

# MATTHEW

## 19:1-26

### Matthew 19:1-26

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Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 11th May 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Ephesians 5:1-5

### Introduction

Well, this morning we are going to study quite the chapter. For here in chapter nineteen of Matthew's gospel account there is something to offend everyone. And I know I quip about that every now and then as we start a study, but it *really* is the case this morning, because this chapter deals with marriage, divorce, singleness, bringing children to Christ, and riches. And if there's not something in this that speaks to you this morning, then I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest you're not really listening.

But even *if* these things don't speak to something in your life *right now*, then you still need to listen, because there is no such thing as an irrelevant sermon. You see, you may not need apply these things *today*, but who is to say you won't need to apply them next week, or next year, or 5 years from now? But even beyond that, you have a responsibility to the person sat next to you, to be able to talk to them about these things. You have a responsibility to those in this church that *are* immediately affected by these things to talk such matters through with them from a Biblical standpoint.

The married Christian should still be able to talk to the single Christian about singleness. The single Christian should still be able to lovingly support and encourage the married Christian in their marriage. For the qualification for ministering to others isn't being in their shoes, it's being in the *Word of God*. And so that's why we each need to consider the entirety of the Bible — as we read it personally, and as we study it corporately such as on a Sunday morning or evening. That we might be equipped to help others, as well as challenged to apply what we hear to our own lives.

## Overview of chapter nineteen

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- **v1-10** — Marriage and divorce
- **v11-12** — Singleness
- **v13-15** — Bringing children to Jesus
- **v16-22** — The rich young ruler
- **v23-26** — The distraction of riches
- **v27-30** — Our inheritance in heaven

Now, as mentioned, this chapter covers a lot of ground. So as a quick preview of where we're headed this morning; in verses 1-10 we will see Jesus respond to the Pharisee's question about marriage and divorce, and He'll follow that up in verses 11 and 12 by speaking about singleness too.

In verses 13-15 we then see some dad's bring their children to Jesus, that He might pray for them, but also we read of the disciple's response. Then finally from verses 16-30 we'll hear Jesus speak regarding riches. First, from verses 16-22 we'll read the famous encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler who comes to Him wanting to know how he can enter heaven. Following which, from verses 23-26 Jesus speaks about the distraction riches can cause (which is as far as we'll get this morning). Then finally, as we'll look at next week, in verses 27-30, Jesus will move from talking about the riches of *this* world, to the inheritance in heaven that awaits those who follow Him.

## An important note

So then, we'll dig into those things soon. But first I want to briefly consider some of the things we read in Ephesians chapter five, part of which we *read* a moment ago in our reading this morning. For having written that we should *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us* (at the end of chapter four), Paul now says in verse one of chapter 5 "*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children*" going on to warn in verse 5 that our heavenly inheritance is at stake.

He then reasons in verse 8 that our very identity has now changed — that we *were* darkness, but are now light in the Lord — and thus we *should* walk as children of light. But how? Well, in verse 10 he says we are to *find out what is acceptable to the Lord*. And in verse 17 he tells us to *not be unwise, but to understand what the will of the Lord is*. And how will we do that? Well, let's look at David's words from Psalm 119 that we briefly looked at on Easter Sunday morning. We read there:

### **Psalm 119:9-16**

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

So then, we are to pay attention to God's Word. We are to listen to everything that Jesus said, and that His Holy Spirit guided the hands of men to write down in the Bible. For that is how we will know what the will of God is. That is how we will know what is acceptable to Him. And that is how we will know what is *not* acceptable to Him too. And we would be foolish to think that doesn't include the important subject of marriage — for it was instituted by God even before the fall of man, and it is the bedrock of society. When done right, it is a great blessing. But when done wrong, it can destroy lives.

And so then, let me put it like this; you should neither get married, or get divorced without a clear understanding of what God says about either. Indeed, I don't think you should even *date* without first knowing what God's Word says regarding these things. And because time is short but our need to understand these things is great, that means we each need to study God's word on these things, not rely on a single sermon. For while this morning I will spend some time explaining what God's Word says in this chapter, I will not be able to answer every possible question, or deal with every possible scenario regarding marriage, divorce, or singleness.

But that said, I do hope to provide some clarity on these matters. And if you want to talk through these things in any more detail, then myself or any of the elders will gladly do that with you, sitting down with you and a Bible, to answer the questions you may have.

## **Chapter nineteen**

Now, please turn in your Bible's to Matthew chapter nineteen. And while you do that let me say one more thing before we get going, and that is we should approach the topic of divorce with both a great deal of grace and with a real desire for holiness. We should acknowledge that sin is sin, and should not be committed or repeated. But we should also remember that we have all sinned, and there is nothing we have done that Christ cannot forgive.

We read in verse 1:

### **Matthew 19:1**

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

So what was it that Jesus had just been saying? Well, since returning to Capernaum He had spoken regarding the temple tax, about the simple faith of children, about our responsibility toward children, the seriousness of sin, the Father's desire that no-one should perish, and — most recently — of forgiveness, using the parable of the unforgiving servant to underline all that He was about to do in paying for our sin.

And now He left Capernaum, heading south toward Jerusalem where He would be that sacrifice for us, stopping here east of the river Jordan.

#### **Matthew 19:2**

And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

Again, if this were not the case then these great multitudes could have disputed Matthew's record of these events that he wrote down as soon as 3 years after these event. But this was a *faithful* record of what happened that stood up to scrutiny at the time from those that had been there.

And against this backdrop of compassion, and of Jesus speaking so clearly about forgiveness, the Pharisees now come to Him with a question, hoping to trip Him up that they might accuse Him. We read:

#### **Matthew 19:3**

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

Whether the Pharisees knew Jesus had just been teaching on forgiveness or not I'm not sure, but it's hard not to see a link here — for it's been well said that a good marriage is the union of two good forgivers. Indeed, living in the same house as another person, and especially being married to them, exposes their flaws (and yours) like no other relationship or situation can. And as a result, it's not always easy — even in the best marriages. So then, the Pharisees wanted to know if there was a point where they could call it quits on marriage, or if indeed it was to be for life.

But the background to this question was that there was a dispute at this time with two schools of thought — literally. For one rabbi, named Hillel, taught that a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason he could think of. And there was quite a list of excuses they had come up with, including:

- Careless seasoning of food
- Going into the street with loose or uncombed hair
- Spinning in the street
- Loud or constant talking in the home
- Saying a bad word about her mother-in-law
- The husband finding a more beautiful wife

Of course, that seems rather sad, even laughable, but we shouldn't laugh too loudly for today no reason at all need be given for divorce in our country. And it's all rather ugly, as it was then. But the other school of thought was via a rabbi called Shammai, who taught that divorce was only permissible in the case of adultery. And with the more liberal approach being the widely accepted one of the time, the Pharisees wanted to draw Jesus into the dispute, that they might have something to accuse Him of.

But rather than take the sides of men, Jesus responded by taking them back to the beginning and what God had instituted in the first place. We read:

**Matthew 19:4-5**

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,' and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

And so Jesus said *this* is the starting point, that in the beginning God made Adam and Eve, male and female. Not only ruling out the idea that mankind evolved, but clearly stating that from the beginning there were two sexes, distinct from each other, that when united in marriage become one flesh. A partnership ordained and designed by God, that the two would be considered as inseparable as your own body is from itself.

Another way of putting it, is that this was God's design from the very beginning. Does that mean everyone should or must marry? No. We'll get to that in this chapter. But *generally* speaking, this *was* God's plan for all, that there would be a loving stable home in which children would be born and raised, that the human race would continue (including that there would be a line through to Christ), with each person protected and blessed by the covenant of marriage between husband and wife.

And Jesus continued:

**Matthew 19:6**

So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

That is, there is to be a special union in marriage. Not merely two people cohabitating with their own agendas or ideas, or worse still doing so as a trial to see how well they get on with each others imperfections. But rather, there is to be a union, a partnership, a commitment where you work together, never against each other, doing all you can for the other person's ultimate good. In fact this is more than a commitment, it a covenant established before God. And in God's eyes it was never to be broken. That neither one of the couple cause separation, or anyone external to that marriage do anything to break it.

So God's plan and intent for marriage was very clear, that marriage was to be for life. *'Til death do us part*, right? And indeed, we read in the book of Malachi that God *hates* divorce. But that left the Pharisees, and perhaps us, with a question...

**Matthew 19:7**

They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

So you see, we read in Deuteronomy chapter 24 of the law concerning divorce, and so the Pharisees had a logical question here. For if marriage was to be a covenant entered into for *life*, protected at all costs, then why did Moses permit people to dissolve their marriages? Why was this even an option?

Jesus gives the answer...

**Matthew 19:8**

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

In other words, this was never the way it was supposed to be. It was not the way God created it to be. For what should have happened is that men and women would enter marriage knowing it would be for life, with the possibility of divorce not even an option put on the table. And as such, they would protect and invest in their marriage, knowing that they would be in it until the day one of them dies.

Think of it like this; if you were told that the car you have will have to last you the rest of your life, your relationship to that car would change. You would make sure it was serviced on time. You would think carefully about the brand of fuel you use. You would clean it more often. You'd be even more careful where you park it. And you'd drive it far, far more carefully — right?

I mean, those of you that have changed car a few times know how it works, don't you... day 1 you drive it away from the dealership, you're really careful all the way home, you watch out for potholes, and you avoid parking next to other cars. Perhaps you even read the owners guide, or invest time knowing how the radio or sat nav works. But a few years in and it's so dirty you can't read the number plate clearly, there's sweet wrappers in all of the door pockets, and the boot looks like you've started a business transporting sand, loose stones and leaves! Your love for that car has disappeared, you're listing all the things you know are wrong with it, and you're starting to think about what you want in your next car (even justifying to yourself why you really ought to change it, right?).

Well, that is the problem when marriage is viewed as a convenient arrangement all the time it suits *you*, when divorce *is* an option that you are willing to consider. And our dating culture doesn't help with this. Because the normal way of doing things in our culture is to like someone, date someone, find out *that* person annoys you or frustrates you, and therefore break up with them. And you repeat the process. And so, what we learn is that every time a relationship isn't going our way, that it's not scratching where we're itching, we have a solution. And that is to break up, and start over.

And so all too easily, once the novelty of marriage has worn off, and we find that the other person has changed, or perhaps worse still that they haven't changed, we repeat the same step that has always solved it in the past. Indeed, much like the car owning experience, we can be drawn into listing all the things that are wrong with our marriage, or indeed the other person. And we decide it's time for change.

But that is *not* how marriage should be viewed, it is not what God established, and praise God there *are* still those that *don't* view it in that way. But sadly, this world far too often does view it as that convenient arrangement all the time it suits *them*. And that brings us back to the question, of why did Moses permit divorce if that was not God's intent for marriage?

Well, Jesus says here that it was because people's hearts had become so hard, and sin so wrecked marriage vows, that Moses *permitted* divorce to take place in certain situations. That while on one hand we would not treat it as a trivial thing to break apart a God-ordained covenant that was designed to be for life, there *would be* the provision to allow divorce in such cases where sin had caused the other person to break their marriage commitments, of which Jesus speaks in the next verse. We read:

**Matthew 19:9**

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

So then, Jesus makes two things clear here; that whoever divorces his wife and marries another (whether that was the intent behind the divorce or not), commits adultery. It doesn't matter that the new relationship began after the first ended. For he should not have treated his first marriage like a trivial or temporary thing that he could walk away from.

That directly addressed those at Jesus' time who were divorcing based on their own preference, and not holding marriage up with the high regard that it should have as a God-ordained and permanent union. And of course, that directly addresses many in our world today, sadly including some Christians, who do the same. And note; this goes both ways (as Mark's gospel account makes clear), that wives also are not to divorce their husbands because he fails to take the bins out, or do any household chores.

However, we also read, that (in the case of this man) if his first wife had been unfaithful, then divorce *was* entirely permissible in that case, and he *would* be free to remarry. That's not to say he *should* have divorced his wife, or that he *should* remarry, for reconciliation is always the better option to pursue where it is possible to do (indeed as Christians we are called to forgive just as Christ has forgiven us), but divorce was an option open to him (following which, so would remarriage be permissible), and doing so would not be sinful.

And so there are these two extremes of ending a marriage as a result of preference, which is sinful. Or a ending a marriage as a result of adultery, which is permissible (though not mandated).

But what about where marriage is tough, where there are fights, disagreements, and division? What about where one of the couple is poor with finances, or fails to do their share in parenting? Well, culture certainly makes exception for those things. After all, you've got to look out for number one, you've got to consider your own emotions and feelings, society says. But we cannot adjust the Bible to fit society. We must adjust ourselves to the Bible. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, remember! Indeed, a view of the Bible that requires no change in our actions or opinions likely isn't a right view of it!

*But you've got to let people be happy, you say.* Well, what about people being holy? Isn't that the greater thing that we're supposed to be pursuing as Christians? Jesus didn't say be happy as your Father in Heaven is happy, did He? We need to recognise that the world gives up on marriage far too easily, and that we all gravitate toward selfishness far more than we like to admit. And on top of that we're cultured to expect instant results.

But that's not how marriage works. For laying down your life for your wife like Christ did for the church will not happen overnight. And submitting to your husband will not be something that can be done once. These things will take time, energy and effort. They require commitment, and they require sacrificial love. Not the warm fuzzy feelings, but the steady continual commitment of a marriage where your seeking the very best for your spouse, because you are committed to them for life — not giving it another 6 months to see if it works out the very best for *you*.

Of course, I'm not suggesting anyone remain in an abusive marriage — but I think we should consider that in many cases, in an effort to protect feelings, we fail to protect marriage. And we can confuse ordinary marital conflict that should be worked through as two sinners seek the Lord together, with a problem that requires separation. We must tread very, very carefully in this area — praying that God would fill us full of wisdom and with grace.

Now, we read on in verse 10 that...



### **Matthew 19:10**

His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

In other words, *"If this is the level of commitment required, then maybe it's good to not sign up for it!"*. And I get their observation. I mean, you should go into marriage knowing what it is all about. So, if you are single, and you want to be married one day, then you need to be listening to sermons on marriage NOW. Not later. Not on your 5th wedding anniversary. But NOW. Indeed, Paul is very honest in writing to the Corinthian church that there are hardships in being married, and blessings in being single.

However, the opposite is also true, that there are blessings in being married, and hardships in being single, which is why we read Jesus response next:

### **Matthew 19:11-12**

But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

That is, there are those who are born without any particular desire to marry, then there those that other men have forcibly and wrongly prevented from marrying — whether by command, such as in the Catholic church, or by castration, such as was practiced by conquering nations or within kings courts of the past — and finally there are those who have effectively made themselves eunuchs by voluntarily keeping themselves from marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, for the sake of serving God.

And Jesus says, if that is how you want to live for God, or if that is how God has called you, then throw yourself into that. But if not, don't avoid the commitment of marriage because you think it will be difficult, for so is being single in its own unique way.

Now, evidently the Pharisees could find no fault in how Jesus had answered them in all this, for He took them back to the Scriptures that they themselves held up in the highest regard. And we see no more of them mentioned as a group in this chapter. Rather, next, we see others come to see Jesus. We read:

### **Matthew 19:13**

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them.

And we'll get to the disciple's reaction in a moment. But note what's going on here, that these children were brought to Jesus that He might put His hands on them and pray. But who brought them? It's reasonable to conclude that it was their parents, right? Well it's a small detail, but one commentator noted that in Luke's account that the pronoun he uses for "they" is masculine. In other words, it was the men who brought their kids to Jesus. And if nothing else, that's a reminder to us dads, that we need to continually be doing all we can to bring our kids to Christ. We can't sit on the sidelines while our wives do that. We can't hope that sending our kids to Sunday School, Livewires, or Youth Club will be enough.

No, we need to be involved in their spiritual lives, noting what Paul instructs the believers in Ephesus, saying *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."* That responsibility is on us. *Us*, dads. It's on us. Let us not fail to do that.



Here, these men *were* doing the right thing, but they were met with resistance from Jesus' closest disciples. And so we read:

**Matthew 19:14**

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

So Jesus corrects His disciples, again showing the value God places on little ones, and on little ones coming to Him. But also reminding us of what He had said previously in chapter 18, that it is those who repent and put their faith in Him just as a little child fully trusts that God is able to do *all* things, that will be the ones who enter Heaven.

**Matthew 19:15**

And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

And so, Jesus' disciples listened and they didn't stand in the way any more.

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Now, as we reach the half-way point of this chapter, we read of an encounter with a young man, who has become known as the *rich young ruler*, based on the details the gospel writers note. And this encounter was notable enough that the Holy Spirit prompted both Matthew, Mark *and* Luke to record it. So we really ought to take note of what this says to us, right?!

And first, let us consider for a moment that this man had everything — he was rich, he was young, and he had authority or position as a ruler. Yet he realised that he was still missing something. Something that could not be fulfilled by those things. And so he came to Jesus with a question about eternity. We read in verse 16:

**Matthew 19:16**

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Which seems like a good question to ask, right? But there's a problem, for he was trying to figure out what he could *do* to enter heaven. Like many in our day, he thought getting there was by works. And so Jesus challenges him on this, to expose the fact that his works were not good as he thought, and that in fact he had a problem. We read:

**Matthew 19:17**

So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

And so first Jesus refers back to Psalm 14, which says:

**Psalm 14:2-3**

The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

These words are repeated pretty much verbatim in Psalm 53:2-3, and then quoted by Paul in Romans 3:10-12. And this news that no-one is good is not good news at all, for we read this in Ecclesiastes:

#### **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and **keep His commandments**, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

In other words, if we have failed to keep God's commandments, we're in trouble. The problem is, most of us think we've kept them. We think we're good people. Such as this man, for we read:

#### **Matthew 19:18-19**

He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' Honour your father and your mother,' and, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' "

Which are the six of the ten commandments that relate to our fellow man. And...

#### **Matthew 19:20**

The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

You see, this young man was confident that he'd been a good boy. He'd done all of these things. So it was to be a gold star, and free pass into heaven for him... or so he thought. But the issue was that these commandments go deeper than simple actions — for they deal with the heart. And Jesus, knowing all things, could see that this man's heart was the issue... specifically his love for money and possessions. For we read in verse 21:

#### **Matthew 19:21-22**

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And so in reality, it was not so much that he had great possessions, but that they had him. You see, all the time Jesus left those material things untouched, this young man was all ears. But as Jesus spoke these words, He walked away from the Lord. What sad revelation to this man, and about this man. That rather than let this knowledge of his sin drive him to the feet of Jesus, he got up on his feet, and walked away from Him — considering that the temporary riches of this world *without* God were of more value to him than the riches of heaven and eternity *with* God.

You see, the problem was not that he *had* riches, for riches are not inherently evil. Indeed, there are a good number of rich yet godly men in the Bible, from Abraham, to Joseph, to David, even Solomon to some extent — so we can't get caught up in the idea that physical and material things are bad, or that money is bad. It is not. But as we've been considering at our Spring Bible Study Series on Sunday evenings, good things become a problem when they become our gods. When they become our idols. And that is what had happened here. For the problem wasn't even so much that he wouldn't give up what he had for the *poor*, but that he *loved* the things he had. They had become his idol. The had become the object of his affection, devotion, and worship.

But what of us? We should of course consider ourselves as we read this. So then, how much do the things of this world have *us*? I mean, who here is willing to give up even a little of their careers, their jobs, their finances, their home, their cars, their hobbies, their games consoles or their phones for the sake of the kingdom? It's a blessing to have a home, it's a blessing to have the finances to make it look presentable. It's ok to own things. And of course, we are to be good stewards of those things. But have we become distracted? Do we love the things we have, more than we love God?

This was the problem that faced the people of Israel many years before Jesus was born, after they had returned to the land from captivity. While they had initially returned with enthusiasm and begun work on the temple, discouragement had set in as they faced opposition, and instead of pressing into the work of rebuilding the temple, they had turned to their own lives, and their own houses — making those things their priority. But God sent Haggai the prophet warning them to *consider their ways*, to turn their hearts back to the Lord — for unknown to them, all the frustrations and difficulties they were facing with the things *they* thought were important, were actually sent by the Lord because they were neglecting the *most* important thing. May that not be the case with us. May we not put the good things God has given us — especially money and possessions — in between us and Him. For that is a terrible mistake to make.

It is the mistake that this rich young ruler made. And it kept him from following Jesus.

Now, we read on in verses 23-24:

#### **Matthew 19:23-24**

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Why is this the case? Because our riches teach us to be self reliant, right? When we have ample money to pay the bills, to buy food, to go on holiday, or even just go for a coffee, we begin thinking we're in control, and that we can support ourselves. When we don't need to ask anyone for help, we think we've got it sorted. And as a result, we fail to see how destitute we are — not materially, but spiritually. And here Jesus says that is very hard for someone with great wealth to come to know Him as their Saviour, not only because they are used to being self-reliant, but also because of the distraction and love of riches that He had just demonstrated so clearly in speaking to the rich young ruler.

And He uses an example, saying *"it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

It's quite the illustration! And there's some debate as to exactly *how* Jesus was making this point, for on one hand it's clearly quite impossible for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle. But there are some who like to rationalise Jesus' statement, suggesting that camels (which were the mode of transport for goods at that time) would sometimes arrive in Jerusalem after the main gates to the city were closed, and as such the only way they could enter was through a smaller gate that was known as the needle gate, which required them to be unloaded of all their goods, and to enter in on their knees. And of course that does make a point about the humility required to approach Christ.

But we should not miss the *key* point that Jesus is making here, is that riches can distract so badly, that an unbeliever can miss out on salvation altogether. All the more reason to reach people while they are young, before the snare of stocks and shares, of pensions and savings, of home improvements and hobbies, of cars and consoles, attract and distract them to the point that they will not listen.

Now, we read in verse 25:

#### Matthew 19:25

When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

And so it seems they took Jesus' illustration literally, realising that we all have riches that we have become attached to.

#### Matthew 19:26

But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

So then, we are never to give up on anyone's salvation! Even those that seem hardest to reach. Even those that are in love with the riches of this world. For Jesus says it is not impossible to save them.

And that is the context of this verse, that God can save *anyone*. That He *can* save, and indeed *came* to save those who are given to sin and self, whose hearts are full of idolatry. Whose love is for this world and all that is in it. He came to save sinners like us.

What this verse is not saying is that we can do anything we like if God is on our side. We are not to take it out of context and use it as a slogan for running a marathon, or doing weight lifting, or some other physical task. That is not what this is about! If those things are your work, and you do your work as if you are serving God, and not yourself, then God may indeed bless you in it, but unless God has called you to fight Philistines with your bare hands or a donkey's jaw-bone, as Samson was, then you can't take this verse to mean God will help you lift heavier weights than the guy or girl next to you in the gym. That's misusing Scripture.

But praise God for what Jesus was saying here — that even when it seems unlikely, God can still save an individual by His grace. What good news to end our study on this morning!

## Application questions

Now, in light of what we have read and considered this morning, there are some questions it would be good to ask ourselves.

- If you are single, and want to be married, how are you preparing for marriage?
- If you are married, what are you doing to protect your marriage?
- Dad's, what are you doing to bring your children to Jesus?
- If you have riches or possessions, are they the object of your affection and attention?

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