

## **The Reward of Discipleship**

Mark 10:28-31

25/02/2024

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### TRANSCRIPT:

Mark 10:28-31: Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Let us pray.

We come before You, Lord, asking now that You would send the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding to help us see the preciousness and the beauty and the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and His word. I pray, Lord God, that You would, in mercy, by Your grace, touch our hearts this morning, that our struggles, our temptations, Lord, our fears may be calmed, that we would find rest in You, find joy in You, and a renewed vision and a renewed zeal to follow in Your commandments. And so, I pray that You guide us, You give me the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to preach Your word so that Your people may be encouraged and edified and Your church built up. Lord, help us to be found faithful to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, as you know, we've been considering the sermon series on discipleship, and I've covered some ground. There's obviously more to cover, but I think enough to understand at very least what it is that the Bible teaches about those who are true Christians, those that are followers of Jesus Christ. We've considered what is a disciple. We've also considered the counterfeit disciples. We've also considered the challenge of discipleship. And then we considered over the last three weeks the cost of discipleship, where we saw in the words of Jesus in Luke chapter 14 the very conditions of discipleship that are costly, that are laid down before us and are quite challenging.

But I would say that unless we come to this text here, our series will be incomplete, and we will fail to understand an aspect of discipleship that is vital for us to understand that Jesus wanted His disciples to understand, and that is the reward of discipleship, the reward of discipleship. And this is what Jesus refers to in this text, and it is important to understand this aspect of God's work in the lives of His people, that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.

And it's important to realize this because there is a trap that sometimes we come to in our Christian experience or even with consideration to the things of God, where we feel like rewards are contrary or a desire or an ambition or even looking to any respect to reward is contrary to scripture. I would like to demonstrate from the scripture that is not the case, but it is part of God's gracious work in our lives to lay before us a reward and to encourage us to pursue on that path to receive such a reward.

Now, the context of this passage is clear: here is a rich young ruler who Jesus confronts, and He really desires to—Jesus loves this man, and this man seems to really have a desire for the Lord, you know, there's no doubt about that. But he's challenged in such a way that his desire for riches are greater than his desire for God, and so he walks away very sorrowful. Look at verse number 21 of chapter number 10: then Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And the disciples of Jesus just witnessed this scene of a man that was confronted with the cost of discipleship and walked away sorrowful, without Christ as his master. And Peter, just a little bit later, as they're discussing the difficulty of a rich man entering into the kingdom of heaven and the fact that it's all by God's grace, and even though it's impossible with man, it's not impossible for God—God is the one who can save any sinner, no matter how hard. But Peter has a question that he asks, and I love Peter because he asks the questions that everyone's thinking, and he's not afraid to go out and ask them. We all need Peters in our lives; otherwise, I'd never ask the questions that Peter's asking for me.

So Peter asks a question, and I'm going to read to you the question as it is presented in Matthew chapter 19 because it's a little bit more fuller there, but it says this: He says, "See, we have left all and followed You; therefore, what shall we have?" We have left all and followed You; therefore, what shall we have? Immediately we think, is this an ambitious, selfish ambitiousness of Peter, or is this really a genuine inquiry? I think we would be wrong to judge based on this text of scripture as to make that assumption. Jesus

does not rebuke him but answers his question as if it is a very valid question to answer because they have just seen a man walk away, counting the cost. They're saying, we have counted the cost, we have followed You; what is going to be the result of that? What is it going to look like for us now and for eternity? And Jesus goes on to answer that question by pointing to the rewards of discipleship, the rewards of discipleship.

The question we have to ask ourselves is, is it wrong to have rewards as a motivation for service and obedience to God? Some people think of rewards as a distortion of true Christian service, that true Christian service is done without any consideration to reward, and if there's any reward that lingers in the mind of the person, then it cannot be counted as true service. They simply say that it taints the desire of our obedience to the Lord. But the scriptures are full of examples where the Lord Himself encourages us, and we see examples of people that look to the reward. Look at what it says in scripture, the different scriptural kinds of rewards. It says in Luke 14:14, "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Also, in Luke 6:35, "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great."

The Bible gives us examples of that, even as was read to us this morning, that Moses, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward. And it's important to understand that the Bible does talk about different kinds of scriptural rewards. When God appeared to Abraham there on the plains of Mamre, He said to him in covenant mercy, "I am your shield and your exceeding great reward." And so, in scripture, very clearly, God is our reward. Not only in scripture is God our reward, but the Bible teaches that the crown of life is a reward. "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." And then he says, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course, and there's a crown of righteousness laid up for Paul." And then in James 1:12, he says, "There's a crown of life for those that endure temptation." And Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:25 talks about that the athletes, they run for a crown that perishes, but we run and run and strive for a crown that does not perish. And the Bible even in this text of scripture says that there is the reward of eternal life at the end of the race if we could say for those that are faithful and true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we know that salvation is by grace through faith, and therefore our justification is not a reward. It is given to us by God's gracious gifts of His mercy toward us in Christ Jesus. But the Bible also presents to us a salvation that is now and not yet, that here and now in Christ Jesus, we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. And we are kept by the power of God through His grace that causes

His people to persevere in the faith until they reach the end and receive the crown of life with faith not away. The Westminster Confession puts it like this, "But that God, He looking upon them, that is the works that they do in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections." So even the rewards that we receive for our deeds are only by the grace of God because He overlooks the imperfections of them because they are done in His Son as we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The believers in Jesus Christ are not only encouraged for a future reward and heavenly rewards that are to come that are a long-term anticipation, but even in scripture, the Bible speaks of rewards as being things that we receive now in the present life, that God does reward His people not only in eternity but even now. David said that "I have received the reward of my righteousness, that I have obeyed the Lord, I have done these things, and He has blessed me even now." Asa, when he was confronted with needing to be obedient to the Lord, he says, "Your work shall be rewarded," the Lord encouraged him through the prophet. And the heavenly rewards are ours; there are earthly rewards also for the people of God that are even mentioned in this passage.

Now, am I simply saying, therefore, that we need to love rewards with a certain covetousness, and that is what it is? No, I think if you don't understand the relationship between the rewards and the rewarder, then you misunderstand the rewards entirely as they relate to the Christian faith. There is a relationship in scripture between the reward and the rewarder, and I'll try to demonstrate this for you. What is the reward of eternal life and heaven but that we might know God, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent? And in heaven, the Bible says that He will be our God, and we will be His people. So the desire of Abraham to search for a better country and seek a heavenly reward, being in heaven with God, whose builder and maker was God—this eternal place and prize was not to have heaven without God because heaven won't be heaven without God. But it's in a sense to have that which God has prepared for him, knowing that that is part of the reward and the rewarder together.

The heavenly crowns, what are they? The Bible speaks of heavenly crowns as like a wreath, which is just leaves done up together in a circle. Not very fancy, is it? It doesn't really mean much. If I was to give you a wreath, or your daughter was to make a wreath out of leaves in the backyard or whatever and hand it to you, you'd be like, "Oh, that's great," and you'd probably put it up on the fridge for about a month or two, and then somehow find a way to get rid of it without her realizing. It's not that special. So what was so special about the crowns then, if they're just wreaths? Well, it's not the material of the crown that makes it so precious, but it's that which it

represents. So that the athlete, when he runs his race and is crowned with a wreath, it is all that it represents, that it is the accomplishment and the approval of one that is hearing the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." That makes the reward that represents that claim, that represents that accolade, that represents that faithful service as what rewards.

Even the gold of a medal won at the Olympic Games is not necessarily something we couldn't take out of our savings and purchase for ourselves, but what good would it mean if you didn't run the race, win the race, and then be rewarded and crowned, as it were, there? That's what it represents. That's what the crown represents. And what it represents is the commendation of the rewarder. And so we see in scripture this link between the reward and the rewarder, and even the earthly rewards, we say then, what are they for? How does that represent the relationship to our rewarder? Well, listen, as we receive God's good hand of providence and provision in our faithfulness toward Him, what does it do? It stirs us more to obedience and to look to Him as the one who rewards those that diligently seek Him.

And so the scriptures present rewards in such a manner, not to take our eyes off the Lord, but in a way where God bestows His acceptance, as it were, and approval upon that which we do in His Son, for His glory. Now let us consider just for a moment what Jesus says here in this passage as we move along and consider discipleship. In Mark chapter 10, look with me in verse number 29. So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life." The age to come, eternal life.

What is encouraging here is first to notice that Jesus says these words, "Assuredly, I say to you," not just to Peter, because in the plural, it means to all those disciples that have borne their cross and followed Him. He says, "Assuredly, I say to you," which is the word "Amen," which is the word that simply means that this is true and established as true, and therefore, pay attention to what I'm saying because this is an assured truth. It could be translated also as "I tell you truly," or "in solemn truth, I tell you." And what Jesus is doing is looking at His disciples square in the face in the context of a man that counted the cost and walked away from Jesus, and at this group of disciples that have counted the cost and follow Jesus. And He looks at them square in the face and says, "I've got a promise for you. You can be assured. I am faithful. I am the true. I lie not. What I speak is that which My Father gives me. And this is the word that I speak to you."

And He speaks a word that says, "No man that has ever left," He goes on

to explain, and He says, "shall not have." Simply saying is, if you have met the conditions and the demands that I have laid upon you, and that has cost you those things that are so dear to you, it may have costed you your reputation. It may have costed you your family. It may have costed you your friends. It may have costed you your wealth. It may have costed you your comforts. As we have been looking over for the last several weeks, He goes, "There is no one that has left those things that shall not have." He's saying, "You can be sure that I am the one who shall reward you." It's a certain promise to be held on to by His disciples as a ground of assurance and also to spur them on in their continued pursuits of their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. A sure promise, a certain promise. And what is the promise? That no man that has left these things shall not have. And then He says, "a hundredfold in this life and reward in the life to come."

This is very interesting, isn't it? A hundredfold in this life. Before we get too literal on this point, let me ask you this question: Would you really want this promise to be fulfilled if it was a hundredfold? A hundred brothers? Some of us struggle with one or two. A hundred mothers? Oh boy. Alright. A hundred fathers? Alright. A hundred lands? We struggle to cut the grass in our backyard. What is being referred to here? What is Jesus referring to here when He is talking about a hundredfold of reward in this life? It's important for us to understand what He means here. What He's simply saying in a general statement is this: What you have forfeited in this life will be met by Me in a way, either spiritually or even personally, in this life. You will have rewards so that you will not have lack in any of the things that you have given up for My sake. You will not experience lack.

Going back to our last sermon, this is what Jesus is saying: You have Me. You have everything. You have Me. You have no lack. But Jesus is not saying just no lack in general. He is saying even in the specific areas of your life, I will meet your needs. I will provide for you. And that which you taste of, which I give, will satisfy a hundred times more than that which you have given up for My sake. A hundredfold. A hundredfold, God will provide. I think this is a biblical truth that the apostles understood in their lives. They were those that left all and followed Jesus Christ. And Paul, when he writes to the people there in the churches, what does he always begin his letters with? Or what do you always find him saying? He says, "Brethren." Paul, you may have left brothers. And what was he received into? The family of God. More than a hundred times, he received brethren in every part of the world.

The Bible teaches us that the apostles understood this. Peter even talked about the brotherhood that we ought to love the brotherhood. What is he saying? The brotherhood of believers. Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ have been received. You all are my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Before I came to Christ, you were not my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. And there's a lot of brothers and sisters that I have not yet met in the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what it's like. You meet a Christian for the first time that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and you just think to yourself, "Wow, it's like I've known you for years." It's like I've known you for years. We speak the same language. You're like a friend that sticks closer than a brother. And Jesus, when He was referring to these things, means these things. The loss of family brings people into the family of God, if we could say. The loss of riches leads sinners into the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, whereby they are satisfied by the riches that He provides. The loss of friends leads to you finding a friend in Jesus, who is everything to us. For Jesus Himself said, "You are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you."

The loss of houses and lands, not only in this life but in the life to come, we are provided with places in heaven and mansions in heaven in glory with our Lord, but even in this life. You know how many places the apostles resided in on their missionary travels? How many Christians have shown hospitality one to another? My wife and I can testify of this. We've lived days or weeks or however in so many houses on our missionary journeys, if we could say, in the Lord's work. And He's even provided a place for us even now to have over our heads. What the Lord provides for us is everything, more than enough. He doesn't leave the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging for bread. He provides. It was Lydia that said to Paul, "Come, do you count me worthy that you could stay even in my house?" And there he was received by her.

In fact, even when Paul greets Rufus in Romans 16:13, he says, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord." And then he says this, "and his mother and mine." I can tell you Rufus was not brothers with Paul, but he said, "his mother and mine." And as John Trapp says about this passage, "his by nature," that is Rufus's by nature, "but mine by affection." The apostles parted with their parents and friends at home and found them abroad. And isn't that so true? That anyone who's taken up their cross and followed Jesus Christ has found in the Christian church all that they need through their Lord Jesus Christ because God has provided for them a hundredfold more.

But also, He goes on to say, not only in this present time but in the age to come, eternal life. Even if there was nothing in this life that we received for following Jesus Christ, just one look at His dear face in the age to come, in eternal life, will satisfy forever those losses which we may have tasted in this world in which we lived. The Bible teaches us that very clearly. As Fanny Crosby said, "When my life work is ended, and I cross the swelling tide, when the bright and glorious morning I shall see; I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, and His smile will be the first to

welcome me. I shall know Him, I shall know Him, and redeemed by His blood I shall stand. I shall know Him, I shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hand." This woman was born blind; she never saw anyone's face, but she knew that the day that she would wake up in heaven, she would see in eternal life her Savior and be completely satisfied. "And how will I know Him? By the print of the nails in His hands." Eternal life.

When all the disciples left Jesus in John 6:66, they walked away. Jesus said to the twelve, "Are you going to leave also?" And Peter said, "Where are we going to go? We believe that You are the Christ and the Son of God, and we know and are assured that You are the one who has eternal life." He understood that life forever in the presence of God, where there will be no sin, no tears, no sorrows, no pain, no suffering, there in eternal bliss and worship of the Lamb, will be the great day of our salvation consummated in the presence of God. That was a reward that led the martyrs to the posts to be tied and burned for their faith in Jesus Christ because they could see at the end of the pilgrimage was the light of the dawning of the glory of God. And there they found their eternal rest, for there is a rest for the people of God. And that is the rest of eternal life, that as we struggle and fight through this world, because even the promises of His provision, as mentioned before in this life, are coupled, as the text says, with persecutions.

The promise is not of no pain. The promise is not of to leave discipleship and not to suffer. The promise is that you will be provided for in your persecutions. You will be sustained in your persecutions. You will have even a quality life, in a spiritual way, in your persecutions. God shall supply your need, no matter your persecutions, with your persecutions. But there's coming a day where there shall be no persecutions, and the eternal glory and bliss of being with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is the promise that God has for all who count the cost and follow Jesus Christ. You say the cost is so great. Is it really? In comparison to that which our Lord supplies? For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What Jesus is simply saying there is that it's not worth it. The value of losing your own soul is not worth it. What are you going to give in exchange for it? What is it that you're holding on to that keeps you from the cross? What is it that you're holding on to that keeps you from the persecution and the suffering and the identifying with the name of Jesus Christ? And the Lord is saying, is it worth it? Is it really worth it?

In this life, I'll provide for all your needs, and in the life to come, everlasting life. What is it more that you want? The Lord is not trying to say to us, "Come, follow Me, and I'll make your life a living hell and misery." He's putting before us unsearchable riches that we could spend all eternity



wondering about and be completely satisfied in them forever. This is what God is offering to us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as we are challenged to take up our cross and to follow Him.

Christian, the Lord Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you." Let me ask you this morning, are you most assured by the words of our Savior? That your fight and struggle toward the kingdom of God in this world shall be rewarded? Are you sure? Is His word your confidence? "Josh, I'm going through a difficult time, and I'm struggling for the sake of Jesus Christ." Look at God's provision, not only now but then. See what God has done for you in His Son. See that which you have. See that which He has promised. Look to the reward, as Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, in due time, we shall reap if we faint not," or if we don't lose heart.

Have you forgotten the word of the Psalmist, which is the word of our God, who says, "The Lord is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and the Lord will give glory"? Have you forgotten that He says, "No good thing will He withhold from those that walk uprightly"? Have you gotten the word of Hebrews, which says that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him? Do you not believe the words of the apostle Paul, who says in Philippians 4:19, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"? Do you not affirm what David also affirmed, that he said, "I've been old and young, and I've never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread"? Do you not know that the promise of Jesus Christ stands sure, that if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you? Then why do we take thought of tomorrow? Why are we anxious on what shall be on the morrow? It's because we're not upholding the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "Most assuredly, I say to you."

It was His word that called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. And it's the same word that will sustain you every hour of your pilgrimage until you reach the glory. Christian, do not think, "Oh, I heard the word once, and I put the word down." Let His word be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. Let His word dwell richly in your hearts. Let His word be to you sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Let it be the strength of your days. Let it be the sustenance of your soul. Give His word more than your necessary food, and hold fast to it because the promises are there for His people. They're ours in Christ. And the ascended Lord of heaven and earth, that rules the entire universe, has spoken. And some of His word has been fulfilled already, and some yet to be fulfilled in our lives, yes, and in eternity. It's not over. God is still on the throne, still fulfilling this word to His disciples in this generation.

So Christian, are you most assured? You say, "But Josh, nobody sees what I do for the Lord. And I receive no praise from others." Take comfort by the words of Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." See, God is just. He sees, He knows, what He says He will perform. He can be trusted. And He says, although no one sees what you're doing, God sees it, and God will reward it. Therefore, continue on, even though no one else recognizes it.

We must never forget that the cross-bearers below are crown-wearers above. There's coming a day on our pilgrimage where we will lay the cross down. There's coming a day on our pilgrimage where our Lord Jesus Christ will come again, that the heavens will open, and that the brightness of His glory shall shine, and the graves shall be opened, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. And we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall go before those that are asleep. We will be raised together with Him in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. There's coming a day where the King will come and plant His feet upon the earth and will gather together His people. He will gather His elect from the four winds of the earth, and He will reward His people for their works. There's coming a day where God will honor His people for their faithfulness to His name and the suffering that they bore in this life, where He Himself, the King, would say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

That is the day when the heavy cross that lays on our shoulder will be put down, and we will trade our cross on that day for a crown. And there, in the presence of our Savior, we, like the 24 elders, will cast our crowns at His feet, singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory, honor, and power, for He has created all things. And we were created by His pleasure, for His pleasure." And we will be there in His presence forevermore. The day is coming, that glorious day, where all the pain that we felt below will not even be remembered above. This is the day that the apostles looked for. This is the day that the early Christians looked for, and they were spurred on in their obedience because they saw the reward, like Moses. He forsook Egypt, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Why? Because he looked to the reward.

O Christian, lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset you, and run with patience and endurance the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, the reward set before Jesus, for the reward that was the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And you know what the apostle says to us? Consider Him who endured such contradiction against Himself from sinners, lest you be weary and you faint

in your own minds. Your own souls will faint if you don't consider Him in your pilgrimage. Why He is the one that has paved the way before us, and He is the one that shall reward us. He is our hope. He has spoken, and it shall be done. Listen, dear Christian, follow Jesus Christ. He will supply all your needs, and He will bring you home to glory, where you'll be in His presence forevermore.

Let us pray.