verse 8 in your Bible. He said to them, *"He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you* (Did you get that? He didn't command you, he *allowed you*) *to divorce your wives, but* (then He adds this statement at the end) *from the beginning it* (in other words, we're going to take it back to God's intent) *was not so."*

In other words, and this is important, guys. If you don't hear anything else, hear this. This is a classic issue between, I guess it's confusing a command and a concession. The Jews considered it a command from Moses. It was, however, not a command. It was a concession.

The command, if they really wanted to. If they really wanted to camp on a command, the command was, what God has joined together, let men not separate. That's a command. But a concession is a compromise. It's a compromise. It's a compromise that is laid out to allow something to take place because of extenuating circumstances.

And make no mistake about it, the extenuating circumstances in this situation is, He tells him right there, *"hardness of heart*. So He says no. Moses didn't command you. He allowed you, but here's why. Because your hearts are hard. And ultimately it was going to be better because some of your hearts are so hard, it's going to be better for your wife no longer to live with you in your home. And because your heart is so hard, it's going to be safer for her. Because women didn't have much in the way of rights back then.

So, this is what makes the… Have I made you uncomfortable yet, by the way? I mean, I hope I'm not doing anything. It's the Word of God. But this is this is the uncompromising stance that Jesus gives related to this.

And He says in verse 9, He goes on to make this other stand. Oh, and people love to debate this one too. *"…whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,…"* And the word there is a single Greek word. It's pornea. It's where we get our word pornography, but it refers to immoral sexual behavior. And specifically it would be going out on your spouse.

But He says, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality and marries another. *""…whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another,..."* And by saying this, Jesus expressed another concession, okay? Moses gave them a concession because their hearts were hard. Jesus is expressing another concession, saying if your marriage partner is unfaithful, they're the ones who broke the covenant of marriage. You are then

free. You don't have to leave the marriage, but you're free because the other person made the steps, took the steps to break the marriage bond, okay. By having sexual relations with someone other than you. All right. I'm sorry to make it uncomfortable sounding, but this is the challenging part. And it's gotten, oh, it's gotten so crazy.

I got a note from somebody just this last week and I didn't even respond to it. I'll be honest with you. That's very rare that I don't respond to someone's email and it wasn't somebody in our church. But I could just tell from the tenor of the message that there wasn't a willingness to listen. And so I decided not to even respond, but, and it was, well, if a woman divorces her husband because of such and such, are you telling me that God doesn't want me to be happy, and I can't remarry, and stuff like that? It's okay, we're not going to get anywhere with this.

There are some things you just can't respond to in an email. You know what I mean? It might take a long time to sift through the Word of God and really see what it has to say but always makes people uncomfortable. It made the Pharisees uncomfortable and you'll notice that it didn't sit very well with the disciples either.

Look at verse 10. What does it say in verse 10? *"The disciples said to* (Jesus) *him*, (and they said, good grief) *"If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."* Isn't that an interesting comment?

Well, if that's the case, if God intended marriage to be for life, what's up with that? Well, it's better not to marry. And by the way, they're not talking about living together either when they say it's better not to marry. They weren't suggesting that people should just live together instead.

Cause I, can I just say something? And then this will make you uncomfortable too. Living together outside of marriage is cowardly. It dishonors marriage and it disgraces the woman who is giving herself away without a commitment. And that was never God's intention. It's the way of the world. I know it, but it's still disgraceful. That's not what they were talking about. They're just they're like, well, I don't know. This is just, this is too rigid. I think it'd be better not to marry.

Sometimes when people are talking to me about marriage and divorce and what they can do. What qualifies, for me to get out of this marriage. One of the questions I want to ask is when you got married, how long did you get married for? Did you get married for 5 years? Were you thinking in your head? I think I'll give this a couple of years. You know what? 10 on the outside and after that,

I don't know, all bets are off. I may just blow this thing away. How long did you get married for?

Well, we all said the same thing when we got married. Presumably we said, till death do us part. And the words just fall out of our mouths like we mean them or something. But the fact of the matter is, usually we don't. I mean, good grief, why do people write prenups today? That's basically an insurance clause for when the thing fails. It's like getting a warranty on your car. Yeah, I know the camshaft on these isn't very good. It's probably going to go out. Let me get that extra warranty here so that when it happens, I'll be covered. Yeah, that's the way we treat our marriages. You can tell I got a cold. I don't care anymore. Don't care.

Anyway so Jesus responds to His disciples and He begins to speak of people who can receive this message and those who can't. He, in fact, He says, let the one who is able to receive this, receive it. And then He goes on to talk about eunuchs and you might wonder, what does that have to do with anything?

Well, He's talking about eunuchs because there are some people where singleness was either a personal decision, or it was forced on them, or they made a decision to forego marriage. And that's what being a eunuch was all about for reasons of the kingdom of God.

And He's basically talking about those who have one gift and those who have another. The apostle Paul talks about this too. There are people who have a gift of singleness. Did you know that? There's a gift of singleness and some have the gift of being married. And you need to recognize, what gift the Lord has given you. And some people can receive this message and some can't.

Now He goes on, it goes on here in verse 13 and following and it says, *"Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,* ***14*** *but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* ***15*** *And he laid his hands on them and went away."*

We don't know why the disciples were trying to discourage parents; mothers, from bringing their children to have Jesus lay His hands on them. It could be they were just trying to protect Him.

But when Jesus made the statement, *"to such belongs the kingdom of heaven,"* He is basically repeating what we studied last week in Matthew, the previous chapter where we observed Jesus would often cite children as an example or a

model for people who receive the kingdom of heaven due to their humility and openheartedness. And that's what he means when He says, *"to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* This isn't a statement as much as we might like to believe it. It's not a statement saying that all children go to heaven.

Now, I don't have a problem with that statement. I don't have a— when a child dies young, I don't have any problem at all believing that child goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. But that's not what He's saying here. You can't use this as a proof text of that particular statement. Again, He's just using children as an example, all right?

Now then we come to the last conversation of the chapter and in verse 16 it says, *"And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" **17** And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." **18** He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, **19** Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **20** The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" **21** Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **22** When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

***23** And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. **24** Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." **25** When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying,* (well)*"Who then can be saved?" **26** But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." **27** Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" **28** Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. **29** And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. **30** But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

This is a great story and I love the fact that Matthew shared it in as much detail as he did, because this is such an all-important conversation that gives us insight into the heart and mind of a person who's trying to earn their way to heaven. And that's exactly what Jesus is being confronted with. This young man who

comes along and frankly everything you need to know about this kid, or I don't know how old he is, he's a young man. But everything you need to know about this guy is revealed by his opening statement. I mean, if you ever wondered what an opening statement could tell you about someone, check this out.

Look at verse 16, again, in your Bible, *"And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"* And see, that's it right there. That tells you a ton about this guy. And I'll bring out two particular things, all right? Two things that his statement tells you about him.

First of all, he believed that eternal life was something to be earned. Because that's what he said. What do I have to do? What do I have to do? Okay? And he didn't just say, do I just need to put my faith in you? No. No. No. He said, *"what good deed must I do…?"* So he believed that heaven, eternal life, was earned through good deeds. Okay. All right.

But what's the second thing? The second thing is he believed he was capable. He personally was capable of doing it. Or being good enough. Or doing deeds that were good enough to gain eternal life. Otherwise, why would he have asked? Right? He not only believed that's the way you gained eternal life was by doing good deeds, but he believed he could do it. Okay.

So you know and Jesus knew too, He knew exactly, this guy opened his mouth. Okay, I know exactly what I'm dealing with here. He just, this guy just, he believes good deeds will get you there. He just needs to know which ones. Would you give me a little detail here about the good deeds that need to be doing?

And so what we know about this man is that he had reached false conclusions about how a person gains eternal life, right? We do believe, right, that these are false conclusions? I sure hope so. Yeah. All right.

When you pay close attention to how Jesus responds to this guy now, in these next verses, you're going to see that Jesus addresses his false conclusions first, before He even begins to answer his question. He addresses his false conclusion.

Now, what's the false conclusion? You can earn your way to eternal life. Look what Jesus says. Read verse 17 again here. *"And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good."* Stop there. Okay? That's it. Do you know, in that statement right there, Jesus answered his question.

The young man should have turned around and walked away right there. Because what Jesus was saying, if he had been paying attention, if the man would have been paying attention, is that you're not good, right? Let me show you these two statements side by side on the screen. Here's first of all the statement by the man, *"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"*

The man: *"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"*
Jesus: *"Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good."*

Jesus responds, *"Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good."*

Now, I don't know if the man thought Jesus was talking about him, the man himself when He said, *"There's only one good…"* But I mean, I think anybody would realize what Jesus was saying was there's only one who's good and it's not you, right? So if it's not you, why are you asking Me about what is good if you're not good. Why are you asking Me about doing good things to possibly earn your way to heaven? Why are you asking Me those questions?

See this is a theological discussion these two men are having. And it really comes down to this whole issue of the study of mankind. And even though we like to refer to each other as good. We'll talk about so and so, he's a good guy. Or did you hear what he did? He helped out that family. Their house had that house fire and he rounded up a bunch of people to give them things. And even got online and got people to give money. And he's a good man. He's a good man. And we say that and we and everybody agrees. Yeah. He's a good man.

Jesus comes along, He says, there's only One good, just One. And of course it's God. And what that does is that smacks you and me right in the face because He just insulted us. He insulted our pride because we like to think of ourselves as good. And Jesus simply blew that away, right?

But you know what? When people are convinced that they are good and that people can be good, they're not listening. And this man didn't listen either. Jesus comes out and He just says, there's only One who's good. But the guy wants to keep talking. He wants to keep talking about what he needs to do to be good enough. And that's what I find too.

When people are convinced that we're good people. You're good. You're good. I'm good. We're all good. You got to learn to be bad. That's what the world says.

Any badness or anything like that, it's a learned trait. You never raised children, right? Yeah. They can be monsters and they didn't learn a thing. They just came out of the womb, little monsters. But anyway, we did it 4 times over.

Jesus is, He's not, He realizes this man isn't listening to what He's saying because this man believes that he can be good enough. He believes that eternal life is gained by good deeds and so Jesus is going to have to prove it to him that he can't possibly be good enough. And so you'll notice that He went on to say to the man in verse 17, well, if you want to do it on your own. And that's what He means by, *"If you would enter life, keep the commandments."* Keep the commandments.

Now that's interesting word, isn't it? If I asked you right now, if I handed everybody in this room, a piece of paper and a pencil, and I said, keep the commandments, give me your definition of what it means to keep. Keep. It'd be interesting to see your responses, but ultimately it means obey. Right? He's saying obey, obey the commandments, all right?

And so He's saying, you got to keep the commandments. But again, of course, this guy isn't really listening. And if he would have been listening, he would have realized that keeping the commandments means perfectly keeping the commandments. This is something the Jews knew. Fundamentally, they knew and understood that if, when we talk about keeping the commandments, we're talking about doing it perfectly without fail. We're not talking about just having a good day once in a while. James actually explains this in his letter. Let me put this on the screen. From James chapter 2, he says,

James 2:10 (ESV)

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails at one single point, has become guilty of all of it.

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails at one single point, has become guilty of all of it.

You with me? This is what the Bible says, you guys. When we talk about keeping the commandments and obeying the commandments and stuff, we're talking about doing it perfectly. And if you mess up in one area, it's all over. It's all over than if you break one law. And by the way, everyone in this room has at least broken one law, then you are a lawbreaker. Isn't that just fun to think about? Well, see, this is the stuff that the Jews just, God had been telling them in the Hebrew Scriptures for centuries about the reality of this, but they weren't listening.

You might remember there's a passage back in the Book of Isaiah. This was written 700 years before Jesus was born upon the earth. Let me put it on the screen. Isaiah 64. He says,

Isaiah 64:6 (NIV84)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags…

All of us have become like one who is unclean, (and the word, unclean was a word meaning ineligible to come into the presence of the Lord, okay. In fact, he goes on to say) *and all our righteous acts* (and here's these good deeds this young man is asking about. What good deeds must I do? He says, you know what? All of your most righteous good deeds) *are* (basically) *like filthy rags…*

Well, boy, that just hits you in the bread basket, doesn't it? But why didn't this man know this? He was a Jew who'd been raised on the Scriptures. He wanted to really, truly, I mean, he genuinely wanted to be right with God. But God had made it clear, He had made it plain. You can't do this. It is impossible, all right? But they weren't listening. The best you can do still falls short.

After Jesus told this man that he had to keep the commandments and look at verse 18. He says, *"Which ones?"* Cause he, this is what he wants to know. I want to, I believe that I can keep these commandments, so just tell me which ones I have to keep. Okay.

"You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal,…" By the way in Matthew, remember in Matthew chapter 5? We learned that committing adultery is a whole lot more than having physical relations with someone, didn't we? We learned in the Sermon on the Mount, it's just entertaining lustful thoughts in one's mind. And He says, that's it, you've committed adultery. Yeah, anyway.

So he goes on to say, *You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,* ***19*** *Honor*(ing) *your father and mother,…"* And then Jesus added this last one. This is the proverbial straw that's going to break the camel's back. *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Right.

Now, I want you to listen to the response of this man who is so out of touch with God's Word and his own heart, that he actually has the audacity in verse 20 to say, *"All these I have kept."* I've kept all those. I'm good. Never murdered. Never adultery. No. Steal. Never stole. Never done any of these.

And then I want you to, but I want you to see what he puts on the very end. After saying, I've done all this. He says, *"What do I still lack?"* And that is really interesting because that is the futility of legalistic thinking. When somebody is caught up in legalism and they're trying to earn their way to heaven, they believe in a sense that they can do it, but they're never quite sure if they've rang the bell, as it were. Did I really climb all the way up to the pole and ring the bell so that I'm in because I'm not really sure.

So he says, *"All these I have kept. What do I still lack?"* So he has a sense of his lack. Right? But he still thinks that he can do it himself. Pretty incredible, right? So Jesus gives him that more that he's looking for. He says, what more? What do I lack?

Verse 21, *Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* What is Jesus challenging him to do in that verse? Do you know what He's challenging him to do? Love your neighbor as yourself.

Now he just got done saying, I've done all that. I'm good. I'm in fact, I'm golden. I've loved my neighbor as myself. Sure. Not a problem. Fine. Then take everything you have. Sell it, give the money to the poor *"and come, follow me."* Basically what Jesus is doing is, He's challenging him to carry through with what he believes.

Now listen, if this guy really truly loved his neighbor as himself, this command would be a piece of cake. Yeah. Sell everything I've got and give it to the poor. No problem. We'll get that done right now. That's not what happens, is it?

No. In fact, what we're told here is that the man *"went away sorrowful."* And I, it doesn't say why he was sorrowful. I hope he was sorrowful because he came to the realization that he was kidding himself about being able to keep all the commandments. I hope.

You know why I hope that? Not because I'm mean or anything like that, because it's conclusion that everybody has to come to in order to come to Jesus Christ. You have to come to the conclusion, I can't do this. I can't be good enough to save myself. I can't be good enough to earn my salvation. I need to cry out to God for His mercy. Right?

I hope this guy walked away sorrowful, at least thinking, wow, He rang my bell. I thought I was ringing the bell and getting it all done. And this guy, he opened my eyes. Well, anyway, the conversation with this young man generated some

comments between Jesus and His disciples. And it begins with Jesus saying in verse 23, look with me again there.

This is where He says, *"Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven."* And He repeats it saying, *"[24] Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle…"*

And by the way, that word for needle there, it refers to a sewing needle. There was a popular interpretation years ago that needle referred to a particular low gate in the Jerusalem wall and camels had to get down on their knees to get through it. No, incorrect. It's a sewing needle. And so, He's literally saying it's easier to stuff a camel through the eye of a needle, right? *"…than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* Well, that's a crazy statement and so the disciples correctly understand what He's saying.

And in verse 25 they, it says, *they were ...astonished,…"* And they said, well if it's that way for rich people, if it's literally impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, well *"Who then can be saved?"*

And I love what Jesus said, *"With man this is impossible,…"* Guys, did you just hear this? This is the conclusion to this whole conversation with this rich young man. It's impossible. You come to Me and you say, what must I do to gain eternal life? It's impossible. Don't even talk to Me about what you can do. It's impossible. You can't gain eternal life on your own.

But then he offers hope to each and every one of us by simply adding, *"but with God all things are possible."* All things. And that includes salvation and everything else. And that's such a wonderful, wonderful statement.

And then I love Peter, who always has to speak up and say things that are usually out of turn. But Peter speaks up and he goes, hey, listen, we've left everything. What are we going to get? That's what he's asking. And Jesus makes a lovely promise here about the fact that, that there will be recompense on the positive side for those who during this life on earth have given up the things that He just asked this young man to give up.

But He goes on and says, interestingly enough, that He says, *"when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* And that's a very fascinating, a fascinating statement given the fact that we know Judas betrayed him and was no longer an apostle, one of the 12. So who's it going to be? Who's going to be sitting on the twelfth throne? Well, it doesn't say. And we know that

the disciples picked their own replacement for Judas. I don't think it was a legitimate choice, to be completely honest with you, but you know what? That is nothing more than my opinion. So don't go telling people, well, pastor Paul says, because my opinion isn't worth anything. It's just my opinion. I think the apostle Paul deserved to be on that throne. But that's, again, just my opinion.

And then Jesus ends by saying, *"[29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold…"* On and on. *"[30] But many who are first* (in other words, first now) *will be last, and the last first."* And by the way, this isn't a salvation statement. It shouldn't be taken as a salvation statement.

It's just simply a declaration that those who are last in the eyes of the world today are going to be first in the kingdom of heaven. I think that's pretty cool. And the opposite is true as well. Those who are first now, in the eyes of the world, we'll be last in God's kingdom. And that's why we call it the upside down kingdom when we refer to the kingdom of heaven.

We're going to stop there. But before I close in prayer, there was one other thing I feel like the Lord reminded me of when we were talking about divorce. Or marriage, divorce, and remarriage. And I just wanted to add this, very quickly.

One of the most common questions that I get from people who have experienced a divorce and then have been remarried. And they later come to terms with the Word of God, which tells them that they committed adultery if they did not divorce for biblical reasons. They will often say to me, what do I do now? Am I living in sin?

Guys, can I just tell you, when you turn to the Lord and ask forgiveness, it's impossible to keep living in sin in the sense that you're referring to. There are teachers out there that are telling Christians, if you divorce wrongly, in other words for unbiblical grounds, and then you remarry someone else. And then you come to terms with the reality of what you've done, then what you should do is divorce your current spouse and go back and reconcile with your original spouse.

And basically what they're saying is two wrongs make a right because you see, God hates divorce, period. And two wrongs don't make a right, and it is not God's will for someone to blow off a marriage because they now realize that what they did in the past was wrong. If that defines you and you, we're married and you didn't really know what the word of God said, or even if you did, frankly. And you blew off your marriage and you realize looking back now

there wasn't any unfaithfulness. We just didn't like each other. And so we decided to get a divorce. And we went along and we each remarried and this and that. No, you don't divorce the person you're married to now. You start living for Jesus, right here, right now, with where you are right here, right now.

You just say, Lord, I've made mistakes in my life, some serious ones. And I've committed adultery and I've done things that I know weren't right. I ask You to forgive me. I ask You to cleanse me. I ask You to wash me. And for the rest of my life, this day forward, keep me in Your will and help me to walk with You with an upright heart, right? And the God we serve is a God of the perpetual second chance, I guess, is the best way for me to put it.

Sometimes you just can't go back and make reparation. There are some things you just can't do. And that's one of them so you start living for Jesus. You just say, You know what? I'm going to live for Jesus right here, right now. For the rest of my life. I'm going to do it His way, not mine, amen?

Let's stand together. We'll close in prayer. I'm going to stay seated because if I stand up, I'm going to be out of the microphone, so I'll just pray for you guys. If you need prayer, come on up. And we'd be happy to pray for you.

Father, I do thank You so much for Your Word. This was a hard chapter. Lord You got us through it, but it was hard. There were a lot of hard things to hear and it certainly can make us uncomfortable. But we are comforted knowing that even though many of us have made some pretty serious mistakes in life, that You are a God of mercy and forgiveness. And we come to You, Lord, and we confess our wrongs, we confess our mistakes.

We say, Lord, forgive me for the stubbornness that I carried out in my previous life. Forgive me, Lord, for making dumb decisions poor choices. And help me, Lord, to live for You from here on out and to submit to Your will. And to learn from You and to grow in You. And I thank You, my Father God, that You are so merciful and so forgiving, and that the blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior, keeps on forgiving us from all sin.

Be with us, Lord, as we go from this place. May we walk in the freedom of knowing that we are loved and forgiven from all of our sins through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

For it is in that name that we pray and all God's people said together, amen. Have a good rest of your Sunday.