Threading the Needle

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[0:00] Let me read it out loud for us. Luke 18, verses 18 to 34. And a ruler asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments.
Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.
And he said, All these I have kept from my youth. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor.
And you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. But when he heard these things, he became very sad.
[1:07] For he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

For 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. Those who heard it said, Then who can be saved?
But he said, What is impossible with man is possible with God. And Peter said, See, we have left our homes and followed you.
And he said to them, Truly I say to you, There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.
And taking the twelve, he said to them, See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.
[2:17] For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him. And on the third day, he will rise.

But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. This is God's holy and authoritative word.
So before we start, I just want to apologize. I don't have remote access right now to the slides, so you're not going to see slides. You'll just see that screen the whole time.
But I'll try to read to you the things that you need to know as it comes up. We've all experienced in our life various forms of and varying degrees of privilege.
In our world, privilege opens doors. It gives you access to places and people that others might not have access to. It tips the public perception in our favor.
[3:20] It confers power on those who possess it. But in our passage for today, we learn something about God's kingdom that is surprising. It teaches us that God's kingdom is not like any other kingdoms of this world.

It's an upside-down kingdom that even the rich and the powerful cannot enter. In fact, it is impossible to enter the kingdom of God except through faith in Christ the King.
That's really the main point of our passage. And first, we're going to go through and talk about the upside-down kingdom in verses 18 to 30. And then we'll talk about an unlikely king in verses 31 to 34.
A ruler approaches Jesus in verse 18 and asks him a question. And Luke usually tells us when he uses that word ruler what kind of ruler it is, whether it's a ruler of the synagogue in Luke 8 or a ruler of the Pharisees in Luke 14.
And when he doesn't specify it, he's usually referring to the members of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin is the highest Jewish ruling council. It rules on religious matters and political matters and legal matters in the Jewish society.

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[4:33] It's the highest ruling body among the Jews. And later, they're mentioned in Luke 23 and 24 as well and simply referred to as the rulers. And so it's probably a member of the Sanhedrin that has come down from Jerusalem to interrogate Jesus.

And this would explain why Jesus assumed that this ruler knows the commandments of God in verse 20. And so if we consider that, this ruler is a VIP in every measure.
He had religious standing. He had political standing. He had social standing. And as we find out in verse 23, he had economic standing.
Since he was extremely rich. He has all the privilege that you can imagine in this world. And he asks Jesus, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
And to hear someone like this address Jesus, to address him as good teacher, and to seek his spiritual direction, really must have been quite flattering to Jesus, if you think about it.
[5:38] Right? Here is this great member of the Sanhedrin, seeking Jesus out, asking for his advice, calling him good teacher. But Jesus responds with a correction in verse 19.

He says, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. In the original language that this is translated from into English, the personal pronoun me is in an emphatic possession.
It's in the front for emphasis. So really we should read it as, Why me do you call good? No one is good except God alone. And when he says that, Jesus is not denying that he is, in fact, good.
He is good. He is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the triune God who alone is good. He's a member of that, so he is good. But Jesus is here intentionally challenging the rich ruler's shallow understanding of moral goodness.
Because this ruler only sees Jesus as a rabbi, a human teacher, and yet he is calling him good teacher. This is what I call the PGP delusion, the pretty good person delusion, which is very common.
[6:49] It's an epidemic. Everyone that you talk to thinks they're a pretty good person, right? Of course, then what's the need for hell, and what's the need for heaven if everybody's a pretty good person? And many people in this world see themselves that way, and especially religious teachers, esteemed religious teachers like Jesus were considered good people.

But this member of the Sanhedrin really should have known better because Psalm 53, part of the Jewish scriptures and part of our Old Testament, says this, The fool says in his heart, There is no God.
They are corrupt doing abominable iniquity. There is none who does good. God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.
They have all fallen away. Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. This is what the scriptures that this ruler believes says.
There is not one man in this world that is good in an absolute sense, that God is good. Only God is perfect. Only God is good in that way. Yet here is this ruler thinking that he can attain eternal life by doing good.
[8:05] He thinks he can make the cut. And Jesus kindly but firmly reminds him that no human being can be called good in an unqualified sense.

That's precisely why Jesus had to come to save us. As Jesus said in the preceding passage, it's not those who trust in their own righteousness that are saved, but those who humbly entrust themselves to what only God can do to Christ's work of salvation on the cross.
Like a child, it's only they who will be saved. So we are not good people. We are not good people, but the good God has sent his son to be the good teacher to show us the way of salvation.
And so this ruler really unknowingly is acknowledging a profound truth. Yes, Jesus in fact is good in a much more profound sense than you understand. He is the son of God, the chosen one, the messianic king, and he has come to save you.
And if this ruler really understood that and knew who Jesus was, he should have left everything behind to follow him. But as we see in the following verses, he doesn't have that faith in Jesus.
[9:23] This ruler's question is exactly the same question that the Jewish legal scholar asked Jesus earlier in Luke chapter 10. And Jesus answers that question in much the same way by pointing them back to God's law.

It says in verse 20, you know the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. And these commands come from the Ten Commandments, the famous Ten Commandments, which is a summary of the entire Old

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Testament law.
The first four of the Ten Commandments deal with how we ought to love God with our whole heart. And the second half, the last six of the Ten Commandments deal with how we should love our neighbor as ourselves.
And that's why the command to love God with our whole selves and love our neighbor as ourselves is called the greatest commandment because it sums up the entire law of God. And Jesus here only lists the second half of the Ten Commandments, the parts that deal with our love for neighbor.
And that's not because loving God is not important. It's not because that's less important than loving our neighbors. In fact, we can't love our neighbors rightly unless we love God. But it's because, as Jesus taught in Luke 10, our love for God is concretely expressed in our love for neighbor.
[10:46] 1 John 4, verses 20-21 put it this way, If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

And this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must also love his brother. Similarly, our love for God whom we cannot see is evidenced, it's demonstrated in our love for the neighbors whom we do see.
And so here, Jesus uses the last commandments, the second half of the Ten Commandments as a test. Interestingly, the Tenth Commandment which says, you shall not covet is omitted from Jesus' list.
It's possible that Jesus sees that as the one command that the rich ruler is failing to keep, but I don't think that's what's going on since Jesus doesn't explicitly say that in this passage. I think it's more likely that he's just listing a few as representative of the entire Ten Commandments which happens frequently in other parts of Scripture.
They'll list three or four of the Ten Commandments and say that that represents the whole. And the rich ruler's response in verse 21 exposes his prideful delusion.
[12:01] He says, all these I have kept from my youth. Now, when he says that, he's not saying, well, I was a really bad kid, but hey, I cleaned up my act when I grew up. That's not what he's saying because Jews believe that the people were only held accountable for their moral actions from their youth.

It's around 13 years of age. And so what he's saying in essence is, well, then I'm blameless because I've kept it from my youth. He's saying, well, if that's the standard, then I don't have anything to worry about.
I'm all set. And when Jesus heard this, it says in verse 22, he said to him, one thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me. Jesus contrasts the one thing that the rich ruler lacks with all that he has.
He seemed to have it all. Political power, social clout, religious standing, and extreme wealth, which is the focus of this passage.
[13:08] But the abundance of his wealth was precisely what caused his spiritual lack. As 1 John 3, 17 says, if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Similarly, the rich ruler's lack of generosity toward the poor revealed the lack of love for his neighbors. Now, does that mean all of us have to give up all private ownership, all of our possessions, in order to get into the kingdom of God?
I don't think that's what this means. I don't think this means that Christians can't have or use money at all. It does not mean that in order to get into heaven we all have to take a vow of poverty and beg for a living, which some Christians in church history have done.
And we can see this clearly in the following passages, which we'll look at next week, about the story of Zacchaeus, who is a rich tax collector who does get saved. And Jesus doesn't tell him to give up all of his possessions and follow him.
There's a reason why Jesus makes this the criterion for entry into the kingdom for this particular man, for this rich ruler. It says in verse 23, But when he heard these things, he became very sad for he was extremely rich.
[14:38] Jesus knew that the love of money was the one thing that held this rich ruler back from wholeheartedly following God.

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Jesus' invitation to follow him is the standard way to describe discipleship in the Gospel of Luke. A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, who learns from him by watching him, imitating him, and listens to his instruction.
And instead of responding with joy at Jesus' invitation and gladly leaving it all behind to follow Jesus, this is an opportunity of a lifetime. And yet instead, he turns away sad because he loves his money more than he loves Jesus.
He was unwilling to relinquish his extreme wealth. This is a picture of what Jesus warned us about in Luke chapter 16 verse 13.
No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
[15:50] This rich ruler was trying to serve both God and money, and Jesus makes it clear here that you have to make a choice, either one or the other. Even though this rich ruler was otherwise a law-abiding Jew, even though he was blameless in some other respects of the law, he lacked one thing.

Money was the one thing he could not renounce. And this is a choice that faces all of us. What is the one thing that you lack?
What is the one thing that you're not willing to give up for God? Who is the one person that you love more than you love God? Is your academic performance or your career advancement the first priority of your life?
Is ensuring the future success of your child, making sure that she outshines all of her peers, is that the overriding goal that takes precedence over your child's and your family's and your own wholehearted pursuit of God?
Is appeasing or pleasing your boyfriend or girlfriend, your husband or wife, your parents, your boss, or your professor or advisor, is that more important to you than pleasing Christ?
[17:28] or as what's in view in this passage, is earning and saving money, more and more money, so that you have financial security and a deposit to enjoy life in the future.

Is that your most pressing concern? All of these things must be second to Jesus. Jesus must be first.
If you're going to call Christ your Lord and King, we have to subordinate all of our other allegiances to Him. Notice this.
I take comfort and warning from this passage often. Notice that Jesus does not negotiate the terms of discipleship as this rich ruler turns away in sadness. He's uncompromising.
He doesn't say, oh, hey, hey, just don't go just yet. Let's talk some terms. I see that you follow God in a lot of other ways, so here, I'll lower the bar for you a little bit. It's okay if you don't leave your money behind, if you still love it.
[18:35] Just follow me a second. Jesus does not do that. He doesn't say, I'll turn a blind eye to that one thing that you still lack. He says, one thing you still lack, sell all that you have.

That's the only way He can test His true allegiance. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. You cannot follow me until you renounce your love of money.
You cannot be my disciple as long as money is more important to you than me. If your greatest desire in life is for earthly treasure, then you cannot by definition have God as your greatest treasure and that's what it means to be a Christian.
If we live for the treasures of earth, we cannot expect to have treasure in heaven. And seeing that the rich ruler had become sad, Jesus laments in verse 24 how difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.
It's hard for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of God. It's highly unfortunate that we live in one of the richest parts of the entire world.
[19:54] 24-7 Wall Street which publishes financial news and opinion pieces online, they reviewed median household income for all the data from the U.S. Census Bureau for 381 U.S. metro areas, the cities and he concluded that Boston, Cambridge, Newton, this metro area is one of only five U.S. metro areas where most households earn at least $85,000 a year.

It's one of the five richest cities in the entire country. What that means is this, it's hard for our neighbors and our friends to enter the kingdom of God because of their wealth.

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Do you really get this? As Christians, we should know better than to dream of getting rich and living large. It is difficult.
That's what you daydream about. If you daydream about getting rich and living large in life, that is a spiritual emergency. you're in grave trouble.
It's difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Why in the world would you want to be rich? Don't desire to be rich.
[21:21] 1 Timothy 6 says very clearly, those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.
Thus falling into temptation, into a stare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction, does that sound enjoyable to you?
There will be people from our circles, from our church, that succumb to this temptation in the years to come.
Brothers and sisters, let's not fall into the temptation. Don't desire to be rich. It breaks my heart every time I go sit at a Starbucks somewhere.
[22:31] I invariably find somebody scratching lottery tickets. And sometimes they're not wealthy. Sometimes I see poor people that have asked me for money that I've given money to scratching lottery tickets.

That's where their hope is. Yet it's dragging them away from the Lord, from eternal treasures. If you work hard and steward your resources well and wealth is the incidental result of that, great.
In that case, use your money generously for the kingdom of God. Give sacrificially to the advancement of the gospel. Give liberally to the poor. Do that. But don't ever desire to be rich. Don't ever love money. Jesus continues his explanation in verse 25. For 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.
The camel is the largest animal native to that part of the world. It can be about seven feet tall, complete with a giant hump or two in its back. So you can imagine trying to get that through an eye of a needle.
[23:44] And it's supposed to be a silly image but also a shocking image that warns us. It's impossible for the camel to go through an eye of a needle. And so is Jesus saying that rich people can't be saved?

Well, that can't possibly be. So Jesus must be trying to say something else. That's kind of how we tend to rationalize it. In order to improve Jesus' teaching and make it more palatable to our sensibilities, some people suggest that there was in Jerusalem, in ancient Jerusalem, a certain gate, not the main gate, but a side gate that was so low that in order for a camel to enter through it, it had to kneel and humble itself and it had to unburden itself, take whatever is on its back off before it can go through the gate.
And some people say that that's what this means. Well, it doesn't mean that it's impossible for rich people to get into heaven. What it means is that you have to kind of lay it aside and then enter the kingdom of heaven.
That's what this is referring to. It's a romantic speculation. The only trouble with that interpretation is that there's no evidence whatsoever in all of history for such gate existing ever in Jerusalem.
And it seems to have been invented in the 11th century and it was a speculation based on an earlier teaching that was allegorizing this text.
[25:10] The point of Jesus' illustration is not that, well, it's actually pretty easy to get into as long as you just lay aside your wealth and enter in. The point of this teaching is that it's impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

A camel cannot go through the eye of a needle. And that's confirmed by verses 26 to 27. Those who heard it said, then who can be saved? But Jesus said, what is impossible with man is possible with God.
That's precisely Jesus' point. It's impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The allure of money is so strong, the distractions that it creates is so numerous, the temptations that it multiplies is so enticing that it's impossible for the rich to be saved.
As Bible scholar Daryl Bach puts it, wealth can shrink the door of the kingdom down to an impassable people. The self-focused security of the wealthy is a padlock against kingdom entry.

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In fact, we can broaden that further. It's impossible for any man to enter the kingdom of God with his own merit and in his own strength. But here is hope.
[26:40] What is impossible with man is possible with God. He's saying God alone can wean rich people away from their love of money.

God alone can wean us away from the various idols of our hearts. As Jesus speaks of salvation as something that is humanly impossible in this way, Peter seeks assurance from him.
In verses 28 to 30, he says to Jesus, See, we have left our homes and followed you. And he said to them, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.
As we saw earlier in Luke chapter 5, Peter, James, John, Levi, all left everything behind to follow Jesus. And that's the key.
It's not leaving everything behind that saves you. It's laying it behind so you can cling to Jesus and follow him that saves you.
[27:52] And many ancient Jews were disowned by their families for following Christ. And this happens today to many Christians in parts of the world where they face ostracism and persecution for following Jesus.

So to some believers, following Christ may literally mean having to leave house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God. But for most of us, this is not literally true. But even if this is not literally true for you, to be a Christian is to be a person who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God.
in the sense of subordinating all of these responsibilities, commitments, allegiances to following Christ first and foremost. You might own a house.
You might have a spouse, a sibling, a sibling, parent, or child. But none of them must be the controlling center of your life. Your priorities and purposes must be submitted to and oriented around Christ.
[28:51] And that requires sacrifice. But it's worth it. Because look at the rewards that Jesus holds out to us in two parts in verse 30. We will receive many times more in this time, that's the first stage of our reward, and in the age to come, eternal life, that's the second stage of our reward.

Now these two stages correspond to the already but not yet nature of the kingdom of God that we have spoken about multiple times throughout the gospel of Luke. The kingdom of God has come in a real way.
It's broken into our world through the coming of Jesus. And it's established by Him. However, it's not fully consummated yet that will happen when Christ returns.
So because we live in this already but not yet reality, we in this time already experience many times more the blessings of God. But in the age to come we will experience eternal life.
And Jesus assures us of this. He says, Truly I say to you, He's saying, I assure you, I guarantee it, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.
[30:05] Those who give Jesus the primacy that is due to Him in their lives become part of the family of God, the church. And as the church lives out its calling as the family of God, as they share their lives and possessions with each other, we may lose our homes as our exclusive private property but we gain a hundred more homes in the homes of our Christian brothers and sisters.

We may lose our spouses, siblings, parents, and children but we gain hundreds more in the family of God. And some of you have already experienced this.
You have found in the church the family that you have never had in your birth homes. That's what Jesus is talking about. He said earlier in Luke 8 verse 21, My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.
We receive many times more in this life and in the age to come we will also be given eternal life. In short, Jesus is assuring us whatever you give up for God, no matter how much you sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom, what you gain from the Lord will be far greater.
And for many of us, following Christ and being devoted exclusively to Him also will make us more devoted people in our homes, in our families. because we're putting God's priorities first instead of being selfish in our homes.

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[31:44] Perhaps you're not a follower of Christ yet. You're weighing the costs of discipleship and you're wrestling with that one thing you still lack. Keep thinking about that. What is that one thing?

You're considering whether or not you're willing to pay that price to follow Christ. Perhaps you've already counted the cost, you've decided to follow Christ, but you keep being lured back by the treasures of this world in your backsliding.
The costs of following Christ are high, but they're nothing compared to the rewards that Christ holds out for you. Last summer, I saw that an American, not American, sorry, Amsterdam, a Dutch art dealer, and historian named Jan Six.
He purchased a painting at Christie's. It's a famous British auction house. And the painting was entitled The Portrait of a Young Gentleman. And the artist behind the painting was reputedly one of the disciples of the great Dutch master Rembrandt.
And the pre-sale estimate of this painting was $20,000 to $27,000. Crazy, right? How a painting could be that expensive. But get this, Jan Six paid $172,000 for it.
[33:03] About seven times the value of that painting. So you might say that he was ripped off. But the art dealer was on to something. The young gentleman in the portrait is wearing a velvet coat with an ornate white lace color.

And Jan Six observed that the way the lace color kind of curls at its edges as if you can put your finger under it. It was a clear giveaway that this was no ordinary painting.
That no disciple of Rembrandt could have painted such a thing. He believed that it was also a little bit too early to have been done by a follower of Rembrandt.
And so he gandered out, shot out $172,000 to buy it. And it has paid off in spades because the portrait is now being hailed by art historians as the first previously unknown painting of Rembrandt to surface in nearly half a century.
It was actually by the Dutch master. And guess how much the last Rembrandt painting was auctioned off for at Christie's, the exact same place? $33 million. The art dealer paid a very high price for that painting, but what he gained was far greater.
[34:21] He was willing to pay the price because he knew what it was really worth. Likewise, only those people who see God truly as the infinite, priceless treasure that he is, they're the only ones that can forsake earthly treasures to follow him.

Truly, I say to you, no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.
Some of you are in the midst of this suffering and sacrifice. You live daily in the trenches of bearing the costs that you have counted to follow Christ.
But when it's hard for you, remember what you are gaining. Remember what you laid aside these things for. Remember why you are fighting for holiness. Remember why you are saying no to the pleasures of this world.
Remember why you are saying yes to disrepute in this world because you see Christ is worth it because he is the priceless treasure. And you will have him now and his family now and in the age to come for eternity.
[35:45] you will get to enjoy him. But how does this change take place in us? How does that reorientation take place since it's impossible for the rich to give up their riches?

Taking his twelve disciples aside, Jesus instructs them in verses thirty-one to thirty-three, see we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.
For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him they will kill him and on the third day he will rise.
The Son of Man is a term that Jesus frequently uses to refer to himself indirectly and it highlights the fact that he is not only the Son of God but he is as he's described in other parts of the gospel but he's also the Son of Man.
He's God who took on human flesh, took on humanity. So he could identify with us. So he could take on our sins upon himself and represent us to God the Father.
[36:52] And this is now the fourth time Jesus is predicting his imminent suffering and it's a reference to his death on the cross and all of these things will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles in chapter 23.

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He will be mocked and he will be shamefully treated. He will be killed on the cross but on the third day he will rise again victoriously from the dead. And interestingly each of the four predictions of suffering that Jesus makes in the gospel of Luke they assign responsibility for his death to different human parties.
In chapter 9 verse 22 he said it's the Jewish elders and chief priests and scribes who are to blame. And then in chapter 9 verse 44 he says the hands of men are to blame.
And then in chapter 17 verse 25 he said this generation is to blame. And here in chapter 18 verse 32 he says the Gentiles the non-Jews the nations are to blame.
Now these four predictions then implicate Jews Gentiles this generation and humanity in general. People throughout history have tried to single out Jews or Gentiles or Pontius Pilate or people of Jesus' generation for being exceedingly wicked and ignorant and for killing Jesus but that's only partially true.
[38:15] They were all guilty yes but we are all guilty because it's for our sins that Jesus had to die on the cross and we see that agency in what Jesus says here.

He says see we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. that's a passive it's called a divine passive the agent of that accomplishment is God himself.
He wrote about it through the prophets hundreds of years before and he is now bringing it to fruition and to fulfillment through the hands of men.
It's God who is doing it. Remember what Jesus said earlier no one is good except God alone. We all lack something there's one thing we still lack maybe more than who can be saved.
That's the natural follow-up question. And Jesus answered it's impossible with man but possible with God and how will you God make this possible and Jesus says I will die on the cross for your sins so that people who will never otherwise return to God can come and find forgiveness and find eternal life.
[39:38] that's what we read in the assurance of pardon today in Psalm 130 if you O Lord should mark iniquities O Lord who could stand but with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in this word I hope my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning more than watchmen for the morning O Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord there is steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities none of us can stand before God but God had promised that he would himself come to redeem his people and that's what he does through his son Jesus the son of God comes as God's representative he he comes as our king and he who should reign over us who should subjugate all of humanity to his authority instead goes to the cross to die for our sins so that we might believe in him and willingly follow him as this rich ruler did not do it's so countercultural and it defies the expectations of the disciples in such a way that it says they didn't understand any of this in verse 34

I mean not that they didn't understand the words that were coming out of Jesus mouth they understood exactly what he was saying that he was going to suffer and die but they didn't understand how this was supposed to be the fulfillment of the promises of God and the prophecies of redemption and salvation Jesus had to do that because it's impossible to get camels through the eye of a needle becoming a political I guess just a king that will overthrow the Roman empire on behalf of the Jewish people that would free them from political oppression but they would not have delivered them from their spiritual oppression their slavery to sin and death he would not wean their hearts off from the idols of their hearts it's when we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and believe in our hearts that he's the one who died and was raised for our salvation that's when we become one with Christ through faith so that we become partakers of his death and resurrection and they're born again into the family of
God and filled with his spirit that's the only way that camels go through an eye of a needle and it's when we live in light of that objective reality of what Christ has done that we more and more subjectively experience that freedom in our experience so have you beheld the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ do you love him more than the idols of the earth you have to look at the cross where Jesus bled for you look at the empty tomb where Jesus was raised from the dead victoriously before you then let go of the idols of this world let go of your love of money and take hold of Jesus for salvation that's the only way I want to conclude by sharing a verse from one of my favorite hymns it's called hast thou heard him seen him known him a 19th century hymn written by

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Ora Roman it goes this way what has stripped the beauty from the idols of the earth not a sense of right or duty but the sight of peerless worth teen swear where sunt we are STEVE we do you you you I you you you

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