

Good morning, church family. All right, if you would turn to Mark chapter 10, if you would please, Mark chapter 10. This is going to be part two of our little mini series here in Mark. We're gonna be looking at verses 17 through 31. So Mark chapter 10, 17 through 31. And we will read the whole text, but we're gonna pick up where we left off last week in verse 24. And we'll finish out this short section here. Mark chapter 10 verses 17 through 31 once you found that if you would stand with me in honor of the one who gave us this word As we read through our text this morning beginning in verse 17 of Mark chapter 10 And as he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him and began asking him, good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother. And he said to him, Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up. And looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, One thing you lack, go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. And as Jesus, looking around, said to his disciples, how hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. 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. And they were even more astonished, saying to him, then who can be saved? Looking at them, Jesus said, with people, it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God. Peter began to say to him, behold, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for my sake and for the gospel's sake, except one who will receive 100 times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions. And in the age to come, eternal life. but many who are first will be last and the last first. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the opportunity to gather this morning, this beautiful Lord's Day. We're so thankful for the grace that has brought each and every one of us here. We just pray, Lord, that we would be attentive to the Word today, that we would be filled with your Spirit and that you would apply to our hearts the truth of this passage, that we would carry it forward with us into the week and into the future. And that we would do all that we do for your glory. I pray Lord that you would remove any distractions from me any hindrances any Tongue ties or anything else that would distract from the message that you have for your people today We pray all these things in your holy name and for your glory. Amen All right, you can be seated So this week is nothing before Christ part two, part two. So we're gonna pick up in verse 24. And if you recall last week, we

looked at the first half of this larger section, and we saw goodness defined and goodness rejected. So we see him, Jesus interacting with this rich young ruler, who thought himself good. He thought he had earned himself a seat in eternity, but he was ultimately broken when he heard that Jesus commanded him to give everything up for the kingdom of heaven. And it's really this, if you recall, this particular section is really a visual expansion or visual lesson expanding on verses 13 through 16 in Mark chapter 10 when Jesus took the little children into his arms and said that none will enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are like infants. And so it was a continuation of that principle, that idea. And today, we're going to continue through the text, because it all works as one large pericope, or one paragraph, one thought process by Mark. And we're going to be looking here at the second half of it, where we're going to see that salvation is only possible through God. full stop, there's no extras, there's no there's nothing else that you can add, there's nothing else that you can bring, all salvation is from God, and God alone. And then we're also going to see that although the life of the disciple is one of sacrifice, by God's grace, there's also a life of abundance for us that we are just as undeserving of, but he still blesses us with that. But I want you to remember that overall, through all these overarching truths that we're going to find there's a there's, there's a truth rich text. All of these other truths that we're seeing fall under the overarching truth, the central truth of this text is that there can be nothing before Christ. whether it be before salvation, whether it be after salvation, there can be nothing before Christ. So let's keep that the centrality of our mind as we go through here, we're going to look at many of these truths this morning in the second half here, but I want you to recall the title of the message nothing before Christ. So let's dig in first to chat to verses 24 through 27. Number one, the impossible made possible the impossible made possible. So I'm going to reread verses 24 through 27. To begin, and the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. 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. And they were even more astonished, saying to him, then who can be saved? Looking at them, Jesus said, with people, it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God. So as we pick up again here in the text, verse 24 is in response to the last verse that we read last week, verse 23, where Jesus says, how hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God. And this absolutely amazed the disciples. It specifically records that they were amazed at his words. This is shocked is the idea here in the original language. They were shocked, amazed, astounded at his words. but Jesus answered and essentially doubles down on what he's going to say. Now it's important for us to understand why they would be shocked and amazed at his words. You would think that this wouldn't be as much of a surprise as good Western Christians who have been brought up in the idea of

Christianity and self-sacrifice and being the servant and putting yourself last. Those words don't shock us. necessarily do they is how hard it is for the wealthy. We know that the wealthy are often have this connotation of greed and causing suffering and those who are less. So in our Western cultural minds, we aren't as shocked by those words. But for a Jewish person, the first century, we have to understand that for them, culturally speaking, someone who was wealthy was automatically blessed by God. Throughout the Old Testament, you see over and over and over again, those who have wealth are seen to be acknowledged as blessed by God. Therefore, if they're blessed by God, they would be right with God. For God isn't going to give someone blessings if they're not following the law. God isn't going to give them blessings if he's not happy with them. So in a Jewish cultural mindset, for them to hear the words that it's going to be very hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven when in their minds wealth is associated with the blessings of God, wouldn't that be an amazing statement to hear from a rabbi teaching in the first century? And so you can get a better feel for their amazement when you understand that for them, Jesus is essentially saying that all those who are blessed by God, those who are wealthy, will be the hardest ones to get into the kingdom of heaven. That's what they're understanding this verbiage that Jesus had told them this this statement of truth that he is sharing with them. That's the kind of hit that they take from it that there's got to be something wrong here. They're amazed by this statement and we're going to understand their amazement as it is Jesus doubles down and gives us a verbal analogy here in just a moment, but we're going to see this play out in their reasoning and their understanding and their questions of him as we move forward. And this brings us to a piece that I want to address just for a moment. Because this often comes up in this text, because Jesus in verse 24, or excuse me, in verse 23, that we looked at last week, and then we'll continue on later on in verse 25, that it seems like Jesus is saying those who are wealthy, are terrible people, or those who are wealthy cannot have anything. In fact, that is not the teaching of Scripture. If later on when we get there, Mark chapter 14, verse three through nine, speaks of an unnamed wealthy woman that helps Jesus and the disciples. She isn't cast aside or nothing negative associated with her. In fact, Joseph of Arimathea, who was so wealthy that he had a hand carved stone tomb to put Jesus in, which was top of the line wealthy in that time. You had to have a lot of wealth to be able to afford to carve yourself a tomb to put yourself after you die. Most people were simply buried in the ground and went on. And neither one of them have negative consequences. In fact, Zacchaeus, if you remember him, he was touched by Christ, he was he was visited by Christ and in his in his change, he gave away his wealth, but he wasn't commanded to give away his wealth. Do you recall that? That was something that the change brought about in him. Wealth is not necessarily a negative or a positive overarchingly in scripture. So I want to make sure and not give you the idea in this text, because I've heard this text used,

unfortunately, to, to beat people over the head, for lack of a better term, that give away everything you have, if you're not living an absolute poor destitute monastic style life that you're not really a good Christian. And I want to say that that's not the case, necessarily. What Jesus is specifically teaching in this text about wealth is that wealth is and can be a hindrance to discipleship. It is and can be something that keeps you from growing in the Lord because it makes you self-sufficient. The overarching teaching that we've seen in chapter 10 so far is an absolute dependency on Christ. Over and over we've seen that so far, haven't we? That we are infants with nothing but need, that we have nothing but Christ, that we as believers have to come to a position where we understand we have nothing without him. And if you're so self sufficient that you need nothing, it is harder to get to the point where you need Christ. Does that make sense? So I want to make sure and put that out there because this text, unfortunately, has been ran through the ringer over the years, trying to say something that it simply does not. So in this particular context, the stumbling block for the rich young ruler was in fact his wealth. But if you recall, the disciples had to leave their fishing nets. Christ calls us to give up whatever is before him. And that's the context of what we're looking at. So as we continue here with the interaction between Jesus and the disciples, He is now making the disciples essentially look inside themselves. Now you may say, Josh, why do you say they're having to look inside themselves? Because of their level of astonishment and the ultimate argument that Peter gives here in a few moments in verse 28, when we get there to address it, they're trying to defend themselves. They ultimately try to show that they've sacrificed everything for Christ. They're trying to put themselves on solid, firm ground here. And truly, when you think about it, whenever Jesus, our beloved Savior, our gracious Lord, brings us to a point where we have to look inwardly to ourselves and see how inadequate we are, that is a mercy and a blessing. Because if you do not see how inadequate you are, will you want the remedy for your inadequacy? No, of course not. If you don't come to a point of realizing that you need something, you're never going to be able to come to the point by faith that you acknowledge that Christ is all you have and all you need. So ultimately, the mercy shown by Christ here on bringing his disciples inward, facing, looking at their own inadequacy as a blessed mercy. And so Jesus responds to their amazement. We're still looking at verse 24. The disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus answered again and said to them, children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. So he calls his disciples children, this term of endearment. He wants them to catch on to what he's saying. He is a father teaching his children a valuable lesson. And he states how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. And this time it's a more generalized statement. The first part of his statement is generalized. It's hard to enter the kingdom of heaven. And he wants them to understand it is brutally hard. And in

order to get them to grasp the depth of his words here, he uses a beautiful analogy. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Two things I want to point out here. First, The word here for rich in verse 25 is a more generalized word for the wealthy than it was in verse 23. In verse 23, the word wealthy in the original language was for landowners. It was specifically regarding those who had vast amounts of land, which was a word for wealthy in that time. If you had a lot of land, you were automatically assumed to be wealthy. But here in verse 25, he uses a more generic term for rich, it's more of a liquid form of wealth, whether it be monetary clothing, food, it's just more of a generalized, so he's now broadening the statement as well. But I want to address the big one here in verse 25, the camel going through the eye of a needle. How many of you have heard it taught? that this means a small gate in Jerusalem that a camel walks up to and can crawl on his knees and get them that's that's what Jesus is referencing. And that really if the wealthy would just get on their knees before God and humble themselves, they too can fit through the eye of the needle. This in fact is not remotely close to the correct interpretation of this passage. I say that because the eye of the needle was a Jerusalem gate, but not until ninth century. This is first century. This gate didn't exist in first century Judaism and Jerusalem. So there's no record of a gate on Jerusalem called the eye of the needle until ninth century history. No, this this in fact is exactly what it's intended to be. People have have tried to lighten the impact of these words throughout the years by using different analogies and trying to soften Jesus's words. No, Jesus is trying to tell us the absolute impossibility of a person saving themselves. Because in Palestine, the largest known land animal was the camel. There was nothing bigger. So in context of the people that day, this was the biggest thing they could come up with that was a living organism. The smallest representation of a passage, if you will, something that has something pass through it was the eye of a needle. Now we can all shake our head in here and go, can a camel fit through the eye of a needle? No, it's impossible. It's absolutely impossible from a human standpoint for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle. Now, how do we know the disciples understood this to be impossible? And that's the message that Jesus is trying to get across because of the response in verse 26. Their response is, okay, then who can be saved? They clearly see it as impossible. The connotation of this analogy is absolutely spot on with the just the bear wording a camel cannot fit through it is easier excuse me for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is a simple impossibility. There's no way around it. It's been said that salvation is completely beyond the sphere of human possibilities. Every attempt to enter the kingdom on the basis of achievement or merit is futile. We have to grasp the impossibility of salvation apart from God alone. We have to grasp it, we have to accept it, regardless of how offensive it is, regardless of how much it bothers

us, regardless of how hard harsh those words may seem. It is impossible for a human being, regardless of wealth, it's harder for the wealthy, but it is impossible, regardless of what you do to save yourself, a human cannot do it. And so he is driving this home, absolutely driving it home. and they pick up on it immediately. Because in verse 26, it says and they were even more astonished. They are beside themselves. This is an idea of shock, absolute shock, possible even verging on the idea of denial. There's no way he can be saying this. There's no way. Because remember, in a Jewish context, the framework of a Jewish person, their mindset was I can achieve right relation with God. And the outward sign that you are doing exactly what you're supposed to be is the blessings of God in a Jewish mindset, the blessings of God, then formalize themselves, form themselves, excuse me, in physical wealth. It's taught all throughout the Old Testament, you see it over and over again, Job, Abraham, Jacob, over and over, you see them all getting wealth because of the blessings of God. And I will absolutely say blessings come from nowhere, but God. But in a Jewish context, that is then equal to God's happiness with you, therefore earning eternity. And so in context of this rich young ruler, Jesus is essentially destroying the very framework of the disciples mind of how they relate to God himself. Would you not be astonished if everything you thought you was true by being trained up for 25 3035 years, he came to be found came to find out that it was absolutely untrue. and being taught by the one who you believe to be the son of God, Jesus has already revealed himself to the disciples as the true Messiah. And so for them, this is God himself, tearing down the Jewish framework of thought about their relation to God. Would that not be an astonishing thing to hear? And so they're amazed, they're more astonished and saying to him, then who can be saved? So in their mindset, if those who are the most right with God, those who have lived their lives to the point where they're so good that they have earned God's blessings, if they can't be saved, who can be? If it's not for them, what hope do I have? And Jesus, understanding their question in verse 27 answers, looking at them, Jesus said, with people, it is impossible. but not with God, for all things are possible with God. Jesus affirms the impossibility. He understands the context of their question. He is just twice doubled down on saying that it is essentially impossible for people to enter the kingdom of heaven. The same impossible level of impossibility that it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It's simply absurd. It's so impossible. It's the level of absurdity. And now he affirms it. in black and white, possibly red if you have red in your translation. With people, it is impossible. And one of the best but in all of the Bible. My favorite but in all of the Bible is in Ephesians 2. But God, who is rich in mercy. This is a close second. With people, it is impossible. It is impossible. When you come to that realization, it is astoundingly humbling. It is a gracious miracle. When you finally come to the point where you look inward and you go, I have a problem, there's something wrong with me. There's something innately wrong

with me that I cannot fix. I don't know why I keep doing the things that I do that continually hurt people, hurt myself, the things that I do are an affront to a holy God. And by God's grace, we come to realize, I need a savior. And in that realization, we go by God's grace, we go, it's impossible, I can't do it. I can't, there's nothing I can do for myself. But then Jesus says here, but Not with God. For all things are possible with God. I read an article recently, probably six months to a year ago, there was a big hubbub about, in American evangelicalism, because a prominent American theologian pastor, said that salvation is not a miracle. That salvation is not a miracle. And that article was brought back to my mind because the article is writing against that statement saying you cannot deny the miracle of salvation. You cannot remove the word miracle from salvation, because by definition, a miracle is something that is supernatural, outside the realm of possible for a human framework and natural law. And so by the very definition that Jesus gives right here, with people, it is impossible, but with God, all things are possible. That makes salvation a miracle, open, shut case, done. So I want you to grasp the idea and I want you to heartily say amen. I want you to lodge the idea that salvation is a miracle when it's something that you cannot do yourself, but by God's grace, he does for you by a supernatural work within you from start to finish A to B, it's all him. That is the definition of a miracle. Praise God for the miracle of salvation. And so as we come to the first part, the ending of our first point here, there's a few points of application that I want us to really walk away with. Do not, under any circumstance, try to underestimate or take the sharpness of Jesus's words away here. Because that's our natural reaction when something offends us. We try to dull it, we try to take the bite away from it. We need to fully embrace as human beings the impossibility, the level of absurdity of a camel going through the eye of a needle level of impossible for us to understand we cannot save ourselves, our superior superiority complex must come crashing down. And think about the context of where we are here. Are we going to reach the point of being an infant if our superiority complex does not come crashing down? No, because remember, two weeks ago, we talked about the infants, and he took them in his arms. And we talked about the needs of an infant, you don't reach that point until you are offended. And have your own complex of your own goodness come crashing to the floor. Don't fight it. Don't take away from the offense. The gospel, which is the good news, the word gospel, who on Galley on in Greek, the gospel means good news. But nothing is good news without bad news, is it? You can't have good news without bad news. Otherwise it's just news. So the bad news is, we can't save ourselves and we need a savior. We should embrace that. That is an offense that I will take all day long. And I want to charge you to do the same. I charge you to do the same. Embrace that offense, because it is only in the grace of that offense, the mercy of that offense, that we cry out to a holy God and we say, we have nothing without you. And by that little seed of faith we are given, we then cry out and are saved by

our Savior. Because we cannot save ourselves. But there's another lesson here that I want you to be mindful of. Jesus mentions riches as making it harder to enter the kingdom than the camel through the eye of a needle. But I want you to think after salvation after conversion, there are still times that we try to bring a camel through the eye of a needle in our lives. There are other things besides riches that we can try to lift up before Christ. There's a quote that I found this week, anything that causes disciples to forget their poverty and child likeness before God, and that prevents them from following Jesus Christ, this too is a camel before the eye of the needle. There are things in our Christian walk that we will raise up as our offerings that we will bring up and eclipse the view of God, whether it be riches, whether it be our family, whether it be our friends, our jobs, material possessions, and the thing that gets eclipsed, excuse me, the thing that eclipses Jesus the most in our lives is ourselves. We so often lift things up before Christ. Because ultimately, that's what he's using that analogy for, isn't it? to teach the disciples that the rich young ruler held his riches above and before Christ. And so I would caution each one of us in here who are converted, each one of us who have the grace of Christ and His Spirit indwelling us to be very, very careful what you raise up before Christ so that it reaches the level of being the camel in front of the eye of the needle. Be very cautious of that in our lives. Number two, Christ saves and blesses. We'll be looking at verses 28 through 31. Christ saves and blesses. Let me reread verses 28 through 31 for us. Peter began to say to him, behold, we have left everything and followed you. Jesus said, truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or farms, for my sake and for the gospel's sake, except one who will receive 100 times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers, and sisters and mothers, and children and farms, along with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first. So we have gotten, throughout Mark, we have gotten pretty used to Peter kind of being the spokesperson for the disciples, haven't we? We've seen it on a few different occasions. Jesus speaks to the disciples. Peter, I know they don't wear suspenders, but I always imagine Peter putting his fingers in his suspenders. You know Jesus? You guys know what I'm talking about? Anybody else grow up with people like that? And so Peter comes up to answer. And notice what he's concerned about. We know that this idea of the impossibility has shocked them to their very core. The impossibility of the wealthy entering the kingdom of God, how hard that will be. Because his concern at this point, is look, we have left everything. Are we okay? You can almost hear the worry in his voice in the original language, the we is hyper emphasized. We have left everything for you. He's coming up and he doesn't understand. Realize what he's saying. He's looking to what they have done. He wants confirmation that they have given up enough. He wants confirmation that surely as disciples, we left our nets behind, remember? We've been following you for some



time now, remember? Have we done enough? Am I okay? And what he lifts up before Christ is what he has done. He's missed the picture. His response shows he's still just as thick as he was when Jesus told him he was the Messiah and Peter rebuked him. It's amazing to see the disciples and how much I identify with them. And it's so convicting how much I identify with the disciples because how often in a moment of doubt or weakness do I, or possibly you, lift up how much you've done for Jesus lately? How much I've given up. Jesus, surely you realize how much I've given up in my life for you. Living in the richest country in the world, Surely you realize how much I have sacrificed to be your disciple, Jesus. This was convicting for me this week. Because that should be a slap in the face for all of us that we as just dumb human beings default back to, look what I've done. Look, look what I've and it's just filthy rags. It's just it's just filthy rags. We're just holding up our best is nothing to a holy God. And so Peter defaults back to his normal response to what a Jewish and a Jewish framework. This would be his normal response. Look at all we've sacrificed for you. And so this mercy of Jesus causing the disciples to look inwardly to astonish them to offend them is working. isn't it? He's questioning it. He's he's needing affirmation. Have I done enough? Have I done enough for you? Jesus? He's trying he's trying to assuage his angst. He needs to hear. Yeah, you've done enough. You've sacrificed enough. Now notice Jesus's response. And this is so beautiful. Because Jesus not only saves, Understand that Jesus not only saves, which is insurmountably enough to sacrifice everything we have in this world, is it not? When you look at the weight of your soul, salvation for all eternity, by grace, through faith, should be enough for us to go, yep, everything I have pales in comparison. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He not only saves, but then he blesses. He not only blesses, but he promises to bless 100 fold over what he had you give up. So let's look at his reply. Jesus said in verse 29, truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms. That's a big list. That's a big list, house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, farms. Now, when you think about that, you may think, well, I don't have a farm. I don't I don't have a farm. I don't have a farm. I live here in Marshfield. I don't have a farm. But so that means I'm not going to get 100 fold blessing. So we need to understand the context of what Jesus is saying in first century world. This is the essentials of a human life. This is what it takes to live. Remember, they're highly community driven in first century Judaism. They stayed with their families. That's how they survived. They would have family units, their houses would just simply get bigger, they would live all in the same area. So houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, father, children and farm that is the essential living package of first that this is the this is the essential basics of first century life. So now that we know this is the essential basics, we can take that truth out, transport it up here, and we understand that we are giving up even the essential basics for Christ. We bring no baggage. He expects us

to leave everything. The disciples were called to leave their nets. The rich young ruler was called to leave his possessions. We are called to leave everything behind. And we've seen over and over and mark a couple of different occasions where he says, even the relationship with your parents, if it's a stumbling block, must be cast aside. For my sake. And so Jesus is saying, the basics, the essential life package of being a human being is what you must give up for my sake and for the gospels. But then he goes on in verse 30, and he doesn't correct Peter. He doesn't chide Peter. He comes in and instructs him and promises him blessing over blessing. When it comes to giving up the essentials, I couldn't help but being reminded of, anyone in here read Pilgrim's Progress before? What does Christian do at the very beginning of Pilgrim's Progress? He leaves absolutely everything. The only thing he has is the sin on his back, which is, in the illustration, a heavy bondage, a large pack on his back. And he has the Word of God. That's all he has. He leaves everything else behind. All he has is his baggage, his sin to carry with him. And he goes on this journey on this narrow path. And that's essentially what Jesus is calling for everyone here to do is to leave the essentials behind and come follow him. And ultimately, Christian has his heavy burden released at the foot of the cross, if you've read the story. And so Jesus is telling them to leave all of their old allegiances behind and they must be severed. But he's telling them in the same breath in the same sentence, except everyone will receive 100 times as much now in the present age. I used to miss that now in the present age. I think when I've read this in the past, because my mind instantly went to eternity, right? We're going to receive 100 fold in eternity. But that's not what Jesus says. He specifically says you're going to receive 100 times as much now in the present age. So wait, if we're going to receive just as much now in the present age, that means that we are going to be given more houses, more brothers, more sisters, more fathers, more mothers, more children, more farms in our present life. What in the world could that possibly mean? Does that mean we're all going to get twice as much acreage after conversion that we had before? or 100 fold? No. The beauty of this is the community of faith that we are then baptized into that we are now members of a body that spans centuries, we are given heritage of fathers of the faith and mothers of the faith. And we have children of the faith around us that we get to speak into. And when Christians are living their lives sacrificially to serve one another as the entire New Testament calls us to do, that means nothing is our own, it's God's. And therefore we all have access to the blessings of each other as well. Now, please understand that doesn't mean you need to go deed your house to the church. I'm not saying that. But what I am saying is that Jesus promises to give us so much more in the community of faith in our local body than we ever had before. The family of believers that we have are blessing far beyond our physical parents, or brothers or sisters. Because when we as a church live out the commands to live selflessly, provide for one another, prioritize hospitality, we gain a beautiful family that pales, that makes our

former family pale in comparison. And truly Jesus takes nothing from a man or woman that he does not restore to him or her in a new and glorious form. Because the new family that we're a part of is righteous before God. And although we may still struggle and sin against one another, we are still a holy people filled by the spirit that he uses to pour out the very blessings he promises to us individually from those around us. He literally fulfills his command and promise of blessing by uniting us with a community of faith. So not only does he save us, he then blesses us 100 fold beyond everything that we gave up. That is an amazing thing to think about. Because he could save us and turn us loose and be completely justified, could he not? He could save us and say, sacrifice everything for me, convert us, and never bless us again, and we would still be in eternity in heaven, which would be far better than everything we gave up for conversion, correct? Everybody agree with me? Shake your head yes, because you have to agree with that. And yet he still blesses us 100 fold above everything we gave up. That drives us to a place of such deep praise and thanksgiving and a desire to glorify him and all that we do that we then play out by our actions through the grace that we have following the commands that he gave us to glorify him ultimately in praise and thanks, which then blesses those around us and the circle, the beautiful circle of life of being in a Christian community. just spirals upward and glory to God. Do you see how all that works together? It's amazing. But lest the disciples get too far ahead of themselves, he adds on this time, along with persecutions. Along with persecutions, because he knows this life is not going to be a bed of roses for the believer. because it kind of sounds like that is it's just going to be a life of abundance. And we don't ever have to worry about anything that conversion is just a better human life. And that's the ultimate goal of it. And there's some that preach that incorrectly. But in reality, he checks, he checks their their thought process already and says, along with persecutions. Because in John 15 verses 18 through 21, I'm going to read you what he says will happen. John chapter 15 verses 18 through 21. Jesus says to his disciples, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world. Because of this, the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they keep my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know the one who sent me. He very clearly promises there will be persecutions. And that's how we know that the blessings he says will come in this present age come out of the community of faith. It doesn't come from the world. The blessings are not blessings that we would tout around and show people, look at all these amazing things that I have. These are the kind of blessings that the world scratches their heads at. These are the kind of blessings where maybe your unconverted friends and family go, why, why do you enjoy going to

church with a bunch of people you don't know? Why do you want to spend so much time with a bunch of people that aren't your relatives, you should, you should come spend time with us, or you should, you should do things that we say, or you should spend all your time with the old crowd, the friends that you had before conversion, and you are joyfully, abundantly excited to come gather with the body of faith, because that is a blessing that the world simply doesn't understand. but there will be persecutions. And think about the first century church in Rome that read these words. Remember, during the time that Mark was written and was being passed around was the time of Nero's persecution. This is something that they were experiencing firsthand. They literally read this letter and probably knew people in their lives that were killed by persecution that very week, perhaps. And so let's not forget the persecutions that come the blessings that Christ promises are not of this world. They are spiritual supernatural blessings through his body of faith. And then as a cherry on top as if every everything there wasn't clear enough and encouraging enough. He says in the age to come eternal life and that we get to spend an eternity with him in heaven. And I want you to remember the promises that he's giving about 100 fold. Remember what he did with the five loaves and two fish in Mark chapter six. He took the smallest of things and blessed 5000 people. These blessings that he's talking about 100 fold, I want to reiterate once again, lest we raise the blessings above the blessing giver. These blessings are the small acts of faith that he compounds by his grace and provides for the people that are his. So as we come to verse 31, he's going to conclude his teaching with something that by the world's wisdom is a backwards statement. He says, but many who are first will be last and the last first. There it is, that sums up the disciples life, doesn't it? This was used for centuries in the early church to remind one another of what the disciples life is, the follower of Christ life looks like. It is to be last. Because in the kingdom of heaven, those who are last will be first. And so he ties a bow on this teaching that he gives us. It's been said the kingdom of God topples our cherished priorities and demands of disciples new ones. It takes from those who follow Jesus things they would keep and gives to them things they could not imagine because the first will be last and the last first. So there's a couple points of application here that I think we need to walk away with this week that we need to sink deeply into our minds After Peter emphatically explains that they had given up everything, Jesus does not correct his statement of looking at his own sacrifices, but instead speaks of the blessings that come with being a follower of Christ. He doesn't harshly come down on him. He simply points him back to the blessings of being his follower. What a beautiful Savior we have. That is someone that we can rest in. That isn't an angry God sitting in heaven waiting for us to mess up so he can strike us with another difficulty. Other times of discipline in our lives, yes. But understand that as a compassionate Savior, as he causes the offense of the gospel to take root in the disciples heart. Remember, he crashed their very framework. Everything they understood

to be true in their lives has just been decimated in a matter of moments. And Peter defaults to the only thing he knows to do, which is to say, but I've sacrificed this because isn't that what the Jews always look to? I've done this. I've done the sacrifices. I've went to the temple. I've done what I'm supposed to do. But as a loving savior, someone whose arms that we can rest in, he simply points him back to what being a follower of Christ looks like. And that is blessings beyond anything that we can ever imagine all by his grace. I encourage you to rest in that. But there's another thing that I think we have to be careful of. And I mentioned that moment, just briefly a moment ago. We have to, especially in our Western culture, we have to be on guard against lifting the blessings up to the point where they eclipse the gift giver, the blessing giver. There are entire, I call them church industries, Some would call them organizations or denominations, whatever the case may be. There are some that have built their entire ministry around what can I get from Jesus? How much faith can I conjure to demand what I want? They treat God like a machine in the sky that you swipe the credit card of an emotional appealed on and you can have a name and claim whatever you want. That is the very definition of raising the blessings of Christ above the blessing giver himself. And that comes back to nothing before Christ. Nothing before Christ, we can love the blessings that Christ has given us, we can relish in that, but that should drive us to a more humble, falling to our knees position of praise, because we understand we don't deserve it, because we're infants who bring nothing to the table. Do you see how this all plays together in the context of what Jesus has been saying for several verses now? But we have to be on guard for that. We don't follow Jesus. Our motivation for following Christ is not so that we will receive 100 times as much in the present age. We have to check our motivations. We have to ensure that the blessings don't become what we're chasing instead of the blessing giver. Because then we've done nothing but raise up something before Christ once more. And it's hard to do. It's hard to do. It's much easier said than done. But always keeping your face pointed to Christ and not allowing anything to eclipse the blessing giver. So in conclusion, we've spent the last two weeks breaking down this passage fairly in depth. And my prayer is that this passage that has been used, as I've mentioned in a couple different areas, been used to being ripped out of context, kicking and screaming, been used to do a lot of harm. Misinterpretations, misapplications of this text has caused a lot of harm to many believers. I firmly believe that. So my prayer is that a correct interpretation and understanding of what Christ is saying here is an encouragement to you, number one, that we have the impossible done in our lives. that he saves. There's nothing we can do to save ourselves. There's nothing we can do to help ourselves. We bring nothing to the table. It's not a 99% us and a 1% him. It is 100% a sovereign act of God by his grace and mercy, full stop, nothing else. And that in our Christian lives, we can not raise something before Christ. That is what this text is teaching us is that Christ is supreme, and it is only through him that salvation is

found. And as we move forward into the next week, we're going to see Jesus once again, tell about his passion and the disciples once again, miss the boat. And they turn the spotlight back to themselves once more. but I pray this week that by the work of the Spirit, by grace working in your lives, in my life, that we take this to heart and we know that nothing can come before Christ. Nothing. That includes the good, the bad, and the ugly. Nothing can come before Christ. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, We are so grateful and thankful for your grace that the text we've been able to look at for the last couple of weeks is filled with so much truth. But it took extra time to dig everything out and that you by your grace have allowed your spirit to speak the word to us. and that my feeble attempt to communicate these truths, I pray, Lord, are glorifying to you and that you cleaned up the mess that I've provided here and that you've applied the centrality of the truth of this text, which is we can have nothing before you. And that by that encouragement, we are brought to a deeper level of praise because it is impossible for us to save ourselves, but with you, all things are possible. I pray these truths will carry us through during our time of the Lord's table and through the coming week. In your holy name I pray. Amen.