

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 27, Parables On Prayer, Luke 17 :20-18 :17

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This is Dr. Daniel K. Darko and his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session number 27, Parables on Prayer, Luke chapter 17, verse 20 through chapter 18, verse 17.

Welcome back to the Biblical Healing Learning Lecture Series.

In our previous conversation, I ended with the healing of the 10 lepers. I highlighted a few things and challenged us to be able to think about the need for us to consider the poor and marginalized among us, as Luke tried to recount in his narrative as far as the ministry of the Kingdom of God is concerned. Here, we continue from chapter 17, verses 20 to 21, looking at the coming of the Kingdom of God.

This particular lecture will focus on prayers, specifically two parables about prayer. I hope that as we go through this, you will begin to see how Jesus' teaching is being wrapped up slowly as he prepares to enter Jerusalem. Luke's narrative takes us through this journey narrative and goes so slowly.

By the time we get to the middle of chapter 19, Luke will be telling how Jesus will be entering Jerusalem, and the passion narratives will begin. Notice the theme of the coming Kingdom emerging and the concrete parables Jesus tells to encourage the disciples to stay firm and strong in their commitment to the form of piety required in the Kingdom of God. Chapter 17, verse 20.

Being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, he answered them, The Kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed. Nor will they say, look here it is, or there, for behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Yet what Jesus is trying to do here with regard to the Pharisees is they want to know when the Kingdom of God is coming.

And they have specific things in mind when they think about the coming of the Kingdom. They have in mind the restoration of the territory in the Davidic dynasty, where peace will reign, where God's people will govern themselves, and where the Son of Man will take place, and they will not have these foreigners ruling the system. The Pharisees have these expectations, and sometimes, when they pose their questions, they are wondering whether they are dealing with the coming King, Messiah, or not.

Jesus tells them something that draws attention to himself and to his ministry. Something about the question about the Pharisees talking about eternal life and all

that, because that's all the things they are asking there are quite unusual. You see, Jesus points out that the time of the Kingdom that they are requesting is not bound to what they perceive the Kingdom to be.

The Kingdom comes as the reign of God. The reign of God over the hearts and minds of people. The reign of God comes when people listen to the teachings of the Messiah and accept and embrace it.

The reign of God comes as the Messiah liberates and sets free the captives, those who are sick and weary. Those who are outcast and marginalized. The Kingdom of God comes when hope is restored to the hopeless.

As you remember earlier on in this lecture series, I highlighted in what I call the Nazarene Manifesto when Jesus said, The Kingdom of God, the Spirit of the Living God is upon me, and he has anointed me. The Kingdom of God comes as those contents unfold. But the Pharisees expected a particular time frame for this to take effect.

In reply, Jesus let them know that the Kingdom of God will not come according to their expectations. They should actually know that the Kingdom of God is among them. The Kingdom of God is already taking effect.

And there is evidence in their presence to let them know that the Kingdom of God is here. In other words, what they have seen of Jesus in his ministry so far and what they see unfolding is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God as if the question of the Kingdom of God is the wrong question that they posed.

You just try to remind them, you know, the coming Kingdom. It's not quite what you are thinking about. Maybe you want to know something about the Son of Man. Maybe that is, you know, so if you are thinking about the King, the Messiah coming as a King, he clarifies, he is among you here.

You see the works and the deeds that confirm that. But let's look at something else that he will go on. Directing now his attention to the disciples.

And almost digressing with the subject of the coming Kingdom to the Son of Man. And I read. And he said to the disciples, The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.

And you will not see it. And they will say to you, look, look there, or look here. Do not go out to follow them.

For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by

this generation, just as it was in Noah's days. So will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

They will be eating and drinking and marrying and being given to marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot. They were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.

But on that day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire, and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So, will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed? On that day, let the one who is in the house stocked with his goods in his house not come down to take them away.

And likewise, let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

I can tell you, at night there will be two beds in one. One will be taken, and the other left. There will be two women grinding together.

One will be taken, and the other left. And they said to him, where, where Lord? He told them where the corpse was, and there the vultures would gather. Where the action is, people will be attracted to it.

Where things are happening, there you will see things unfolding. Quickly let me highlight six things from this passage as we think about the coming of the Son of Man as Jesus narrates here in this account. First, the Son of Man is a figure in Jewish apocalyptic literature who would come to bring restoration, a final restoration to God's people, and to restore God's kingdom, the kingdom of David as they understood it.

In the book of Acts, chapter 1, verse 3 or verse 4 or so, you remember that the disciples were talking about the kingdom of Israel when they talked about the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man, he said, must suffer, and the Son of Man will be rejected by this generation. Suffering and rejection will typify the work of the Son of Man.

In other words, the Son of Man is not a superhero immune from suffering and immune from human rejection. Third, the coming of the Son of Man will be sudden. It will be unexpected.

If people are waiting like the Pharisees asked earlier, perhaps to hear the disciples, if they think that the coming of the kingdom of God must be in a time frame they are expecting, maybe what they are hinting about is the coming of the Son of Man and the Eschaton, but that would be so sudden and unexpected. There are precedents in

Jewish history for them to recall how sudden this would be, and if they would understand, then perhaps they would be in constant preparedness for the coming of the Son of Man. He said, remember Noah's time.

You see, that time came suddenly. People were unprepared. People were enjoying some material things, and they were just thinking that they were going to have fun and fun for eternity.

And then suddenly, the flood came. God's judgment came down. And those who were not ready perished.

Are you ready? If you can hear from the background of the ministry or teachings of Jesus at this point. When he talks about the coming of the Son of Man, he uses another early precedence from the Jewish tradition, the days of Lot. He said people ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, and built.

And then the surprise came. The surprise came in the form of sulfur and fire. You see, in the voice of Jesus, if you are a Jew who understood all this and is oriented towards the coming of the Son of Man, he is asking you, are you ready? Do you understand how you have to be ever ready because the time could be now and it could be so sudden?

The coming of the Son of Man. Jesus is going to Jerusalem, and they are getting very, very close. As they get close, he draws attention to what is going to happen.

He talks about suffering, rejection, the need for constant expectation, and the posture of readiness at all times. We don't know what was going through the disciples' minds. But he will remind them about a very, very important part of discipleship.

An important part that is linked to their piety is their connection to the Heavenly Father. Jesus will go on to tell them two parables on prayer. Prayer is one thing that I think, as a modern Christian, I need to pause here to say something before we go on.

Prayer is one of the things we have to take seriously. But I'll tell you what prayer is not. And look at couples.

Prayer is not a nice poem somebody reads for everybody to enjoy. Also when they say it, you say, oh, what a beautiful prayer. When I was pastoring, I used to say to my congregation, if you have to be an architect of prayer and it is so beautiful when you say it, people go, wow, what a wonderful prayer.

I think you should understand what you are doing. You are a good poet. You are not praying.

And look at couples. Prayer is something that is going on before God, life. You don't have to worry about the details.

But the posture is significant. The posture in which you pray is significant. It's not a construction of a word architect, but the posture with which you stand before God and how persistent in your understanding of prayer that you will say, I will keep coming to God and keep asking him because I know this God who has my interest at heart.

Two parables. Going through these two parables, notice how I entitled them. I call them parables of proper posture for prayer.

Parables for proper posture for prayer. PPPP, if you like. What Luke is saying is, what is your posture of prayer? As we go through this, please understand from chapters 18, 1 to 14, as Luke narrates these two parables, he draws our attention to a few things.

One, these two parables are only found in Luke. Don't lose sight of that. They are not found in any of the other Gospels.

This is unlike Luke chapter 11, in which Jesus is going to teach prayer out of his own initiative. The other thing you should notice in this prayer is what Luke has been developing from chapter 16—emphasis on the outcast.

The key figures in this parable will be a widow and a tax collector. Then, you will see that the setting of this prayer is very important. One is a social setting in which somebody is seeking justice in the regular daily life of justice.

And one is in the context of the temple, where the supreme expression of piety should take place. If I would summarize what is going to unfold in these topics, I would put it in the imagery you have on the screen. It will be one persistence as a posture of prayer as Jesus draws our attention to that in the parable of the unjust judge.

And a second is the posture of humility as Jesus tells the parable of a pharisee and a tax collector in the temple. The coming of the kingdom of God is going to draw on the need for people to be prepared for the kingdom to come. Preparedness also requires certain traits one needs to cultivate in one's perception of God, in one's communication with God, as well as in one's relationship with and attitudes towards other people.

The teachings of prayer capture these two areas in a very, very clear way to understand persistence in one's dealings with God and humility in one's attitude

towards the other. Let's take a quick look at the first parable, namely the parable of the unjust judge and the widow. And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

He said that in a certain city, there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, give me justice against my adversary. For a while, he refused, but afterward, he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not bear me, she will not beat me down.

It's almost like she will not spank me or even abuse me by her continual coming. And the Lord said, hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, remember the Son of Man coming motif: will he find faith on earth? Jesus goes on to draw our attention and put on a scale the posture and character of a judge and a widow. Here, I would like to take some time to unpack a few things about the judge and the widow. The ending of the parable asks the question, will the Son of Man find faith? Will the Son of Man, the coming of the Son of Man, will he find faith among his people? Will he find faith among people who trust that their persistence will pay off? Think about the image of a judge and the image of the widow, who is supposed to be the model of this.

But one will not capture the essence of what is being conveyed by the widow unless we understand the place of the judge. You see, the judge is not named in this parable. He's a judge who's supposed to adjudicate his cases.

It's one of those English words that I need to take down to pronounce. His whole role is to execute justice. If you are a judge, it is your job to execute justice.

Notice here that we are told that he has no devotion to piety. The judge in question neither feared God nor man. He cared less.

Don't you remember the echoes of the likes of Proverbs 1 verse 7? The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This guy feared nobody. He does not fear God.

Put in explicit terms. First, Jesus says in the parable that the judge does not fear God. And in the parable, Jesus repeats that.

The judge says to himself, though I do not fear God. Supposed to be a wise man. Definitely, he missed the point.

The other thing you should see that when he says he has no respect for mankind. You should know that in the honor and shame society. What Luke is suggesting to you is that he has no sense of public shame.

He does not fear public repercussions. He does not fear social rejection, bad social perception, or bad public image. He cares less.

Understand that this judge is unjust and ungodly. Notice his defiance in the parable. You see, he regarded the law as nothing to be followed.

He repeats to himself what he will not do. The judge was simply unwilling to execute justice to the vulnerable in society. You should understand the context of the parable as a Jewish setting.

Where the Jewish scriptures echo once and again and again, there is a need to take care of the vulnerable in society. The foreigners, the widows, and the like.

And the need for someone like this to just judge and understand his role. And do what he is supposed to do. Let me refresh your memory on Deuteronomy 24, verse 17.

Which says you shall not pervert justice due to the sojourners or the fatherlessness. Or take a widow's garment in pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt.

And the Lord your God redeemed you from death. Therefore, I command you to do this. That is one such law.

Another in Deuteronomy 27 verse 19 says. It can't be anyone who perverts justice due to the sojourner—namely the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow.

And all the people shall say Amen. That is what the judge is not doing. Psalm 146 verse 9 says.

The Lord watches over the sojourners. He upholds the widow and the fatherless. But the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

That is what the judge is not doing. Understand that the basic tenets of what one does to the vulnerable, like a widow in society, are being denied. It was the heart condition of the judge here that is going to play out.

Jesus is going to create the image that if you see such a person. And you see the sense of injustice that person could perpetrate. And still find someone who has faith.

That if she would only keep nagging this guy. She may find justice. Don't you realize God is the opposite of that?

And that your persistent prayer will pay off. You see, I normally attend public lectures. I don't like to quote apocryphal books or pseudo-poetical books and all that.

Sometimes, I even get questions in my own classroom when I bring them. But you know the apocryphal book called Syrup. 35, 16 says.

They that fear the law shall find judgment. And shall kindle justice as a light. This parable of the persistent prayer evokes quite a few things from me.

And what I see in the text is a judge who cares less about the vulnerable. And the need for us to really take a look at some of this in the teachings of Jesus. But lest we make the emphasis on the unjust judge.

I want to remind you that Jesus' focus is on the widow. And understand why he will portray the widow here. And why the widow should be considered seriously.

When you look at the widow in this particular account, the widow is a legitimate member of the jurisdiction of the judge. We are told that the widow is from that country.

In other words, she is not coming from somewhere that the judge will say. Your case goes outside my jurisdiction. You also notice what this widow was asking.

She was asking for justice. It's not a special favor. The widow is just asking for fair treatment.

Or fair judgment. Or fair verdict. That is Jehovah.

But you see, in the way Jesus constructs this image. He makes us understand in the parable that the judge was simply unwilling because he has no sense of piety or justice.

The widow's persistence will actually give the judge so much trouble. The judge will decide if he doesn't attend to this widow. He could be in trouble.

Technical words in the widow's prayer. I find it very interesting. She is looking for vindication.

She is looking for vindication. She is looking for vindication in the way he describes the opponent. It can be the plaintiff, somebody who has brought him to court, or somebody is trying to be defended against.

But we are told that God's justice for the vulnerable is sure. And the central thing Jesus is pushing in this parable is this. God is fair and just.

God is willing to hear those who cry out to him. In prayer, sometimes he may seem not to hear. He may seem to be delaying in our own view.

Persistence prayer will give the result that God will bring. And friends, let me remind you. Too often, you will find out that people are not ready to render justice.

But there and then you want to remember the words of Jesus in regard to this widow. Even if a judge will not, persistence, if directed to God in prayer, God will actually hear. Oh how I wish the world is a just place.

It's not. Oh how I wish most people who profess even to be Christians are eager to execute justice. That is not so.

Some of you will suffer injustice. Some of you are Christians who will suffer injustice in the hands of non-Christians but proclaiming the gospel in countries that are hostile to Christianity. Some of you are Christians working, living among Christians who are unjust.

Jesus does not want you to pay attention to the unjust judge per se. He wants you to contrast the image of the unjust judge to a just God, a willing God, a caring God. And encourage you to adopt the posture of persistence when your answer to prayer seems so slow in coming.

God would hear. God will render the verdict. God will bring justice to you.

God will not leave you unheard. Persist in prayer. That posture is a critical posture in prayer because God hears.

God knows the right time to answer prayer. God may answer the prayer in a way you do not expect it. God may blow your mind off in the way he answers that prayer.

God may seem so silent even if it is the answer to your prayer. Oh yes, but God will still be there, and God will come through with justice. Please, do not expect justice everywhere around you.

Let me put it this way. Do not expect justness; expect the just God to come through even when things are not going well. Society will do its best, but society is inhabited by people who are floored with all kinds of situations that allow for injustice.

But the just God will come through as you persist. In the words of Jesus, the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says, and will God give justice to his elect? Will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? What God is answering is that God may not wait like that judge.

God may give you that answer like this. But the question is, do you have faith to trust in that God? When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith? When the Son of Man comes, let me paraphrase that word or translate it to another word. Would he find trust in you? When the Son of Man comes, would he find you faithful? In your stand and walk with him? Jesus goes on to tell another parable.

He says this is the parable of the Pharisee, the tax collector, still on prayer and in a posture of prayer. He also told this parable, look right, to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Two men went up into the temple to pray.

One is a Pharisee, and the other is a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like the other men, a sinner, unjust, adulterous, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I have, all that I get.

But the tax collector standing far off will not even lift up his eyes to heaven but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I tell you in the words of Jesus, this man went down to his house justified, one or the other. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.

For the one who humbles himself will be exalted. Let me draw your attention to some unusual features. This is the only parable in which Jesus names a Pharisee in the parable.

Now if you're a Pharisee going around, or at least the only one I can recall, if you're a Pharisee around, this is not good news. Jesus is not saying, hey you Pharisees, this is how you behave. But if you look at the figure in the parable, it's almost like the things he's been talking about the Pharisees all this while.

We are told that sometimes when looking at Luke's portrait, you will talk to the Pharisees, and then you turn around and talk to the disciples. So, imagine some Pharisees in the audience listening to Jesus say, hey guys, okay, let me tell you a parable. There was a Pharisee and a tax collector, no good news.

Look at the portrait of the two carefully. And look at how he goes on to critique the self-righteousness that is not supposed to be seen or exhibited among people who are followers of his message. Notice here from the posture of the Pharisee.

He prayed to himself even though he talked about God. We are told that he will say that he is not like other people. He is obsessed with self-importance.

Self-righteousness and self-justification. Yet he stood in the temple, a place where God's presence dwells, to assert and to highlight and to accentuate whose his social standing is relative to others. What a shame.

Jesus says in this parable that the Pharisee addresses God, yet the substance of his cry is about exalting himself. But notice the posture of the tax collector. He felt so unworthy that he stood far off.

He felt so humble that, culturally, he would not look up to God. Now, perhaps I should pause here to clarify some cultural issues. For those of you who are not in Western countries, let me clarify some cultural issues as I try to do in this series.

In most Western countries and especially in America, it is believed that when you are talking to someone and you are telling them the truth, you have to look at them in the eye. That is just how the cultures work. Some European countries have adopted that as well.

America, in particular, is very, very particular about that. This is the reason why some people have been presumed guilty in the courtroom they could not look at a judge in the eye or the jury in the eye or the accuser in the eye. Very, very different from most of the cultures out there in the world.

We're looking at someone in the eye who is actually in a hostile posture. We're looking at someone in the eye, which communicates aggressive posture as a way to intimidate. We're looking at someone who actually implies a desire to intimidate the person.

That is completely different in America as in some European countries. Having made these cultural observations, Jesus's parable is in a context where you don't look at a person in true humility. You don't look at a person in the eye because that would be aggressive.

You see here we find this tax collector who acknowledges to be a sinner in humility and with a sense of shame. The appropriate posture then and now in most Middle Eastern countries is to lower his head down, clearly communicating a great sense of embarrassment and shame, a true sense of remorse, and the other posture of

actually standing afar even accentuates that sense that he's so sorry he has done so poorly. If you like, he has blown it.

He will not come too close to the person he has wronged. He will not look in the face of the person he has wronged, namely God. You see, but the Pharisee in the parable will not do that.

Turn to himself. He addresses God all right. And he says, look, with open eyes, he looks at even the tax collector and say, I'm not like this man.

A very, very arrogant posture. Very, very inappropriate posture, even when dealing with the average person. He goes on to be able to outline his piety as if that should score him points to be heard.

God, do you know that I am better than all these people? And by the way, do you know that I pray and I fast more? Do you know that? Do you realize that I tithe my income or whatever I get? But you see, you find this tax collector crying out for mercy, cry out for forgiveness. Jesus said, let it be known that this tax collector went home justified. He was remorseful.

He was repentant. But above all, the spirit he exhibits is encapsulated in the last two verses of the parable. He was humbled to which Jesus says, whoever exalts himself like the Pharisee would be humbled, all abased.

But he who humbles him or herself will be exalted. In the words of Luke Timothy Johnson, for Luke, prayer is faith in action. Prayer is not an optional exercise in piety.

Carried out to demonstrate one's relationship with God. It is the relationship with God. The way one prays, therefore, reveals that relationship.

The posture that one adopts in the prayer informs that relationship. So, may I ask, what's your posture in your standing before God? I have seen so many Christians, they pray to impress other people around them. I have also seen those who are web crafters of prayer to show how much poetic skills they have.

But that's not the point here at all. Just touches on the posture of persistence as the widow and humility as the tax collector. He then goes on to illustrate the place of the children in God's kingdom.

Following these two parables of prayer, Luke writes, now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him saying, let the children come to me.

For do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Let me make some quick observations to try to wrap up this lecture on this. First is what I call Jesus and children's observations, which is the social-cultural background issues. You should know the cultural script.

That one should assume in reading this parable. That children or infants were very vulnerable in a society where children could easily die. In this society, you are thinking about a very, very vulnerable group.

And children are often perceived because they could die at any time. As having no significant value. Children could not help families that have farms.

Children could not participate in other events that would be meaningful to contribute to the economic situation of the family. So, the value of children was very, very minimal. And that also shows the attitude towards children.

More so, one should understand the tradition. It was a tradition because children could die of all kinds of diseases that will come out. It was a tradition for parents to sometimes bring their children to elders and rabbis.

To bless them, to lay their hands on them. And it's almost like, let's get Yahweh's blessings on these children. So that they may survive and grow to be successful.

That is not a bad idea. Even today, I see Pope Francis touching all kinds of children. People go and bring children to him to touch those children.

But notice what is playing out here. In a culture where hospitality has reciprocity to it, those whom you receive are normally those who are equal. To you.

They are also sometimes of noble standing, not insignificant children. People were bringing children to Jesus, perhaps, so that he might touch them. If someone perceived children as unworthy and unwanted,

And so they kicked them away from Jesus. Oh, but how wrong they were. In the Lukan framework, the gospel is for the outcasts, for the marginalized, for the insignificant, as well as for the rich, the powerful, and the high social rank people.

In Luke, the gospel is for all. Children are not left out. And that brings me to some key things I want to emphasize here.

To close this session. The disciples rebuked the children, perhaps they thought they were unworthy. But you see, in the kingdom of God, one should be careful by exercising our judgment beyond what God would like to see in his kingdom.

Children are made in the image and likeness of God and of so much value to God himself. Jesus summons them to bring the children to him. These children who are unworthy, like the good Samaritan, like the widow, will become models for those who think they are worthy in how they receive the kingdom of God.

He says the kingdom of God belongs to infants like this. Perhaps I should clarify that whereas other synoptic gospels talk about children being brought to Jesus, in Luke, they are us, they are infants that are brought to Jesus. There are those who have suggested that this Lukan discourse and others should be read to show that perhaps there is support for infant baptism in this text.

Please may I suggest that we refrain from such an interpretation because that is not conveyed in this particular text? The point of Luke is this: Jesus and the ministry of the kingdom of God extend to the infants and the children whom even his own disciples deemed unworthy. You know I began this lecture by reminding you about the passage and teachings of the coming of the Son of Man, after which Jesus goes on to touch on two parables of prayer, one of which, at the end, he asks, will the Son of Man find faith when he comes.

In those two parables of prayer, he encourages disciples to understand persistence in prayer and to see that God is ever ready to answer prayer's spittle. In another parable he reminds his disciples about the attitude of humility one should bring to prayer. And then the last segment or passage we look at in this particular lecture attaches to the disciples trying to deprive children or infants of being brought to Jesus for us, perhaps to be blessed by him.

Notice three key figures that have surfaced in this particular lecture as models. One is a widow, an outcast; the other is a tax collector, a sinner by social standards, and the other is a child, an unworthy insignificant being according to social standards. The good news is this: they were not outcasts, they were not insignificant, they were not social rejects, and they were worthy participants in the kingdom of God.

Could you take a look around you and see people that you think are not worthy to belong to God's people? Could you cast your eyes or imagine people you have deliberately written off to be worthy followers of Jesus Christ deserving all that God has for them and able to be utilized by God to touch the hurting world? May I encourage you to see through the eyes of Jesus as we seek him in persistence, prayer, and humility so that he may open our eyes to see the people around us? He may cleanse our thoughts and our minds to be able to see what he sees in the people

we deem unworthy, and he may give us the heart to love, embrace, and reach out to those we think are unworthy. I pray that God grants us the grace that you and I will stand up and take charge as Jesus continued to teach about the kingdom of God on his way to Jerusalem, challenging his disciples and the Pharisees then and challenging us today.

We may rise to the task of showing the world that the Jesus we follow came to bring meaning to all. After all, in the words of John, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever, widow, tax collector, child, believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life. May God bless you and grant you grace in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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