

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 9 March 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Reward for Christian Service

Matthew 19:27-30

In the last 2,000 years, God's people have preached the Gospel throughout the world; and as the Gospel has spread, it has met with fierce resistance. Oftentimes, the earliest missionaries to take the Gospel into a country have paid for their efforts with their life's blood, without ever living to see any fruit from their labours. Yet, their blood is like a "seed" which takes root, and blossoms into a Gospel vineyard.

So it was when the Gospel first began to penetrate Korea. Right up until the late 1800's, the Kingdom of Korea had fiercely resisted any group that attempted to take the Gospel to them. Many of the earliest evangelists to Korea died as martyrs; and some of them (such as a Scotsman named Robert Thomas) have gone down in history. However, there were others who died for the Lord without ever being widely known. Such was the case with three Korean men who attempted to take the Gospel into their own country back in the 1880's. (This story was related to an American missions statesman named Ted Engstrom decades ago, by an elderly Korean brother.) According to the account, these three men had left their country to find work in China; and while they were in China, they heard the Gospel, and were saved. They soon began to have a burden for their own people; and they determined to take the Gospel to them. They didn't have any Bibles in Korean; but they did have Chinese Bibles: and since Chinese writing is similar enough to Korean to be understandable, they decided to smuggle Chinese Bibles into their country. The first of the three friends buried some Chinese Bibles deep in his luggage, and tried to smuggle them into the country that way. However, his belongings were searched; and when they found the Bibles, they killed him. Word of his death got back to the other two friends; and upon hearing it, one of the two remaining friends decided that *he* would take the Bible into Korea. He tore out the pages of his Bible, and scattered them throughout his luggage; but he, too, was caught, and executed by beheading.¹

When the third man found out about the death of his brother, he decided to try something different. He tore out each page of the Bible, and folded it into a small strip; and then, he wove the strips into ropes, and used the ropes to wrap his luggage. When he came to the border, the guards didn't suspect anything, and let him pass. After he arrived back in his country, he ironed out the pages, and bound them in a volume; and he began to spread the Gospel everywhere. By the time Western missionaries began to flood the country later in the 1880's, they found that much seed had already been sown by this Korean brother, as well as by other Korean brethren who were willing to forsake all for Christ.

Brethren, you and I have been given the most important job in the world—the job of taking the Gospel to every kindred, tribe, and nation. Yet, even though this commission is a duty, Christ has promised to *reward* us for doing it! This morning, we will see what kind of rewards await those who are willing to forsake *all* for the sake of the Gospel. The title of this message is ***The Reward for Christian Service.***

Read Matthew 19:27-30.

I. The renouncing of temporal rewards (v. 27)

In last week's message, we saw that there was a rich young nobleman who came to Jesus, and asked, ***“What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”*** This young man had been taught, all his life, that he must keep the Law in order to earn eternal life; and he actually believed that *he had* kept the Law. Yet, as he listened to Jesus' preaching, and heard Jesus say that you must be “converted,” and “become like a little child” in order to enter the Kingdom, his confidence in his own righteousness was shaken *just enough* to move him to ask Jesus this question. He seemed to think that all he needed was to do some extraordinarily “good deed,” and the scales would be tipped in his favour. Now, Jesus knew that this young man was blinded by his self-righteousness; but He also knew that there was one big, overwhelming sin in this young man's life; and He knew exactly how to bring it to his attention. Rather than arguing with the young man—rather than saying, “No, you *have* broken the commandments” —Jesus simply said, ***“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”*** When the young man heard this, his conscience was awakened, as he realised that he had a problem with covetousness. Yet, instead of repenting of his sin, and placing his trust in Jesus, he chose to walk away. He loved the riches of this world too much to let go of them, and follow Jesus.

Now, after the rich young ruler walked away, Jesus said something that astonished the disciples. He said, ***“Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*** That statement blew the disciples' minds! However, Jesus wasn't finished yet. He added, ***“Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”*** Riches, *in and of themselves*, are not the problem: the problem is that most men are not willing to *stop trusting* in riches, and trust in Christ instead. Salvation is all about whom you are *trusting* in.

Now, the disciples were not rich men; yet, even they were fearful about what Jesus had just said. When they heard Jesus make this statement about the “eye of a needle,” they were filled with fear and amazement, and said, ***“Who then can be saved?”*** They knew that even *they* were prone to trust in their material possessions, instead of trusting in the Lord. Jesus' words

were so convicting, that they were having momentary doubts about their own salvation! However, Jesus reassured them that they *were* saved. He said, **“*With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*”** Jesus reminded them that salvation is a *miracle* of God, and not something that man can work for, or earn. None of us is worthy to enter the Kingdom, because our sin has barred us from God’s presence. However, God, in His love and mercy, sent His Son to take the eternal punishment for our sin, by shedding His precious blood for us on the cross; and when we humble ourselves, and receive His free gift, He gives us forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. The disciples didn’t yet understand *how* Jesus would pay the price for their sins; but they *did* believe that Jesus was the One who would take their sin away; and God accounted their simple, childlike faith for righteousness.

Now, as the disciples were getting over the shock of what Jesus had just said, a thought popped into Peter’s head. Jesus had promised the rich young ruler that if he would let go of the things of this world, and follow Him, he would have **“*treasure in heaven.*”** Not only was Jesus assuring him that he *could enter* the Kingdom (if he would simply trust in Him), but He was also promising to give this young man *rewards* for *servicing* Him. As Peter thought about this, the question naturally arose: “Well, what about *us*, then? *We’ve* given up everything to follow Jesus, and *we’ve* been assured a place in the Kingdom; so what kind of rewards are in store for *us*?” Let’s look again at what Peter asked. **(Read Matthew 19:27 again.)**

Was it wrong of Peter to ask this question? Was it wrong of him to think of their forsaking of earthly things as a “sacrifice”? Peter didn’t actually use the *word* “sacrifice”; but he was clearly thinking in this vein. He was essentially saying, “Lord, we’ve sacrificed our livelihoods, and our possessions, and our very lives, to follow you. We’ve chosen to live by faith, without knowing for certain where the next meal or lodging is coming from. What reward, then, will we receive for our sacrifice?”

Was Peter looking at things in the right way? Some would say, “No!” Take the missionary **David Livingstone**, for example. He refused to refer to his service to God as a “sacrifice.” He once said, “If a commission by an earthly king is considered an honour, how can a commission by a Heavenly King be considered a sacrifice?...For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Is that a ‘sacrifice’ which brings its *own* blest reward?...Away with the word ‘sacrifice.’ Say rather it is a ‘privilege.’”² That was how Livingstone saw it; and in a way, he was right. Serving Christ *is* an undeserved privilege!

Read Luke 17:7-10.

In this parable, Jesus reminded His disciples that being in His service is a *duty*, and a *privilege*. We don't *have* to serve Him: we *get* to serve Him! It is an honour to serve the King! Furthermore, when our service in this life is done, the Lord will not "thank" us for our service. Why would He thank us, when it was our *duty* to serve Him (and especially when we were so often *unfaithful* in our service, and *unprofitable* to the Lord)? Yet, even though our King will not *thank* us for serving Him, He *has* promised to *reward* us! Undeserving though we are, He will actually give us rewards for the things that we truly did for His honour and glory.

This brings me back, then, to the question: *Is* it really a "sacrifice" to forsake all for Christ? According to the Bible, "Yes"! The Bible *does* refer to our service as a "sacrifice." However, we must realise that when we sacrifice all for Christ, *we are not doing God a favour!* It is only right and reasonable that you should offer up your *whole life* as a living sacrifice to God!

Read Romans 12:1-2.

In this Scripture, Paul *beseeked* the brethren of the churches in Rome to present their bodies to God as living sacrifices. This isn't a suggestion, folks: this is a *command*. As believers, our calling is to be a "living sacrifice" unto God. Yet, what, exactly, *is* the meaning of "sacrifice"? Well, the Greek word for "sacrifice" means "that which is killed or slaughtered for a purpose." Likewise, our English word "sacrifice" is based on two Latin words that mean "something that is set apart for a sacred purpose." Throughout the Bible, a "sacrifice" is something precious or valuable, which someone gives up and sets apart for God.

Now, the greatest sacrifice that anyone ever made was God's sacrifice of His own Son. In order that we might be saved, God the Father gave up His greatest treasure. God the Father "set apart" His Son for the purpose of dying for our sins; and the Son willingly *became* a Sacrifice unto God, in our place. Well, in a similar way, God wants Christians to be "living sacrifices." He wants us to give up that which is precious and valuable to us, and set it apart for God's use. What does God want us to give up? Our money? Our time? Our talents? Yes: but He expects much more than that. To illustrate, let's go back to the Old Testament, and examine God's instructions to Israel about the burnt offerings.

Read Leviticus 1:1-17.

In the New Testament, the Apostles make it clear that the animals that were offered as burnt sacrifices were prophetic pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ. The body of the animal, which

was laid on the altar and burnt in its entirety, was a picture of Christ, who would one day give up His body as the sacrifice for our sins. However, the burnt offering is more than a prophetic picture of Christ; **it is also a picture of believers.** Think of that bullock on the altar. The LORD commanded that the *entire* bullock was to be burnt with fire. There was no part of the bullock that was *not* to be placed on the altar, and burnt. So it is with us. As Christians, we are to give up *our entire lives* to God. We aren't dead sacrifices: we are *living sacrifices*. Yes, we *should* be willing to die for the name of Jesus, if the Lord should call us to that honour; but right up to the moment we depart this life, we should be *living* sacrifices. If Christ be worth *dying* for, He is worth *living* for. It is our **"reasonable service"** to leave *everything* for Christ, and serve Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength!

Christian, your whole life is about serving God. Your life isn't about laying up earthly treasure for yourself: your life is about serving God with your whole being. As Paul points out, this is not unreasonable: it is our **"reasonable service"** to God. Christ gave His life for us, that we may be saved; therefore, *we* should give all to Christ—both out of duty, and out of love and gratitude to Him. The missionary **C.T. Studd** put it this way: "If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Christian, there *is* a reward waiting for you, for the things that you truly do for Christ's glory: but always remember that even your rewards will not be for the purpose of glorifying yourself: your rewards will reflect all the glory back on the Lord Jesus Christ! When we stand before Christ and receive the rewards for our service to Christ, we will cast our crowns at His feet and say, **"Thou art worthy!"**

Read Revelation 4:9-11.

II. The reception of eternal rewards (vv. 28-30)

(Read Matthew 19:27 again.) Peter and the other Apostles had recently been guilty of pride and envy, as they argued about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom: however, their pride had just been brought down to the dust. They had been so shaken by Jesus' words about the "camel going through the eye of a needle," that they had had momentary doubts as to whether they could even *enter* the Kingdom! Peter knew that he and the others were unworthy servants: and he knew that they didn't *deserve* anything. Yet, since Jesus *had* spoken about rewards, Peter did wonder what rewards they might expect; and this was a fair question to ask. He wasn't asking who would be greatest; he simply wondered what lay in store for them. They had heard Jesus speak, more and more, about a "cross" that was soon to come; but Peter

wanted to know what rewards lay on the other side of that cross, and the suffering. They had given up *everything* to follow the Lord, and serve Him: but lately, it seemed that they were mostly hearing about the *suffering* that was coming. *Could* they expect a reward after the battle was over? Peter had heard Jesus speak about rewards before: but he wanted to be sure!

Well, Jesus had a ready answer to Peter's question: and it was an encouraging one. Let's read **verses 28** again. **(Read Matthew 19:28.)** In answer to Peter's question, Jesus said that when the "**regeneration**" comes, the Apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Now, the Apostles didn't have any trouble understanding this one. As Jews, they had been taught that a glorious Kingdom is coming, in which Israel will be exalted among the nations, and the Messiah will reign over all the earth, from Jerusalem. They had heard that the Kingdom will be a time of endless life and untold beauty, when the curse of sin is removed. They drew this belief from **Isaiah 65:17**, where the LORD promised, "**For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.**" They also based this expectation upon **Isaiah 66:22**, where the LORD said, "**For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.**"

Now, in many ways, the disciples were right in their expectations. The 1,000-year Kingdom *will* be a time when the curse of sin is largely removed. The curse on the ground will be removed, and food will grow abundantly. There will be no thorns and thistles; and animals won't eat or harm mankind, or other animals. Satan and his demons will be bound in the bottomless pit until the end of the 1,000 years; and there will be no war. People will live for hundreds of years; and the world will be much like it was before the Fall. Yet, as God later revealed to the Apostle John, the 1,000-year Kingdom won't be entirely perfect, because there will still be the presence of sin. The believers who survive through the seven-year Tribulation will enter into the Kingdom age; but they won't have their resurrected bodies *yet*. This means that they will still have the sin nature; and their descendants have will have sin natures, too. Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, and the saints who died during the Tribulation, *will* be in their sinless, resurrected bodies; but the believers who survived through the Tribulation will *not* be in their sinless bodies. Sin will still exist on earth until the end of the 1,000 years; and when the 1,000 years is up, God will loose Satan and his angels once again. Those who were born during the 1,000 years, and *didn't* place their faith in Christ, will quickly decide to follow Satan; and there will be one final rebellion against Christ. However, the rebellion will be quickly crushed; and all the unsaved of all ages will be resurrected, judged, and sentenced to the Lake of Fire. It is then that God will destroy this present universe, and create an entirely new heavens and earth, in which there will be no sin or corruption. The Millennial saints will receive their resurrected bodies; and all the saints of all ages will live forever with the Lord in the new heaven and new earth, and in the dazzlingly beautiful city of New Jerusalem!

Brethren, *this* is what we have to look forward to! Jesus referred to the Kingdom Age as the *paliggenesía*, which means “regeneration,” or “new birth.” By the way, this word *paliggenesía* is used one other time in the New Testament. In **Titus 3:5**, Paul reminds Titus about the *spiritual* new birth that every true believer has experienced. He says, “***Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.***” The moment a person believes on Jesus, he receives the “new birth.” This means that the Holy Spirit comes to live inside the believer, and gives him a new nature, which has no inclination to sin. Well, just as the *believer* is regenerated when he believes on Christ, so the *earth* will be “regenerated” when Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom. It will be what Peter called “***the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord,***” and “***the times of restitution of all things.***”

Read Acts 3:18-21.

We’ve seen what the “***regeneration***” will be like. With this in mind, let’s look again at the promise that Jesus gave to His Apostles. (**Read Matthew 19:28.**) Folks, there are a couple important things that you need to know about this verse. First of all, Jesus is claiming to be the Messiah! When Jesus said that the Son of man will “***sit in the throne of his glory,***” He was referring back to one of the most important prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament. Let’s look at that Scripture.

Read Daniel 7:9-14, 21-22.

Brethren, there is no way to allegorise this passage. This is not some kind of metaphor or parable: this is a description of actual future events. At the end of the Tribulation period, God the Father (the Ancient of Days), will destroy the Antichrist, and all his followers; and He will destroy them through the agency of His Son. Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, will visibly descend to earth from the clouds of heaven, and will destroy the Antichrist and his followers at the Battle of Armageddon. He will then set up a literal Kingdom here on earth; and in this kingdom, His saints will rule and reign with Him. The Apostles will sit on thrones, and will literally rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. (Judas Iscariot, of course, will not be one of those twelve. God chose *Mathias* to be Judas’ replacement.) What about *us*, though? We are not Apostles; and we never *will* be Apostles. Only twelve men in history have been given that privilege. What will *we* receive, then? Well, Jesus answered that question, too. Let’s read again **verses 29 and 30**; and then we will read from **Mark chapter 10**, to get the full spectrum of what Jesus said. (**Read Matthew 19:29-31.**)

Read Mark 10:29-31.

What is Jesus promising, here? Is this a proof text for the “prosperity Gospel”—the teaching that if you “sow the seed” of financial donations, you will get a big payback? Sad to say, there are false teachers out there who *do* use this verse to support the “get rich quick” gospel. They promise that if you give financially to their ministry, you will be wealthy (as though it were a “spiritual stock market”). Friends, this is *a lie!*

Now, please don’t misunderstand: **God does meet our needs.** *Can* we expect God to meet our *material* needs as we serve Him? Absolutely! Take **tithing**, for example. Do you want to know how to get out of debt? **Give your tithe to God.** Now, some of you may think I’m crazy. “What? Give 10% to God, when you’re already struggling? *That’s* going to get you out of debt?” Yes! I have experienced this myself; and I have seen many other believers experiencing it in their lives, too. You see, your money isn’t really your own, anyway: it’s God’s. He’s the one who gave you the life, and health, and mental ability to work; and He’s one who provided your job, and your money. All you have is *His*; and when you decide to trust God with *His own* money and resources, and to give Him what is due Him, *He actually provides*—and in ways you wouldn’t have imagined possible. He gives you what you need, so that you can pay your bills, and owe no man anything (except to love one another). This spiritual principle that runs throughout Scripture, folks; and God doesn’t lie.

Yet, having said this, **does God promise to make you rich?** Is that what Jesus is talking about when He promises “*manifold more in this present time,*” and an “*hundred fold*”? Well, that question is answered in **Mark 10**. First of all, Jesus clarifies that those who leave their loved ones behind to preach the Gospel will be given “*brethren,*” “*sisters,*” “*mothers,*” and “*children.*” Now, how can you get another “mother”? Obviously, Jesus isn’t talking about biological family members: He’s talking about *spiritual* family members. (Christ Himself pointed to His followers and said, “*Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*”) Jesus’ message is clear: those who leave their loved ones to take the Gospel to distant lands may take comfort in knowing that they will receive *new* “family”—*spiritual* family. However, this is all according to how faithfully you proclaim the Gospel. As you take the Gospel to people, and lead people to Christ, your spiritual “family” will grow larger and larger—perhaps even “*one hundred fold.*” Do you get it? Do you see what Jesus is saying? He’s not talking about money here: He’s talking about the blessing of people being added to God’s family.

But, Pastor, what about the “*houses and lands*” part? Jesus did promise to give His servants “*houses and lands*,” didn’t He? Yes, He did. However, Jesus also promised that these “*houses and lands*” would come “*with persecution*.” In light of this, I seriously doubt that Jesus was talking about *physical* houses, or mansions. If you’re living in a land where you are being hounded, persecuted, and discriminated against for your faith, it’s unlikely that you will have a nice house! Throughout most of church history, Christ’s followers have been poor, and without any “*certain dwellingplace*.” What does Jesus mean, then? Jesus is saying that if you leave your family and homeland to preach the Gospel, God will see to it that you have homes where you may lodge, receive shelter, and enjoy the ties of family. As the Apostles went out preaching the Gospel, *many* homes were opened to them; and they had sweet fellowship. Whole lands and regions became filled with followers of Jesus; and as the churches increased in number, God’s people were able to be a help and support to each other, as they faced their trials together. All these things are part of the blessing of following Christ!

However, the greatest promise of all is the promise of eternal life in “*the world to come*.” Eternal life begins the moment you believe on Christ; and it continues into eternity. It will continue throughout the Kingdom Age, when God’s people we will literally rule and reign with Christ here on earth. In **Revelation 2:26**, the Lord says, “*He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations*.” Christians who *faithfully* served the Lord (and I cannot overemphasise that word “faithfully”) will take part in the administration of Christ’s Kingdom; and when the 1,000 years is over, they will reign with Him eternally, in the New Jerusalem.

Christian, are *you* faithfully serving the Lord? Are you filling your heart with the treasures of God’s Word, and walking in faith and obedience to Him? Are you offering up your whole life as a “*living sacrifice*”? Are you willing to forsake *all* for the sake of the Gospel? Being a “missionary” isn’t just for an elite corps of exceptional Christians, who are in “full-time ministry”; no, it is the calling of *every Christian*—whether you be an office worker, a factory worker, a stay-at-home mum, a grade-school student, a college or university student, a pensioner, a teacher, a small business owner, a CEO, a senator, or a president. It doesn’t matter who you are: *all* are called to let go of the things of this world, and follow Jesus.

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would like to tell you the story of a man named **Henry Francis Lyte**. Lyte laboured as a pastor to the seafaring folk of Devonshire, England, for three decades. His health was always frail; but he worked like a horse, as he did all in his power to snatch souls from the burning. Finally, though, in 1847, his doctor said that he *must* retire to the warmer climate of southern France. Francis had a final, tearful church service with his flock; and the next day, he set sail for Nice. However, on that last evening before he set sail, he wrote a poem, which he left with his daughter. As he walked along the seashore, the sunset over Brixham Harbour was “like a pool of molten gold”; and he went back home and jotted down the words, “Abide with me, fast falls the eventide; the darkness

deepens; Lord, with me abide.”³ By the time he got to the last stanza, he closed the poem (which was written as a prayer) with these words: “Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes. Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.” Only days later, after he had arrived in Nice, Henry Lyte entered the presence of the Lord; and his last words were, “Peace! Joy!”

Brethren, Heaven's glory is *just as real as* (and a million times more brilliant) than the blazing sunset that Lyte saw on that last eventide of his life. Heaven is *real!* The coming Kingdom is *real!* Don't waste your life in pursuing worthless trinkets of this world! Jesus warned that there will be many who will enter the Kingdom by faith, but who will be **“last”** in rewards: and they will be ashamed. They may have been **“first”** in privilege, because they had abundant access to the Scriptures, and to sound doctrine, and to a good church, and Christian fellowship; yet, though they had been given *so much*, they squandered most of their lives on things of no eternal value. Christian, don't let this be you! Love the Lord with all your heart. Be in God's house; read His Word; and hide it in your heart. Talk with the Lord constantly. Give sacrificially to God, and to others. Forsake the things of this world, and do all you can to tell others of the Christ who can save their souls!

Perhaps you aren't sure that you are saved. If so, don't put off the matter of salvation one moment longer. Believe on Christ today! Repent of your sin, and believe on the one who died for you, and rose again!

¹ Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), p. 784.

² Allen Patterson, “The High Calling of Being a Missionary,” <https://gfamissions.org/high-calling-of-being-a-missionary/>

³ Morgan, *Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations*, p. 2.