



The Consequences and Rewards of the Kingdom

(Mark 10:23-31)

Bottom Line: The Kingdom of God comes with blessing that far outweighs the sacrifices.

When has obedience to God cost you something? When has obedience to God brought you reward?

Read Mark 10:23-31. What stands out to you from this passage? Anything shocking? Anything reassuring? Anything comforting? Anything scary?

If we are surprised by Jesus' response, we are not alone. Notice the reaction of the disciples. The passage mentions twice that they were amazed. Perhaps their amazement came from their ideas of what it meant to be blessed by God. To the first-century Jew, if people were wealthy, if they were healthy, if they had many children and a lot of livestock, then clearly they were blessed. On the other hand, if they were sick or poor, then God was cursing them because of their behavior. When we understand that context, we see why the disciples would be so flabbergasted at the words of Jesus—He was telling this man to rid himself of the very things that, in his culture, evidenced God's blessing in his life. It would have made more sense to first-century ears for Jesus to say, "Blessed are the rich. Blessed are the healthy. Blessed are the comfortable." Jesus, of course, flipped that idea upside down. Into this culture defined by material blessing He said things like, "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the hungry and thirsty. Give away all you have."

How about you? Does what you consider a blessing match up with how Jesus defines blessing? What can go wrong if we misinterpret what true, biblical blessing is?

Read verse 27. In the context, what is Jesus saying is impossible?

Read verse 24. Who does Jesus say it's hard for to enter the Kingdom?

In verse 24, Jesus makes a general statement, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the Kingdom of God!" This is a blanket statement that applies to everyone. The clarification in the sentence afterwards shows that it's *especially* hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom. But then verse 27 serves as probably the key to interpreting this whole teaching of Jesus. Inheriting eternal life, entering the kingdom, and being saved are impossible for any human being, but not for God, who is good and desires the salvation of all. Therefore all must depend entirely upon God. Our salvation requires us to quit relying upon ourselves completely and surrender **everything** to the Lordship of Jesus and the work that He has done.

What does surrendering everything to the Lordship of Jesus look like?

We don't have to overcomplicate this. Surrendering everything to God means exactly that: we must surrender everything to His control and put our entire lives, and the entire contents of our lives, at his disposal. Peter says that they have done exactly this in verse 28: "See, we have left everything and followed you." The same thing is required of us. We must submit entirely and



completely to the Lordship of Jesus over our lives and let Him call the shots for us, which means that sometimes He may call us to sacrifice and to loss, while at other times He may call us to abundance and gain. Whichever He chooses is His prerogative, not ours.

Read verse 29. How is this promise played out in the life of the believer? What sense can we make of the qualification at the end that Jesus says these things will come “with persecutions?”

We find this promise most directly fulfilled “now in this time” through the church. For some, entering the Kingdom of God will mean severing relationships, possibly even with family. But all of that and more can be found and regained several times over in the local church. But entering the Kingdom of God isn’t a cure-all for every problem we have. In fact, Jesus says that along with these blessings come “persecutions.” Until sin is completely eradicated, we will not be completely free from suffering, but the promise of Jesus is that if we give up everything we have to gain the Kingdom, then despite what pain may come our way, we will never regret it.

APPLICATION

What thing in your life that, if God were to ask you to give it up, would be the most difficult for you? (Control, freedom, a job, a relationship, a possession, etc). Why?

Jesus concludes his teaching to the disciples with the statement, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” This is the way things work in God’s Kingdom. What does it mean to be “first” or “last” in the Kingdom? Where are you, first or last? What would it take for you to become “less” in the Kingdom so that you can become more?

What blessings of the Kingdom do you desire but feel you have not obtained? How can you strive for contentment in this life as you wait? (Jesus promises us “eternal life” in the age to come).