

Luke Chapter 22

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[0 : 00] Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout aloud, O Israel, be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

The Lord has taken away your punishment. He has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you. Never again will you fear any harm.

On that day they will say to Jerusalem, do not fear, O Zion, do not let your hands hang limp. The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with his love.

He will rejoice over you with singing. Another wonderful passage of scripture to read to you this evening.

This is in Luke's Gospel, chapter 22. This is on page 1057, Luke's account of the Last Supper. Luke's is the third of these great parallel accounts of the life of Jesus.

[1 : 04] Luke 22, reading from verse 7 through to verse 34. Let us hear the word of God.

Then came the day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

Where do you want us to prepare for it? They asked. He replied, as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.

Follow him to the house that he enters and say to the owner of the house, the teacher asks, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there. They left and found things just as Jesus had told them, so they prepared the Passover.

[2 : 09] When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table and he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you.

For I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them saying, This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him.

[3 : 18] They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

Jesus said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. And those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors.

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest. And the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater?

The one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials.

And I confer on you a kingdom. Just as my father conferred one on me. So that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

[4 : 21] Simon, Simon. Satan has asked to sift you all as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon. That your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

But he replied, Lord. I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Jesus answered, I tell you, Peter. Before the cock crows today, You will deny three times That you know me.

If you have a Bible with you, Please open it to the passage of Scripture I read in your hearing.

In Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22. And we are going to look at verses 28 to 30.

Luke chapter 22, verses 28 to 30. You are those who have stood by me in my trials, Jesus says.

[5 : 35] And I confer on you a kingdom, Just as my father conferred one on me. So that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In 40 years of pastoral counselling, I have long lost count of the number of Christians that I have come across who are unhappy in their work, who really struggle in the workplace.

Why is that? Well, for many of them, it's not because in principle they don't like their job. It's not that they want a change of career. It's not because they're no interest in what they do.

The job itself is not the problem. The problem is the person for whom they work. They're a boss. They're an immediate boss. Or the boss above that.

Or some aspect of the management. And the problem is a simple one. That they work for people who are so very hard ever to please.

[6 : 49] They find that their work is never noticed. It's never commented on unless it is to be criticised. That they're never thanked for anything. They're never praised for what they do.

However hard they work at it and however much they give of themselves to the job. And there's never any question of a bonus or a reward.

And I found that extraordinarily sad. Just a little praise, even occasionally, could have made such a difference to so many of those people.

Now all I want to do this evening is for you to notice and grasp the extraordinary contrast there is about how the Lord Jesus Christ treats those who serve and follow him.

It's very, very different for a Christian serving the Saviour than it is in so much of secular work.

[8 : 00] Here we notice in this passage that Jesus sees and commends and promises to reward absolutely everything that is done for him.

However basic that is. And what is striking about the commendation that we find here is that it comes at a time when Christ could be forgiven for being wholly preoccupied with himself and what lies in front of him.

But no. Even though he is facing the horrors of Golgotha which he has seen in considerable measure already and which he will see yet more even though he faces that crucifixion yet nonetheless he is still alive and alert to what others do for him and full of praise in a situation of great tension.

The lesson I want to draw is simply that Christ sees, commands and rewards even the most basic faithfulness to him. Now why am I so keen that you should grasp that my Christian friend?

Well the answer is in line with the illustration with which I started. Just a little praise a sense that somebody takes delight in what we do for them makes such a difference to the way we work for that person.

[9 : 50] You know it's true in the workplace and it's true in the Christian life. If you can grasp something of the delight the Saviour takes in everything which is done to please him and the rewards he promises for such then it will make a real difference to pressing on in situations of service in the church or out in the world which simply because there aren't many rewards is hard and because it's maybe relentless work and it's the same job and it's not very exciting and it's not standing at the front not that I've ever found standing at the front particularly exciting but you know it's not a public thing.

So often service in the church is not even seen by the people you would imagine would notice it. Not commended by the leadership in the church but the Lord always sees.

It always gives him pleasure and he will greatly reward it. So I just noticed two things this evening. First of all the unexpected praise that we see in verse 28 and then the extravagant reward in verses 29 and 30.

Firstly the unexpected praise. Jesus says here you are those who have stood by me in my trials. Let me tell you a little story to my own hurt. It's many many years ago I went to a minister's meeting met up with a very dear friend of mine and he was grinned all over his face and he said Graham I found this amazing verse of scripture.

[11 : 50] It's just done my soul so much good let me tell you about it. Well it was a very very brief word and all he had a chance to do was to say this is the text and this was the text.

You are those who stood by me in my trials. I didn't get a chance I just had a quick look at it didn't get a chance to have any conversation with him about it at lunchtime or certainly didn't take it

maybe I was so embarrassed because I couldn't see what he was on about at all and I didn't want to show my ignorance so I went home and thought about it.

I don't know how long it took for the penny to drop probably quite a long time I'm a bit slow on the uptake but eventually I began to see what he was getting excited about.

Malk was right I wonder if you can see it too. This is an amazingly gracious word of praise. You are those who have stood by me in my trials.

Why do I say that? Well it's spoken against the background of dismal failure. This comes hard on the extraordinary insensitivity of the disciples.

[13:04] Jesus has told them this very very sobering news that one of them will betray him and in the blink of an eye they're moved from thinking about which of them it would be to a discussion about which of them was the greatest.

And in terms of insensitivity that's about as callous as you could possibly get. Extraordinary. You can see how it happened. They start off humbly saying Lord is it I? And then but it's not me Lord so is it him? And then they're off to this matter that he's he's patiently taught them about before.

And they're back to it. They've this selfish self-centeredness. This desire to be somebody. And he patiently instructs them.

The basics of Christian service. And then he says to them you are those who stood by me in my trials. Now here's a test for you.

[14:16] Have a think about this. Was there at this particular moment in time anything else that Jesus could have said to these men by way of commendation?

It's not quite answers on a postcard please but actually nobody else has ever been able to answer that question. Was there anything else he could have said to commend them?

Anything else positive? So much was disappointing about them. And anyway their service was nothing special. It was the most routine and basic level of faithfulness.

The trials were his. Now they did stand by him in a public sense. They hadn't left him. But stand by him was about all they were doing.

It's a bit like you know somebody is going to a very important examination at some distance and a friend has offered to drive them there.

[15:21] And that's exactly what the friend does. Friend doesn't help with revision, doesn't offer encouraging comments, doesn't say anything about sympathetic about how difficult the exam is that's coming up, let alone giving any advice.

They simply drive them there. And that's in a sense what these disciples are doing. They're just remaining there, not being any great help to him.

So it's not the greatest faithfulness in the world. And he knows, you see, what makes it even more remarkable is he knows that in this area also their commitment to him is going to prove extremely flaky.

Indeed he knows that that very night they will all forsake him. so much so that you might think at first sight these words could be cynical. You know, you're those who stood by me in my trials, you know, even that's not going to last.

But they're not because he promises a great reward, we'll come to that a bit later on. All I want you to notice is how gracious this saviour is in speaking these words of encouragement.

[16:38] He notices and he commends them for the most basic faithfulness. These simple words of praise reveal how gracious Christ is and how inclined he is to commend people who do anything for him.

And we need to remember, you see, that Christ is a revelation of the heart of God. So this is what the living God is like in dealing with his children.

He delights to commend them when really there is very little to commend them for. And it's a point strikingly reinforced by an even more unexpected word in 1 Corinthians chapter 4.

If you've got a Bible, turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 4. I don't often send people scurrying around the Bible, but this is worth scurrying for. It's on page 1146 in the church Bible.

It's 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Paul is having problems with the Corinthians and he has to remind them, look, you need to regard us as servants of Christ, those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed, the glory of the gospel.

[18 : 04] And what is required of those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. And then of course that raises the question will other people are criticising Paul and Paul says I care very little if I'm judged by you or any human court.

Indeed I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, I believe that I've served God faithfully in the matter of the gospel, but that doesn't make me innocent because the Lord is the judge, he's the one who knows, he's the master I serve, it's up to him to declare whether my service is faithful. Then he draws this conclusion, therefore judge nothing before the appointed time, wait until the Lord comes, then judgment comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.

And those are searching things, aren't they? He will expose what's hidden in darkness and the motives. So this is a far, far more searching judgment and then you'd think he's about to say, then we're in for it.

You know, when God focuses his mind and sees everything in the heart of his followers, then we're in for it, but notice what he actually says.

[19 : 23] at that time, each will receive their praise from God. And you think, where did that come from? I'll tell you where it came from. It came from the gracious heart of our loving Heavenly Father.

It is his inclination to see and whatever he can commend in those who belong to him, he gladly will commend.

That is the heart of the living God. It's a bit like how I react. I've got one of my grandchildren, Elsie. She likes to draw pictures. Elsie is just five and I wouldn't say she's the greatest artist in the world and she's been known to draw pictures of me and they are really sort of a round head with about four hairs on the top and a great fat round body and very skinny arms and legs.

She'll give it to me and say, Grandpa, I've done this for you. Of course, I tear it up and put it in the bin. No, I don't actually. I stick it up on the wall where I can see it in the kitchen with Blu-Tack.

[20 : 40] Now, obviously, it's because I think that it's a possibility that when she gets to be an adult, she'll become a great artist. so I can sell these scribbles for £20,000, £50,000.

That isn't the reason, is it? So why do I put this taken at face value offensive picture drawn, badly drawn, by my five-year-old granddaughter on the wall and lavish praise on her for doing it?

Well, it's because it's done in love for me. And that is exactly the picture that we're seeing here, you see. Christ commends the disciples.

The Father will commend all his children in the day of judgment. Why? Because the jobs are well done? No, no.

Because they were done in love and received in love. So that's the first thing that we see here is that Christ delights to praise his followers for even the most basic faithfulness in spite of all their failings.

[21 : 54] Can you see that? He delights in that. It's very important to see that if we are to serve him and go on serving him, to be persuaded that this is the one that we serve, that he is wonderfully gracious in response to all that his children seek to do, his followers seek to do for him.

The other thing I want you to notice is this extravagant reward. Not only lovely words of commendation, kind, gracious words, words that are not in a sense deserved but nevertheless spoken.

And then secondly the extravagant reward. you see that in verses 29 and 30. He says this, you are those who stood by me in my trials and I confer on you a kingdom just as my father conferred one on me so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now I think it's easy to overlook and miss what is being told us here because we're not too sure about what the apostles are being promised.

Is it literally rule or judging the twelve tribes? Are we talking about Israel?

[23 : 22] After all it's been a very long time since meaningfully the Jews were twelve tribes. Or is it God's people in the new age?

And is this judging? Is it literally judging? That is to have some part in the day of judgment? Or is it like the judges in the book of Judges who were largely rulers and leaders among God's people?

So lots of questions. And the uncertainties that we may have can mean that we miss the main point. That this is a promise, the promise of an amazingly extravagant reward.

Now why do I say that? Well it's interesting as this. Jesus hints here about the fact that they're going to share his reward.

I confer on you a kingdom just as my father conferred one on me. so I'm giving to you something that my father has given to me.

[24 : 33] Now he gets his reward for what? For the most extraordinarily perfect obedience in the most unimaginably difficult, horrendous task that has ever been committed to anyone.

His place was to live our life, was to come, take our nature, come to this sinful world. In the fog, or should I say the smog, of sinful humanity, living in a world of the already under judgment, to live out in this world a life of perfect obedience to his father's will, and then lay down that life, and in fact, bear our sin in his own body on the tree.

His reward comes from absolute perfect obedience in everything to his father. And yet he's sharing that reward, giving some of that reward to his followers, whose obedience in things which were far, far less demanding, is shot through all the way along with failure and shortcoming.

So that is an extraordinary thing. And what a reward it is that is promised to us. Feasting in style, dined by him, dined by the king.

Notice what he says here. So that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. There's nothing you see, it would be a wonderful thing if people were rescued from the judgment they deserve and sort of had some part in the far periphery, far flung peripheries of God's kingdom, never ever getting anywhere near the king, where he didn't have to see them or remember them.

[26 : 48] And that is not what he's promised. What he's promised is constantly, as it was to the thief on the cross, today you'll be with me in paradise.

Not just in paradise, but with me. And this is eating and drinking at my table. And that's the emphasis all the way through. I pray that those that you've given me may be with me where I am. And that's he's praying for the whole church. He's praying for all who will believe on him through the message of the apostles. And that's, you know, we believe on him through the message of the apostles.

If you're a Christian tonight, it's because of the message of the apostles recorded in the scriptures. Because they have told us, they have written down their experience of him, or the message that God has given them to share with us.

So, the prayer is for the most insignificant, the most feeble believer to see Christ and be with him in glory.

[27 : 54] And also, you'll notice here, to be given a great and responsible job. Sitting on thrones is not like being given champagne to drink in the winner's enclosure at Ascot after the triumph of some friend's horse in the gold cup.

This is a very responsible and honoured position of work, of greater service. You know, there's parables that talk about because you've been faithful in the little, I'm going to give you great responsibility.

And this is the way the Lord works. He rewards small faithfulness with wondrous, mind-blowing rewards. The reward here, you see, is so generous, so undeserved, out of all proportion to the service prophet.

One is reminded, you know, if you give a cup of cold water to a prophet, you get a prophet's reward. There is an extraordinary response of, on God's part, on the Saviour's part, to the smallest and most fundamental faithfulness in service of him.

I know a couple who have a seven-year-old lad with Asperger's syndrome and he's really hard work.

[29 : 29] And they have lots of times been excluded from schools, took the local authorities, they're very quick to fine you if you take your children out, they're very, very slow to provide education for children who are excluded from school.

And eventually, this lad is now in a mainstream school, he gets some help, but he's managing a mainstream school and his parents are trying to encourage him to behave well at school, to be more patient and not to lose his temper, not to become jealous, not to be, to try and understand that he can't be the centre of attention all the time, those kind of things.

And they decided that if he gets a good report from the school at the end of a week, they buy him some sort of sophisticated computer game.

Now these things cost a lot of money and I'm not sure that this is wise parenting at all. The child's going to get used to the most extravagant reward for the most basic, you know, and he didn't actually beat up a teacher this week so we're going to give him a great reward.

So in terms of parenting, I'm not at all sure about the wisdom of this, but in terms of illustrating the heart of the living God, that is exactly what one sees in this passage.

[30 : 59] These have been, as it were, hanging in there with Jesus. And it's only about now that it's really going to get rough and then they're going to let him down, but nevertheless, because they've hung in there with Jesus up to this point, and in answer to his prayers for them, they will continue to go on with him, though they will let him down extraordinarily badly and not for the last time, you know, when they forsake him and flee, they're going to get the most mind blowingly extravagant rewards.

Can you see how clear, how extravagant, how over the top this reward is? But that is our saviour, he delights to be thus with his mediocre servants.

And so there we are. There is a wonderfully encouraging revelation of the heart of the saviour. He sees, commends wholeheartedly and rewards richly, even the most basic faithfulness.

Two questions in closing. Firstly, do you understand the doctrine? Have you got firmly fixed in your heart? Christ teaches there are rewards in the world to come for service, for work done here.

Yes? Yes. We see that they are rewards of grace. They're out of all proportion to the service which is paid to him.

[32 : 40] Now, do you see how it all fits in, the scheme of salvation? Is a person accepted with God on the basis of work performed? No. Acceptance with God is on the basis of the work of Christ.

Christ. It's what we saw this morning. It's when a person cries out to God, God have mercy on me the sinner. Then the salvation earned by Christ is given to that person.

Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. It is by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Now, on what basis are we judged in the day of judgment? Well, we see it here. Judgment is the scrutiny of a person's works, including things done in secret and including the motives of the heart. How come? How can salvation be by grace and yet judgment be by works? Because the works show the reality or otherwise of the faith that the person claims to have.

[34 : 00] Faith works by love, says the Apostle Paul. James talks about, you know, show me your faith without works, I will show you my faith by my works.

It's only through works. The reality of a person's faith is shown by the works they do. It always works because when a person becomes a Christian, they're joined to God, joined to Christ, and the power of the Spirit comes to live within them, the Holy Spirit of God, and that must bring transformation.

Where the Spirit of God is at work, there is transformation. transformation. That was even true of the thief on the cross. You can see the beginnings. He's humbled by seeing the glory of Christ.

He's enabled to hope in Christ, acknowledge him as Lord instantly. You see that in Zacchaeus, for example, where, and I love to say this to Yorkshire people, his pocket is remarkably touched.

This man who was prepared to work for the Romans, so much in love with money he was, is now giving away half of all he had to the poor.

[35 : 27] Works bring God's delight and reward. They're the works done by the power of the Spirit in the life of a person. They're all down in one sense to what God is doing, and yet so gracious is his heart that he delights to reward them.

So do you understand the teaching? But much more significantly, do you understand the Lord? Have you got him firmly fixed in your heart?

He is an unmistakably, unspeakably gracious Lord, as we've seen here. He delights to notice. So many people's work he's never even noticed, but he delights to notice and commend and reward all that his followers do for him.

Even the most basic things. It's vital to grasp this because it's a great motivation to keep going and keep serving and keep working in the hard circumstances when it's easy to give up or to slacken off.

Don't ever imagine that he's a hard task master because these verses prove that it's a lie. The truth is that whatever those who don't know him at all or know little of him may say or imagine, and people always think that God is a hard task master, and Christ is the revelation of God.

[36 : 59] The truth of the matter is that he is a great master. my wife used to love to watch Pride and Prejudice. She read these things.

She read lots and lots of books. She loved reading, but she loved to watch the BBC version of Pride and Prejudice.

And there's a point in the story, which is in the book, where Elizabeth Bennett has got this very, very low opinion of Fitzwilliam Darcy, the man that she eventually marries, until she goes to the great stately home, which is his, which he lives in.

But it's not so much seeing the stately home that changes her mind about the man, it's listening to the housekeeper. The housekeeper declares, and she's known him all his days, the housekeeper declares that this man who's been rather pilloried by society, those who envy what he has, that he's the best of masters.

And if a woman could say that of Fitzwilliam Darcy, how much more is it true of our Lord Jesus Christ? He is the best of masters.

[38 : 24] You may not even be a Christian, my friend, but one of the things you miss out on tremendously is the knowledge that one is serving somebody and living for somebody who's just so extraordinarily kind and gracious, as we've seen together in this passage.

Maybe there are a thousand other better reasons why you should become a follower of Jesus Christ, but I commend to you to read the gospel and to see the loveliness of Christ and to begin to understand that he is worthy of your service.

Father, forgive us that sometimes we think hard thoughts even of our saviour. Sometimes when life is not what we want it to be, when suddenly the wheels start to fall off and we are frightened and bewildered, we can also become harsh and doubting and Lord, we are ashamed of ourselves and we pray Lord that you would help us ever to remember this picture that we see constantly painted for us in the scripture.

We thank you that he is the best of masters, extraordinarily gracious in his commendation of anything good he can find in his followers, so ready to overlook so much that is amiss, so patient in teaching that we might understand better what he would have us to be and what we should be.

We do pray Lord you would also help us to believe these great promises concerning the future and to love him and to appreciate his graciousness.

[40 : 34] Lord open our eyes and our hearts we pray for Christ's sake. Amen.