

10 The life of his kingdom (Matthew 19-20)

Jesus is the Christ, the Son who restores his Father's reign to the earth. Peter said it (16). Heaven confirmed it (17). And Jesus outlined how kingdom relationships work (18).

Any questions or thoughts from last week before we continue?

10.1 Relationships in his kingdom (Matthew 19)

Tonight we cover our king's final teachings about life in his kingdom, as he makes his way to Jerusalem for the final week of his life (Matthew 21–28).

Family relationships (19:1-15)

How do family relationships work in the kingdom of God?

Divorce was legal in Old Testament law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). But what constituted acceptable grounds? Rabbi Hillel taught that divorce was allowed for any reason. Rabbi Shammai permitted divorce only following marital unfaithfulness.

They drew Jesus into their debate:

Matthew 19:3 (my translation)

Pharisees came up and tested him by saying, "On what grounds can a man divorce his wife? For whatever reason he wants?"

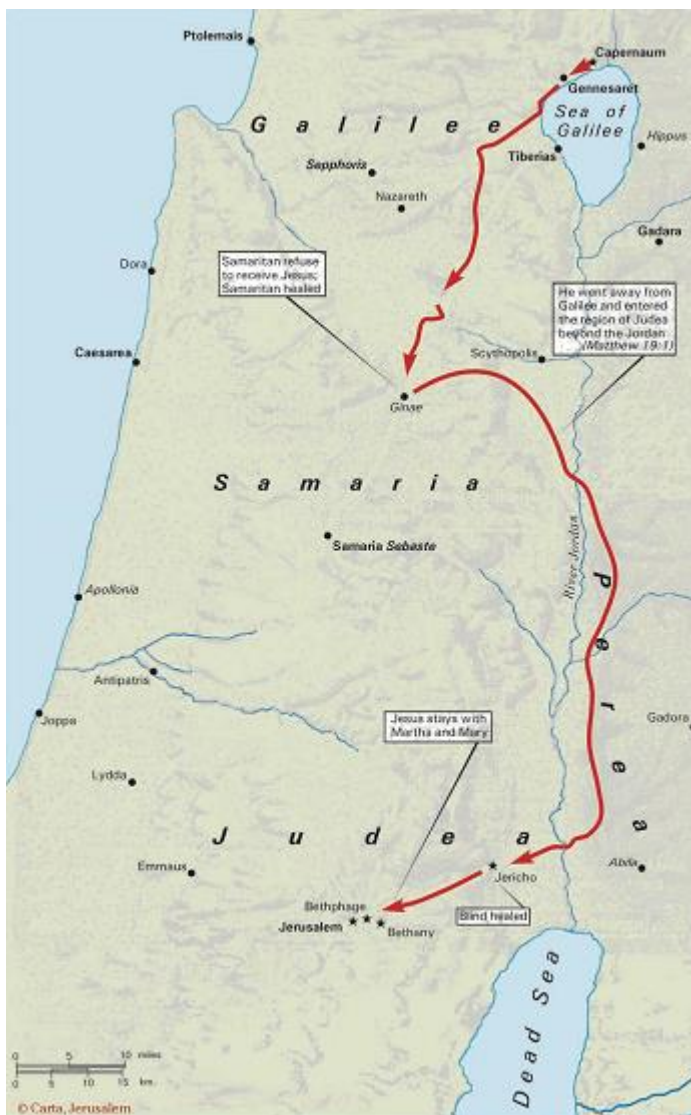
Jesus' response sounded more like Rabbi Shammai, but based on different logic:

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ In reply he said, "Haven't you read how the Creator, from the outset, made them a male and a female?"

⁵ He said, 'On this basis, a man will leave his father and his mother and unite with his wife, and the two will be fused into one flesh' [Genesis 2:24]. ⁶ So it follows that they are no longer two, but one flesh. So then, what God paired up, no person should split apart."

Jesus did not argue the interpretation of the Deuteronomy law, the way a lawyer might do. He asked a more fundamental question: "What was God's intent in the beginning, before everything got messed up?"



Understanding the Bible: Understanding the Life of Jesus: An Introductory Atlas, (Carta Jerusalem, 2019), 31.

His answer: "God gave us a relationship where a man and a woman are fused together in a unified life as a single creature. So don't let anyone undermine the gift God gave us to know each other like that."

Jesus' hermeneutic (way of understanding the text) is **relational**. Instead of disputing the meaning of the words, he asks about the meaning of the relationship.

In the beginning, God gifted us with this relationship. The enduring, committed, devoted relationship that is marriage is the closest thing humans can experience to the unfailing unified love that exists within God's own being.

Divorce was never God's creational ideal for us. The option to break the marriage relationship was a later concession to our human brokenness.

That is not how the Pharisees framed their thoughts about divorce. They treated the Mosaic Law as a *command* to a man to divorce his wife when he no longer found her pleasing. That would make him a lawbreaker if he did not divorce her:

Matthew 19:7

⁷ They say to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of divorce and dismiss her?" [Deuteronomy 24:1-4]

Jesus says divorce was never a command, only a concession. God allowed divorce because people close their hearts to each other. *Hardhearted* (*sklērokardia*) is "an unyielding frame of mind, hardness of heart, coldness, obstinacy, stubbornness."¹⁶

Matthew 19:8-9

⁸ He says to them, "Moses allowed you to dismiss your wives as a concession to your hardhearted obstinacy, but it was not what God set up in the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who dismisses his wife for grounds other than immorality and marries another is being unfaithful to her."

In verse 9, Jesus recognizes that marital unfaithfulness destroys the relationship. If you're divorcing because you've lost interest, you're destroying something significant. But if your partner has already destroyed the relationship through unfaithfulness, divorce is recognizing that the relationship has already died.

Mark's record of this conversation is different. Mark 10:11 omits the phrase "except for sexual immorality." So, if we didn't have Matthew 10:9, legalistic Christians would declare that there are no grounds for divorce at all. But that's misreading Jesus. Jesus was not explaining the grounds for divorce.

Matthew and Mark agree that Jesus was saying, "Don't destroy your marriage." Matthew adds, "But you can't undo the situation if your partner has already destroyed it." You might also need to recognize that your partner has destroyed the marriage if they walk away from it. That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:15 when he describes the partner as no longer bound to the marriage when the partner has left.

¹⁶ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 930.

In summary, don't destroy your marriage. Treat your marriage (and your partner) as a precious gift from God. But if you're a passenger in a marriage that's already been wrecked, you're not bound to that junkyard for life.

The disciples were surprised. If marriage is for life, maybe marriage is not a good idea:

Matthew 19:10-12

¹⁰ His followers say to him, "If that's how it is between a man and a woman, we'd be better off not to marry." ¹¹ He said to them, "Not everyone can accept the saying, only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are some people who were born impotent, just as there are some who were desexed by others, and there are some who chose to live without sex because they're focused on the kingdom of heaven. If you can accept it, accept it."

Jesus' attitude is not dogmatic legalism. He's calling us to the kind of committed faithfulness that represents God's heart.

Immediately following the discussion about marriage, both Matthew and Mark include this story about the children. They're people too. Their place in the family matters, as does their place in the kingdom:

Matthew 19:13-15

¹³ Then they presented him with children, to bless them with his touch and pray for them. But the disciples censured them. ¹⁴ Jesus said, "Let the children be! Don't stop them coming to me, for the kingdom of heaven is people like these."

¹⁵ And having blessed them with his touch, he moved on from there.

Entering kingdom life (9:16-26)

How would you respond if someone asked you, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" What would you say? Would you say, "There's nothing you need to do. Jesus has done it all." Or would you say, "Keep the commandments."

When our answer doesn't match what Jesus says, we have an opportunity to learn:

Matthew 19:16-17

¹⁶ See, someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good could I do so I could have eternal life?"

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Why are you asking me about goodness? Goodness is One Person. If you want to enter life, keep his commands."



According to Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18, this guy addressed Jesus as “*Good teacher.*” He recognized Jesus was instructing the community to do good, to live well (kingdom relationships). Matthew gets to the heart of what the guy was asking: “Help me identify what good I should contribute.”

When we see a phrase like “to inherit eternal life” Christians sometimes hear it as if it said, “How can I go to heaven when I die?” It’s not about going to heaven. The phrase “eternal life” literally means *life to the ages*.¹⁷

There were different ages in Israel’s story: the age of David and Solomon, the age of the divided kingdom, the age when they were ruled by foreigners. They were looking forward to the age to come, the time when they would once again be God’s kingdom, under the rule of God’s anointed. God had promised his Christ would reign forever. It would be the age of all ages, the enduring age of God’s reign.

Jesus answer was, “No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:18). Now, if you filter Jesus’ words through feelings of guilt, you hear, “You’re not good enough. Neither am I since only God is good.” Or maybe he meant, “You’re not good enough, and if I’m good I must be God.” Neither of those make sense in this context.

Matthew’s explanation makes much more sense. Jesus was not condemning anyone. He was directing the questioner to the only source for an answer. You want to know about goodness? Isn’t it obvious where to look? Goodness has its roots in God, the origin of all good.

So if you want to know how to do what’s good, what has the Good One said? Hasn’t our heavenly sovereign set out what good we should do—with his commandments?

Once again, Jesus is interpreting Scripture relationally. The commandments God gave Israel at Sinai were a reflection of God’s own character. That’s what he called his people to be.

The guy was hoping for something more specific:

Matthew 19:16-22

¹⁸ “Which ones?” he asked.

Jesus said, “Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false testimony.”¹⁹ Honour your father and your mother. Love your neighbour as yourself.”

²⁰ The youth replied, “All these I’ve kept. What am I missing?”

²¹ Jesus replied, “If you want to be complete, go sell your possessions and give to the poor. You will have treasure with God, and you can come follow me.”

²² Hearing Jesus’ answer, the youth went away grieving, for he was in possession of much property.

The commandments Jesus cites are so familiar. Like this guy, most of us don’t murder people. We don’t take someone else’s spouse, or their property. We don’t destroy their reputation. We respect our parents, and look out for our neighbours.

¹⁷ For a 5-minute video explaining “eternal life”, see <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/eterna-life/>

How would you have responded to the guy's claims that he had kept the commands all his life (verse 20)? Would you have said, "But you can't have. We're all sinners." Jesus doesn't. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus has no interest in assigning guilt.

Instead, Jesus gives him something he can do. "You know that last command about taking care of neighbours in the same way you take care of yourself? How about selling up and using your wealth to help the people who don't have capacity to take care of themselves? Please don't view that as losing your wealth; think of it as reinvesting in what God values. You'll be unencumbered. And you can follow me as we journey toward the age to come."

Is that the answer you would have given? Jesus' gospel challenges people to seek *first the kingdom of God and his justice* for the whole community (6:33), because we *can't serve both God and money* (6:24).

How does Jesus' response shape the way we call people to respond to the gospel?

As the rich young ruler walked away from Jesus, back to his busy business, Jesus called us to realize just how hard it is for those who have much to let it go so we can experience life on earth as heaven's governance intends:

Matthew 19:23-26

²³ Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth: a wealthy person will go into the kingdom of heaven with difficulty. ²⁴ Again I say to you, it's easier to get a camel through the eye of a needle than to get a wealthy person to go into the kingdom of God."

²⁵ On hearing this, the disciples were totally flabbergasted. "So, who can be saved?"

²⁶ Seeing their reaction, Jesus said, "With people, this is beyond us; with God, all things are in his power."

I hope it's clear by now that Jesus was not saying, "Rich people can't go to heaven." And going to heaven is not what the disciples have in mind when they say, "So who can be rescued?"



Photo: Allen Browne, 2014

As Peter realized (16:16) and God confirmed (17:5), Jesus is anointed by God to restore heaven's reign over the earth, the Son with the authority of his Father the heavenly sovereign. This commission places him in conflict with those who currently hold power (16:20-21; 17:22-23). It places him at loggerheads with those who currently claim possession of the earth and its resources (the rich).

Jesus promised the people who were missing out (the poor) that they would get a fair go under his kingship (Matthew 5:3). But this vision is impossible while 1% of the world's population claim possession of half the world. If Jesus' reign means blessing for you who are poor, it also means woe to you who are rich (Luke 6:20, 24).

That's why it is so hard to get wealthy people on board. Jesus' kingdom vision—the restoration of the world under God's reign—is not to their advantage. Getting a rich person to come into God's reign over the world (the kingdom of God) is more difficult than getting a camel through the eye of a needle.

Our understanding of salvation is too small. When I'm preoccupied with myself, I reduce the message to me and whether I make it to heaven. Then I hear the disciples' question as, "Well, the rich clearly have God's blessing, and if they cannot be saved (go to heaven), what hope is there for the rest of us?"

Jesus' understanding of salvation was the kingdom of God—saving the world from its oppression under sin and death, so earth is what it was designed to be (a kingdom of heaven). The disciples understood Jesus as God's anointed ruler for the world. That was the good news: Jesus is the Christ (anointed ruler) who saves the world from evil's reign to be his Father's kingdom.

But if Jesus cannot get the wealthy to relinquish their claims over the world and its resources, how can he restore God's reign for everyone? Isn't this a deal-breaker for all of us? If Jesus has no more hope of getting the wealthy into his kingdom than of getting a camel through a needle, all his promises about giving the kingdom to the poor are sunk already. He can't save the world. He can't save the poor. He can't save the rich. He can't save anybody. Literally, *Who can he save?*

That's why they were *exceedingly astonished* (19:25). Jesus' statement vaporized everything the disciples were expecting. If Jesus could not solve the problem of the rich and powerful dominating the poor and powerless, it's all hopeless.

Peter thought if those in power killed Jesus, it would be impossible for him to become king (16:22). Jesus said it would take an act of God to raise him up (16:21). If it was humanly impossible to get rich people to relinquish their claim on the world and its resources, it will take the miraculous work of God to restore his kingship over the world: *With people this is beyond us; with God all things are in his power* (19:26).

Jesus doesn't tell them how God will solve the problem of the rich and the injustice they perpetrate over the world. The most common solution throughout history has been violence. Another country invades and takes the property of the rich for themselves, or the proletariat rise up in revolution to take the riches from the bourgeois.

Violence was not Jesus' solution. Well, not committing violence anyway. He was prepared to take the violence of the rich and powerful in his own body on the cross. It's how he bore away the sin of the world.

You've got to love Jesus' blunt honesty. The injustice of the wealthy has contributed to wars and oppression throughout history. It's a problem no one has resolved, and the world cannot be at peace until it is solved. It's easier to get a camel through a needle's eye than to get a rich person to enter God's kingdom (the world as God intends).

Jesus agrees it's an impossible problem from the human perspective, but the rich do not have the power to block what God has decreed for his world. The God who raises the dead can topple the tyranny of wealth and power. Earth will not remain oppressed.

Jesus calls us to trust the grace of the heavenly sovereign who can and will save the world through the one he has anointed as our Lord. Even if we can't pull the camels through.

The rewards of kingdom life (9:27-30)

The rich young ruler walked away from Jesus, back to his wealth.

The disciples had walked away from their nets and their lucrative fishing businesses to follow Jesus (4:20). They needed reassurance that it was a worthwhile choice. If the wealthy won't follow, will Jesus' enterprise succeed? What could they expect?

Matthew 19:27-28

²⁷ Then Peter replied, "Look, we let go of everything and followed you. What can we expect?"

²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, that you—the ones following me into the regenerated world—when the son of man sits on his glorious throne, you will be seated on twelve thrones too, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Jesus has never mentioned his *throne*. The vision of Daniel 7:9 described *thrones* being set in place. The *Ancient of Days* took his seat. The *son of man* was led into his presence and given the kingdom (verses 13-14). The *son of man* shares the reign with the Ancient of Days. He judges the world. That means he sets right what's wrong, i.e. overturning the power of the beasts, restoring the eternal reign of the one who has always been our true sovereign.

So what can the disciples expect? The son of man is the heir of humanity, heir of the dominion God gave to humans in the beginning (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8). He's not after power for himself but for all of us. So those who do follow him are living evidence of what humans should—and could—do. He appointed twelve to restore justice to the twelve fallen tribes of Jacob's family.

His mission to rescue God's nation from enslavement to foreign rulers and oppression under evil will work. They will be part of *the restoration of all things* (verse 28).

Actually, that sounds bigger than the disciples imagined. Jesus is not only the heir of Jacob, restoring what God promised Israel. Jesus is the heir of humanity (son of man) restoring what God promised the world. What they'll inherit is *the regenerated world*.

This is what God's people have always yearned for. After the tribes of Israel began destroying each other at the end of Judges, Samuel's mother looked forward to what God would do: *raising the poor from the dust, seating them with princes to inherit a throne of honour, because the foundations of the earth are the LORD'S. ... For he will give strength to his king ... his Anointed* (1 Samuel 2:8, 10).

And Jesus' mother was looking forward to what God would do through her son too: *bringing down the rulers from their thrones ... filling the hungry with good ... helping his servant Israel ... fulfilling forever his promises to our ancestors* (Luke 1:52-55).

Those who were on top according to the world's values would find themselves at the bottom. Those who were first would be last. Like the centurion of 8:11 and the Canaanite of 15:28, those who were outside the covenant people—aliens to the promises—would be included in the regenerated world:

Matthew 19:29-30

²⁹ “And all who have let go of houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother of children or property on account of my name will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life. ³⁰ Many of those who were first will be last, and the last first.”

What do you think? What's your response to what Jesus said?

10.2 Turning everything upside down (Matthew 20)

Power works different in God's kingdom. In this chapter, Jesus explains how compensation works differently, how power is used differently, how his reign is unlike the power and justice systems we all expect.

By making himself our servant, our king inverts the whole social value system.

Valuing people for themselves rather than their efforts (20:1-16)

Our economic system values people on what they produce. Increase your productivity, and you can earn more as a worker. Get more out of the workers and you deserve a bonus as a boss.

Jesus told a story about a different kind of world where people are valued for themselves rather than their labour or how much they achieved. The goal of this vineyard is not to make money but to provide for the people of the town:

Matthew 20:1-16

¹ “For the kingdom of heaven is like someone with a small business. He went out at the start of the day to hire some workers for his vineyard.

² Agreeing with the workers for a denarius for the day, he sent them to the vineyard.

³ “Going out around mid-morning, he saw others standing around in the marketplace doing nothing, ⁴ and he said, ‘You go work in my vineyard too, and whatever is right I’ll give you.’ ⁵ They went.

“Again, around midday and mid-afternoon he went out and did the same thing. ⁶ An hour before sundown he went out and found others standing around and asked them, ‘Why have you been standing around all day doing nothing?’

⁷ “They tell him, ‘No one hired us.’

“He says to them, ‘You go to my vineyard too.’

⁸ “Evening came, and the lord of the vineyard says to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and give them their pay, starting with the last group, back to the first.’

⁹ The ones who arrived an hour before sunset received a denarius.

¹⁰ The ones who arrived first thought they would get more, but they also received a denarius. ¹¹ On receiving it, they complained to the business owner, ¹² 'This last group only worked for one hour. How come you treated them the same as those of us who carried weight of the day through the heat?'

¹³ "He replied to one of them, 'Mate, am I doing you wrong? Didn't you agree to work for me for a denarius?' ¹⁴ Take what's yours and go. I want to give this last group the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't you think I should be able to do as I want with what is mine? Or does what you see give you evil thoughts because I'm being good to them?'

¹⁶ "This is how it will be: the last first, and the first last."

Jesus story raises so many questions. Why does the vineyard owner hire everyone who is willing to work rather than the number he needs to get the work done? Why does he keep going back to town to see if anyone else needs a job? And why does he pay them the same wage at the end of the day, regardless of hours worked?

I don't think Jesus' story belongs in a course on how to make money. This approach will not maximize your income.

I don't think Jesus' story belongs in a course on how to keep workers happy either. Last time I was in Galilee it was 40°C and summer had not even started. Those who had worked so many hours through the hottest part of the day believed they were worth more than those who only worked an hour. How by any measure is that fair?

The owner is operating with a value system that's foreign to us. At the end of the day, every willing worker goes home with enough to feed their family. This guy isn't running a business to make as much money as he can for himself. He's in business to make the town prosperous. He wants to give everyone a chance. He wants to give everyone enough.

As alien as that value system seems to us, it is how heaven wants life on earth to function. The earth is the LORD's and everything in it. We're working his property. God doesn't need to make his fortune. At the end of the day, God's concern is his family, making sure everyone has enough. That's the value system of the kingdom of God.

So how does God's value system reform our value system? How does that change the way you do business if you're a small business owner? How does it reshape the way you compete with other workers if you're a labourer? How does absorbing God's values reframe what we value?

Truth is: *No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money* (Matthew 6:24).

So, what are we living for?

Path to power (20:17-28)

In the culture of our world, money is power—purchasing power, social superiority, power to put others in their place. That's not the culture of God's kingdom. God's reign empowers others, even those who have been put down. It starts at the top:

Matthew 20:17-19

¹⁷ Going up to Jerusalem, Jesus took his twelve followers. On the way he told them privately, ¹⁸ "See, we're going up to Jerusalem, and the son of man will be handed over to the chief priests and Bible scholars. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and hand him over to the nations to be mocked, flogged, and crucified. And on the third day, he will be raised up."

The moment his followers proclaimed Jesus as the heaven-anointed king, he began to explain that the temple authorities would have him killed (16:21). Now he adds that the leaders of his own people will hand their king over to the nations who will mock his kingship, flog him as a criminal, and crucify him as a threat to Caesar.

The cross doesn't take Jesus by surprise. He can see what's coming. But he doesn't make the preparations you'd expect. He doesn't run from Jerusalem as David did when a rebellious son threatened his life (2 Samuel 15:14). He doesn't collect a force to recapture the capital from the nations (Rome).

Why does Jesus lead them into danger where their lives are also under threat? Why does he expect them to take up their crosses and give their lives too? (16:24-28)

This is how Jesus believed he would receive his authority. On the third day, after death had taken him, the life-giving power of heaven would raise him up from tomb to throne. After being betrayed to death at the hands of humanity, the heir of humanity (son of man) would be raised up and given the authority God decreed in the beginning (17:22-23).

This is how heaven's authority is restored to the earth. We, the followers of the Christ, are called to live through giving our lives too.

That's not how we think about power. It's so counter-intuitive:

Matthew 20:20-23

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached him with her sons, kneeling to ask something from him.

²¹ He said to her, "What do you want?"

She replied, "Decree that these two sons of mine are to be seated beside you—one on your right and one on your left—in your kingdom."

²² In reply Jesus said, "You don't know what you're asking. Can you drink the cup I am about to drink?"

They said, "We can."

²³ "Indeed, you will drink my cup. But the positions on my right and left are not mine to give; they've already been prepared by my Father."

James and John want the top cabinet position in Jesus' government. Their Mum lodges the request for them: it sounds better than seeking power for themselves.

Jesus sees through the ruse, and addresses the boys directly. (The “you” in verse 22 is plural.) As he has just been telling them, the cup the people will give their king is poisoned.

“And you will indeed suffer as servants of the crucified king,” Jesus tells them. It’s true. James was the first of the twelve to be put to the sword (Acts 12:2). All of them, including John, suffered at the hands of those in power.

Jesus does not give them the positions of power on his right and on his left. John came to understand the cross as a kind of throne, where the rebels of this world *lifted up* their king (John 12:32-36). In rebellion against God’s authority, the leaders of this world elevated Jesus as the chief rebel, crucified with two criminals as attendants: *one on his right, and one on his left* (27:38). James and John would have been relieved they had not been given those positions! (verse 23)

Seeking power over others is what’s wrong with the world. Jesus has already rebuked Peter as an enemy because he imagined power for himself (16:23). The other disciples are angry at the power grab by James and John:

Matthew 20:24-28

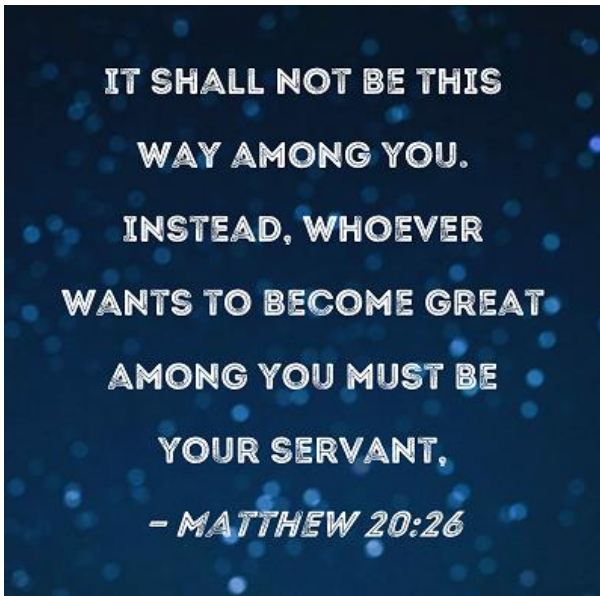
²⁴ When the ten heard, they were outraged about the two brothers.

²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know how the rulers of the nations lord it over them and the great exercise power over them.

²⁶ It is not to be like this among you! Anyone who wants to be great among you is to become your servant, ²⁷ and anyone who wants to be in charge is to be your slave, ²⁸ just as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life in redemption of the many.”

Jesus insists his kingdom must not function like the kingdoms of this world, full of political posturing and manoeuvring for power. If you’ve ever seen the inside workings of a political party (factions, deal-making, branch-stacking, ...), you’ll understand what he was talking about.

And this has been the greatest issue the church has faced in the last 2000 years. By the second century, the power of the bishops became an issue. By the fourth century, the fight for power was really on. The bishop of Rome claimed power over all the others. The Eastern Orthodox churches split from the Roman Pope and assigned their own Patriarch as head of their churches. We now have more than 40,000 registered denominations. Much of that fight is over who rules. Should the congregation be able to hire and fire their pastor (congregational government), or should the hierarchy be able to appoint the leaders for the church (Catholicism, Presbyterianism, Apostolic Churches, etc). Even the names of our denominations reflect the power issue.



**IT SHALL NOT BE THIS
WAY AMONG YOU.
INSTEAD, WHOEVER
WANTS TO BECOME GREAT
AMONG YOU MUST BE
YOUR SERVANT,
- MATTHEW 20:26**

"It must not be so among you," Jesus said. When we fight for power in church, we undermine the credibility of the gospel as the power of God to reconcile the world to God and his people to each other.

The one who inherits the dominion God gave to humans (the son of man) receives that authority not as a conqueror dominating the world, but as the suffering servant reconciling earth with heaven, liberating the many through his own demise.

How does Jesus' *giving his life provide redemption to the many* (verse 28)? That's a topic theologians discuss under the heading "atonement." According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:¹⁸

The term atonement developed in the English language in the 16th century by the combination of "at onement," meaning to "set at one" or "to reconcile."

In this context, the "at-onement" was not achieved the way the rulers of this world do it. Caesar could claim to have unified the known world under Rome. "You recognize the power over you, or we put you down"—that was the attitude of the Empire.

But the son of man does not unify the world under his authority like that. The at-onement comes from the suffering servant of heaven's authority. The rulers of the nations lord it over people, so they assassinate the servant-king God provided for his people. Heaven overturns this injustice by raising him from the dead and giving him all authority, all people under his reign. It's by suffering and giving his life that he is raised up as Lord of all, unifying the world with an at-onement humans that have not known since the war began with Cain killing Abel.

God raising up his unjustly killed suffering servant is what emancipates the world from oppression under the dominating rulers who serve the powers of sin and death. The good news of God raising up his anointed is what restores the many into God's reign as a unified kingdom under God. That's atonement as Jesus explained it.

Seeing who is king (20:29-34)

Matthew began his Gospel by identifying Jesus as the *Christ, son of David* (1:1). God promised David that a descendant of his would reign on earth forever with heaven's authority, and here he was: the heaven-anointed king.

But Jesus didn't look or act like the kings of this world. He had no palace, no army or harem like David did. He had no fortress or imperial forces behind him like Herod did. He's on his way to Jerusalem with his supporters—not to take control, but to lose his life to free his people.

Some could see he was king:

Matthew 20:29-34

²⁹ As he set out from Jericho, a sizeable crowd followed him. ³⁰ And look: two blind people sitting beside the road, hearing that Jesus was on the way shouted, "Have pity on us, Master, son of David."

¹⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/atonement-religion>

³¹ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to quiet down. They shouted even louder, "Have pity on us, Master, son of David."

³² Jesus stopped, and summoned them: "What would you like me to do for you?"

³³ They replied, "Master, that our eyes may be opened!"

³⁴ With compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they gained their sight and followed him.

I guess those two had a different way of "seeing" things.

10.3 Conclusion

The kingdom of God is a different kind of society from how our world has been operating. It's a community where the social relationships reflect the sovereign who leads us, earth as a kingdom of heaven.

- Marriage is the foundational relationship where we give each other faithful love (19:1-15).
- The resources we have are for the sake of the kingdom, not the self (19:16-30).
- Our work is to support the community, not to make money (20:1-16).
- The kingdom of God exists to serve and save each other, so we cannot be like those who live to dominate each other (20:17-28).

In the upside-down kingdom, it's the blind who can see, for it's the king who opens our eyes.

That's the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Next week we follow our king to Jerusalem for the final week of this life.

For more detail on Matthew 19–20, see:

Mat 19:4-9	Handling Scripture as Jesus did (Matthew 19:4-9)
Mat 19:1-12	Can I have a divorce? (Matthew 19:1-12)
Mat 19:13-15	How Jesus saw children (Matthew 19:13-15)
Mat 19:14	Original kingdom, or original sin? (Matthew 19:14)
Mat 19:16-22	When 'good' leads you to 'great' (Matthew 19:16-22)
Mat 19:23-26	The camel that won't go through (Matthew 19:23-26)
Mat 19:27-30	Son of man enthroned (Matthew 19:27-30)
Mat 20:1-16	Working in God's vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
Mat 20:17-19	How Jesus explained the cross (Matthew 20:17-19)
Mat 20:20-23	What's your kingdom vision? (Matthew 20:20-23)
Mat 20:24-28	Jesus compared to other kings (Matthew 20:24-28)
Mat 20:25-34	Regaining the good news of Jesus' kingship
Mat 20:28	How serving can ransom many (Matthew 20:28)
Mat 20:29-34	See, Son of David! (Matthew 20:29-34)

The links are from <https://allenbrowne.blog/scriptureindex/>

In preparation for next week, read Matthew 21–22.