

Christian Foundations

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[0 : 00] Come then to this 10th chapter of Mark's account of the gospel. We find this brief passage. He arose from thence and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan.

The people resort unto them again and as he was warned, as his custom was, he taught them again. Jesus never tires of teaching the people. But we have this opening line here.

He arose from thence. Where is the from thence that he is arising from? Well, it's where he has been in the previous chapters. And where has he been in the previous chapters?

Well, he has been in Galilee. We don't always see this clearly when we take one gospel account in isolation. But the passage that we have here is mirrored in Matthew 19, for example, where we read at verse 1.

It came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan. The great multitudes followed him and he healed them there.

[1 : 00] Matthew says he healed them. Mark says he taught them and both, no doubt, would be involved. His teaching of his doctrine and the healing that he would give by way of outworking the grace and demonstrating the power of God's truth.

But the point that Matthew makes, which Mark doesn't make quite so clearly here, is that this is Jesus now leaving Galilee for good.

And we miss this unless we recognize it. Yeah, well, when you get into chapter 11 of Mark's account, here he is then the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the donkey. And then all the chapters after that, then that's, you know, all the teaching in Jerusalem and the temple and the conflict with the scribes and Pharisees and so on.

And we're so used to Jesus being in Galilee and then down in Jerusalem and then in Samaria and passing through this coast and then Tyre and Sidon and Caesarea Philippi. And he constantly seems to be in and out of Galilee.

So we could miss this if we don't recognize it here that this is effectively his farewell to Galilee. He never comes to it again.

[2 : 06] He never returns to Galilee in his earthly life or ministry. Now, Matthew 28 tells us, verse 16, that he met with his disciples on a mountain there in Galilee in his post-resurrection appearance.

That's after he is risen from the dead. He said, verse 16, that he met with his disciples on a mountain there in the dead. This was his quiet discreet, but must surely have been poignant farewell to the place which, if you think about it, more than any other place in the world, epitomizes or the very mention of it makes us think Jesus.

Now, you think, oh, well, yeah, hang on, Bethlehem makes you think Jesus. Yeah, but Bethlehem is also the city of David. Bethlehem, we are taught about with David when he's a young boy and with Jesse's father and his brothers there.

There's mention of Bethlehem in the Old Testament and the earlier parts of the Bible associated with David, associated with others in the Bible. It's not exclusive to Jesus, and that's it.

Yes, he is the crown of it. Yes. Jerusalem, yeah. Jerusalem is associated with lots of other people. Lots of other kings and events and major happenings in history and in biblical times.

[3 : 22] Likewise, Samaria, other things happening there. But Galilee, you say Galilee and you think Jesus. That's the truth of it. That's the fact of it. You say Galilee and you think Jesus.

You think of Jesus teaching the people. You think of him gathering them around him. You think of the simplicity of all that he does there. Galilee is associated almost by the very speech of it, the very statement of it, with Jesus.

And that's a simple fact. And here he is now leaving Galilee for the last time. And for all of us, no matter what place is associated with us, no matter what place we, you know, whether we're born there, whether we're active in it, whether it's a place where we've worked so many years at the very mention of that company or that business.

You know, it conjures up the thought of this person or that person. There comes a time when we leave it. And we leave it for the last time. Maybe like Jesus, we're conscious, quietly and discreetly that that's it forever.

We're never going back there in our earthly lives anyway. Or maybe, perhaps more likely, there comes a time when it is the last time we say goodbye to it. And we don't realise.

[4 : 29] We think we'll be back. We think there'll be other times. But somehow, there just never is. And I don't want us to get all gloomy and doom and gloom about this. It's a fact of life. And there comes a point at which we depart from somewhere, or indeed from people, for the last time.

As Jesus is doing here, he arose from Thess and cometh into the coast of Judea. He left Galilee for the last time. And there comes this point for all of us.

Places, people with which we've been associated. Whose very name may be bound up with us. Like Jesus, our time will be limited. He only had, what, three, three and a half years yet there? And yet, you know, no other place is so associated with his name. So we have to endeavour to make our time count. We have to make our time, wherever it is.

Whether it's our place of employment. Whether it's the place where we live. Whether it's our home. Whether it's a place we go to, to serve. Whatever it might be. We have to make it count. And we make it count best by the extent to which we go with the Lord into it.

[5 : 35] And we serve the Lord in it. Because we ourselves, we're just flesh and blood. We have limited ability. We can't make that much impact. If we make an impact, it will soon be forgotten. But that which the Lord does, lasts.

And therefore, if we would make our time count. Anywhere or any place or in any organisation or in any business or whatever it should be.

Then we must make it count with the Lord. Because that alone lasts. Jesus certainly did that with Galilee. That very word conjures up Jesus.

The teaching of Jesus. The parables of Jesus. All that Jesus did. In a way that no other place, with no other person, is so uniquely associated. We won't have that type of thing.

No matter where it is or what place it is we're talking about. But we can endeavor to make a cat. No matter how short may be our time in a particular place.

[6 : 35] Now then, as we move on, we see the next thing. The first thing we recognize. In this verse is 2 to 12. The fantasies are questioning with Jesus about marriage and divorce. And the first thing we need to recognize here is that this is intended as a trap.

This is only partially sincere as a question. So that whatever Jesus says, he will make enemies. You know, it's rather like somebody saying to somebody in Glasgow on a football day.

So who do you think is better? Angels or Celtic? Whatever you say, you're going to offend people. Or if you say to somebody in America, so what do you think about the American election?

Whatever they say, they're going to show colors for one side or the other. And in all these things where they're trying to trap Jesus, there were two schools of thought. Whether it's about paying taxes to Caesar.

Or whether it's about the resurrection. Or whether it's here about marriage and divorce. There were two schools of thought in the Jewish culture and in the religious background.

[7 : 38] So that if Jesus chose for one side over the other, one lot were going to hate him. And this is partly their intention. Even if he comes down on the side they support, they're not going to say, oh, maybe he's a good lad after all.

They intend to trap him. They intend to get him. And they intend to try and make enemies for him. So that's one reason they ask him about this. There's one reason we know this is because Jesus has already said, you know, Matthew 19 again, we go back to that.

If we think of Matthew's account of the gospel, Jesus has already mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, what he thinks about marriage and divorce and being married and so on. So it's not an unknown entity.

They're just trying to meet him. They're just trying to set a trap for him. So likewise, when we turn a couple of pages into chapter 12, we'll find the Sadducees questioning Jesus about the resurrection.

How can it be true? Somebody dies and he marries. Well, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? And then the Pharisees saying, so should we pay tribute to Caesar or shouldn't we? Because there were people that said, no, a Jew should not pay tribute to a pagan Roman emperor. [8 : 43] That's treachery. It's treason. And there were others that said, well, you know, that's the reality. We've got to do it. We've got to get on with it. And so there were those Jews on both sides with differing opinions.

And this is what they're trying to do here with Jesus. Trying to trap him. Two contrary opinions. But in each of these cases, whilst Jesus identifies their true motives, he doesn't fall into the same. Well, you know, there's both sides to think of and we have to sort of come to some negotiated settlement. He's under no illusions. And in each of these instances, he comes down firmly on one side.

The side that his father reveals in his word. And he teaches clearly what they should and should not do. He doesn't say, well, they're both of equal sort of worth and merit.

We've got to sort of come to some kind of agreement between them. He takes a side clearly. He comes firmly down on one side of the argument. In resurrection, in paying taxes to Caesar, and in marriage and divorce.

[9 : 46] The trap, in other words, it springs, but it doesn't do any harm to him. Because he is clear from what his father reveals in his word. Because there is a right and there is a law.

He doesn't seek endlessly to temporize between the two. Now, in the case of marriage and divorce, there were two schools of thought in the Jewish religion. And although these had particular names, there was the Hillel school and there was the Shammai school of thought.

And broadly speaking, these were sort of what you would call liberals and conservatives. The Hillel school thought, yeah, you can divorce for any reason you like. It's okay. Because look, Moses just says, write a bill of divorcement, give it into a hand, and that's it.

And Deuteronomy 24 is their basis for this. Chapter 24 of Deuteronomy, first four verses. When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her.

Then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hates her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

[10 : 59] Or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife. Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled. For that is abomination before the Lord, and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God hath given thee for an inheritance.

That might be surprising to us, in one sense. Because we would think, well, if God is saying that divorce is a bad thing, or is wrong, then surely we treat it as though it doesn't really exist.

And then if the second husband dies, then surely if the first one takes her back again, then he's just restoring what was there before. But God says no in Deuteronomy. God says it, if it has happened, and if she goes and marry somebody else on the basis of that divorce, says it a lot, then you can't have her back again.

You had your chance, that was it. You know, it's like Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 1. If they say, if a man threw away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again?

Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the heart with many lovers. Yet return again unto me, saith the Lord. Now, this is part of also what Jesus is seeking to teach here.

[12 : 10] And whilst they are thinking in terms of what can we as human beings, as men, do, Jesus is constantly trying to turn them back to God. And say, you know, supposing God dealt with you the way that you want to deal with your fellow spouses here.

Isaiah 50, verse 1 says, Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it, to whom I have sold you?

Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Now, you see, what the Lord is saying there is that, you know, you're behaving as though you were no longer mine.

But in truth, I never divorced you. I never cast you off as a people. I never said that you were no longer betrothed, no longer married to me.

So although you're behaving as though you've been put away, and have gone after these other gods and these other nations, I never gave you any such discharge. I never cast you out.

[13:14] Where is the bill of your divorcement? Yet you're behaving as though you had been. But now return to me, says the Lord. So in other words, he's saying, yes, you've been adulterous.

Yes, you've gone away, but come back again. And we'll start over. This is God's attitude to his people. And this is partly what Jesus is seeking to call these fantasies back to.

He's saying, look, if you think about the Lord and how he deals with you, he turns them back to God. From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. This is how you'd want the Lord to deal with you.

This is how you should deal with your wives and, by extension, husbands here. Now, when he says, what did Moses command you? He said, Moses suffered the right of the bill of divorcement.

Absolutely true.

Deuteronomy 24, we've just looked at it. And we might think, well, how can there be these two schools? Either the law is clear or it's not. But it has to be said that whilst one side said it should only ever be for adultery that anybody divorced his wife and that's it.

[14:18] And the other side said, well, no, there might be any number of reasons why things don't go right and you should put it away again. And then start again sort of thing. On the liberal side, we would have to say, in all fairness, that one reason they might think they had a case is that if they were to say, you can't say it's for adultery, that it's okay to divorce somebody.

Because the law of God says that if there's adultery, it's not divorce you should have, it's death. Leviticus 20 and verse 10. The man that committed adultery with another man's wife, even he that committed adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

So if it was adultery and you're going straight by the law of Moses, then it's capital punishment for both. So the situation of divorce doesn't arise. So the liberal element in the Jewish church would say, so it can't be adultery because adultery would mean death.

So it's got to be some other kind of uncleanness. You know, maybe somehow, maybe she just doesn't please him or maybe they don't get along or something else was wrong. And the others would say, no, no, no, it's got to be just adultery.

But they would point to the law and say, no, no, no, it can't be adultery because adultery is death. So there is this disagreement between them. And you could say that it was a live issue because marriage and divorce is a live issue in every culture, in every nation under heaven.

[15:43] One reason that we know it to be an institution of God, not just because the Bible reveals it, but if you think about it, every nation and tribe under heaven.

However, however, however, backward or however isolated might be, when these tribes and these native peoples or whatever are discovered, however isolated they've been from the rest of the world, there will be some system of marriage within those cultures.

It's not just a free for all. Everybody does whatever they like with everybody else. There is some system of marriage and of binding between couples in that sense. So everybody has it.

And you could pretty much say that where the marriage bond is highly valued, there will likewise be a fairly high measure of sexual purity. And where it is not, there will likewise be a greater weight of promiscuity.

It's not for nothing that when Jesus talks about marriage and divorce in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, he talks immediately about divorce immediately after saying, if any of you looks at a woman adulterously, then you've already committed adultery in your heart.

[16:55] If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. If it has been said, whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement. But I say unto you, whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, cause of her to commit adultery.

You see, it's not an accident that Jesus talks about that straight after he's talked about sexual purity and about not lusting after somebody with your eyes and in your heart.

So where sexual purity is maintained, you'll always find that marriage itself is maintained at a high standard. Where marriage is debased and where it becomes degraded, you'll find that promiscuity

and social breakdown is very much the order of the day.

You see that, of course, in our own society as well. Now, part of the problem here is that both sides are disputing what they think Moses meant in the law, as opposed to what God intended at creation.

At creation, marriage is seen not to be a man-made invention, but a divine institution, and therefore to be religiously observed.

[18:09] Any variation on what God has ordained is a deviation from the divine institution, a violation of God's holy ordinance. And we say polygamy, for example, having multiple wives or so-called gay marriage nowadays.

These deviations, these deviations, they are violations, or in some cases nowadays, abominations in his side. Now, Jesus does three things with his answer.

As already mentioned, first of all, he comes down firmly on one side of the argument, the demonstrably, you might say, hardline side, the biblically correct side.

He comes down the side and says, no, you can't do it for anything except adultery, anything except fornication. He doesn't specify that here in Mark. He specifies it in Matthew, but not in Mark.

Mark would have to take, he's effectively saying, not for any cause. He establishes, secondly, what later became a principle of the Reformation.

[19:10] And that is, that if there's any doubt about what one passage of Scripture is saying, you know, if you're looking at a passage, and I thought, well, that could be taken two different ways.

Now, what you do is, you go to another passage that speaks more clearly, and you put the two together, and then it becomes clearer. So, if a passage is in any way obscure or difficult, you go to another passage that speaks on the same subject, and you keep on looking for passages until you've got a picture that builds up.

Because God's word does not contradict itself. God's word is, as the Confession says, not manifold, but one. It's not got multiple different meanings. It's giving one unified truth throughout.

So, Jesus, instead of disputing with them about Deuteronomy 24, he goes back to creation. He goes, not to what Moses says in the law, but to what God says at creation itself.

So, that's the second thing. He opens up this principle of letting Scripture interpret Scripture. Comes down firmly on one side, let Scripture interpret Scripture. And thirdly, he uses, again, as in his parables, physical and recognisable earthly characteristics to illustrate spiritual truth.

[20:29] You know, like he does with the parable of the sword or with the fish caught on the net or whatever. He uses earthly illustrations to illustrate spiritual truth. In this case, the creation of male and female, both in the image of God.

God made man in this image. He made him male and female. Complementary and interdependent. And when I say interdependent, remember what Paul writes to the Corinthians.

When he's talking about, you know, male headship and the fact the man is the head of the family and the head of the woman in that sense. He says, but at the same time, the man can't exist without the woman. Because every man that exists is born of a woman.

And every woman that exists is only able to be born because of the conjunction of her father and mother. And a man has been involved in the conception and then subsequently, of course, the birth of that woman.

So men and women cannot exist independently of each other. We are interdependent in that sense. God has created us to be interdependent and complementary in that sense.

[21:41] Both in the image of God. And without wanting to be indelicate, anatomically designed. Yes, with the possibility of standing alone in, you know, chaste singleness of life as Jesus did.

A very honorable calling for those who are called to that. But ultimately, again, to fit together in the most sacred and intimate union in all of humanity.

From which life itself becomes engendered. We do not anatomically fit with multiple partners.

Nor do we fit with those of the same sex. We are designed by God for one man and one woman to be bound together in this sacred and intimate union.

Which God having ordained, he being above us, man is not to put asunder. Now, encapsulating all of this, as we've mentioned, what Jesus is doing is he is directing the focus away from the desires of man.

[22:52] And back to God and his holy institution. Marriage is not a man-made invention. It is a divine institution.

And therefore, to be religiously observed. If God had dealt with Israel, or with his own people, as man intended to do with the law. You know, Moses is regulating this behavior. That's what Jesus says. For the hardness of your heart. That's why Moses wrote this precept. Or God inspired him to write this precept. He was seeking to regulate, to make less bad that which was already rife.

It's as though, you know, sometimes our governments debate whether or not there should be set aside areas for, you know, for vice to take place in. In the streets of our cities.

And of course, there's big debate. It's controversial. Because on the one hand, they say, well, it's better to have it regulated. And you can get safety. And you can get regulation. And make sure that excesses and abuses don't happen.

[23 : 57] On the other hand, as soon as you regulate something, you've effectively legalized it. You've said it's okay. It's like people saying, oh, we should legalize the drugs trade. Because then we could regulate it.

Then we could tax it. And then we could cut the profits from under the criminals if you regulate it. But if you regulate something, you are legalizing it. You regulate it.

Then you allow people to say, oh, well, we're allowed to do this much. We're allowed to go this far. And this, of course, is the problem. Moses sought to regulate a practice that perhaps threatened to overspill into worse behavior.

Such as, for example, wives just being cast out with no status. And, you know, nobody else could marry them because they were still technically married to somebody else. And there's no way they could go.

Nothing they could do. Nobody could support them. They would starve. Or perhaps even worse. They were allowed to divorce the wives so they wouldn't murder them. You know, perhaps that's getting melodramatic about it.

[24 : 55] But, you know, Moses sought to do this to regulate it. But God is saying, oh, throughout, you've got to recognize in this the relationship between me and my people.

You know, Isaiah saying, where's the bill of your mother's divorce? And Jeremiah saying, come back to me, even though you've wandered away, even though you have played the adulteress. Remember what Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 5.

He says, husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself blood, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. Now, nobody is thinking or suggesting, Jesus certainly isn't suggesting, this is going to become all romantically easy, stars in your eyes and all that sort of stuff.

Love isn't easy. Love, consistent, you know, enduring love is not easy. It's tough. It's difficult because we're all sinners and we're all fallen. But at the end of the day, Jesus says, this is what you should do because this is what God is like for you.

[26 : 08] This is the kind of effort God expends on you. Where marriage is not valued, not only do you have the breakdown in society, but you also have, as we mentioned, promise duty becomes more prevalent.

This is why Jesus mentions it at the end of the sermon and during the Sermon on the Mount. But also, where marriage is not valued, children are not valued. Now, what do we have in our society just now?

We have this complete undermining of the institution of marriage, not only because of the rocketing rates of divorce, but also people not even bothering to get married now, just living together.

We also have gay marriage and all these other things, which are undermining the sanctity of marriage itself. This is going hand in hand with rising abortion rates, the killing of unborn children simply because they are inconvenient, or because they have the wrong gender, or because they are handicapped, or because they have to put downs, or whatever the case may be, any excuse that children may cease to be valued.

Where we have the tragic killing or murdering of infants or young children, you find over the past, take the last five years as an example, time and time and time again, 90% of cases, we must say, if not more, you find that it is the unmarried, live-in boyfriend of the mother, with her children there, who is the culpable person, who's the one who is responsible, most responsible for the death of the

child concerned.

[27 : 45] A one who doesn't feel that sense of ownership or investment of the self. He's just there, he wants the mother, he doesn't really want the kids, but time and time again, this is what the news produces.

And the latest death of a child, of course, reported is from a lesbian couple there. So this is, children are not valued where marriage is not valued.

But what we see now, straight after Jesus has been teaching about marriage like this, they brought young children to him. As Luke points out, Luke chapter 18, verse 15, he brought out infants, some of them were little babies, that he should touch them and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

There's no suggestion these children are ill. There's nothing saying, well, they were diseased and their parents wanted them healed. No, they just want Jesus to touch them. They just want him to bless them. They just want them to know that Jesus is gathering them up in his arms.

They want their children to be close to Jesus. And that is a noble thing for people to want for their children. But the disciples rebuked those that brought them. You know, he's just been teaching them in the previous chapter that if they're going to enter the kingdom of God, they've got to become as little children.

[29 : 00] You know, whosoever shall receive one such child, this is chapter 9, verse 37, in my name receiveth me, took a child, set him in the midst of them. When he had taken him in his arms, he said to them, whosoever receives one of these children receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

So they ought to have got this message. Jesus loves children. It's often the case that those who perhaps don't have the opportunity for biological children of their own, they are extra loving towards children who do want to be near them.

It warms their heart. All of us have our hearts warmed if a little child takes to us or smiles at us or whatever. You know, we love to have the attention of little children. Jesus is no different here.

He was much displeased. Now this is one of the strongest expressions of anger or, you know, disapproval that we have coming from Jesus anywhere in Scripture.

You might think, oh, come on, that's a bit steep. You know, what about when he says to Peter, get thee behind me, Satan? We don't read that Jesus is angry then. What about when he makes the whip of small cords and he drives out the money changers from the temple?

[30 : 09] We don't actually read that Jesus is raging with anger then either. Probably we should understand these as being cold and determined prejudged decisions of Jesus.

He intends to drive out the money changers. He intends that it be done cold-bloodedly and determinedly. This temple ought to be house of prayer. This ought to be clean.

It should not have these things in it. But we don't read that he's raging when he does it. But this he is much displeased. He is effectively angry with his disciples for keeping the children away from him.

And he said of them, suffer the little children. Allow the little children to come unto me. Forbid them not, but of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter there.

Now we pass over this word verily. I think that's just the way Jesus said things. It's literally, both in the Greek and in the Hebrew, it's the word amen. It means certainly, truly.

[31 : 14] We are accustomed to putting it at the end of prayers. And at the end of a statement, Jesus quite often puts it at the beginning of things that he says. In John's account of the gospel, it's doubled.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, amen, amen, I say to you. Certainly you may rely upon what I am saying. It's what he means. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. And this is Jesus demonstrating the value, the love that he bears for our little children.

Now, if Jesus so welcomes little children, if he so embraces that and loves them, how can we say, well, he doesn't actually want them to have the benefit of his teaching or his blessings or whatever. Of course he does. This is why Christian parents or those who desire a Christian upbringing for their child do bring them to Jesus. Even in their infancy, they are brought within his covenant family.

[32 : 19] They are, we trust, taught from the youngest of ages the things of Jesus, that he may be able to enfold them, as it were, in his arms. Don't forbid them.

Don't send them away. Don't say, oh, it's only grown-ups that matter. It's only those who are able to make a decision for themselves that matter. For all the formative years of our lives, when we are young, decisions are taken for us.

We know what car my father buys, he doesn't consult me about it. What payments he makes the mortgage on the house I grew up in, he didn't consult me about it. What clothes I might get, I often didn't get consulted about.

You know, what my mum makes for tea, well, I didn't get consulted about. All the time, the bills that get paid, the responsibilities get met, the decisions my parents take, I didn't get consulted about. And yet, I was a direct beneficiary of these things.

They were done so that our home would be protected, so the bills would be paid, so that we could continue as a family. I didn't get asked. I was protected, I was guided, I was helped, I was nurtured, and I didn't have a sin in any of it.

[33 : 25] But I never doubted the love that was being expended for me in ways that I didn't even know about. So likewise, when we nurture our children in the things of Christ, we don't necessarily ask them, now, is this what you think you would like to do?

We teach them. We do what is right by them. We seek to guide and instruct them in the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Yes, they may reject it when they are older.

They may turn against it when they are of an age to do so, just as you find a great many people, you know, turning against whatever their parents did for them and showing such lack of gratitude for all that has been done for them.

But it doesn't, you know, it doesn't reflect well on the individual because a lot is done for us when we are young. A lot is done for us when we are children. And it beholds us to honour our father and mother, to recognise that.

But Jesus here values the little children. He brings them to himself. He blesses them. Where children are not valued, society is breaking down.

[34 : 31] We see that around us. And the reason society is breaking down, the reason the bricks are coming out of the wall is because we have taken out the cement, the glue of the gospel that holds our society together.

We have taken away the Christian foundation to our laws, to our education, to our government, to our parliament. And we've said, we can manage fine without it. And then we find, we have been building on sand.

And the house is coming down around us. And society is breaking down in people's lives, whether young or old. Because the elderly, of course, they want to bring in euthanasia for them too, don't they?

So we can do away with the young in the womb. We can do away with the elderly and the firm at the other end of the scale. Pretty much, it's going to shrink down and down and down. Who is allowed to live? Who is allowed to continue?

Only if they're profitable. Only if they're strong. Only if they are the master of grace. What is next? You know, what is it that we decide allows people to have the dignity of being made in the image of God?

[35 : 36] We have lost the plot when we have lost the gospel, when we have lost the focus upon Christ. And so often it's easy to do to lose the focus.

Just as the next incident of this young man does who comes to Jesus, he is sincere, he is seeking, he wants to know Jesus' answer.

When he was gone forth into the way, again we can miss this little detail, that Jesus is now having been assigned out of the main road up to Jerusalem, now he's coming back into the main road, into the way.

It means the main road to Jerusalem. So it's a public thoroughfare. It's probably crowded with people going to Jerusalem for the Passover. And here is this young man coming.

When he was gone forth, there came one running and kneeled to him. Now Matthew tells us that he was a young man, that he's not ashamed, he's not afraid to come to Jesus and show his zeal and his love for him.

[36 : 42] The young man saith unto him, all these things I have kept from my youth. Luke tells us he was a ruler, a ruler of the synagogue, so he is achieved highly in his society, in his culture, in the synagogue.

He is respected for his piety. He is in a position of preeminent respect. But here he is running to Jesus. Here he is nearing to him on the open road in full view of everyone.

He doesn't care about his dignity. He wants to know what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good?

There is none good but one that is God. Jesus is not denying that he is God. He is testing this man's faith. Saying, You call me good? Do you understand who is good?

Do you understand why you are calling me good if there is none good but one that is God? That was the commands. He answered and said, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

[37 : 42] Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come take up the cross and follow me.

There is such a contrast here with this young man compared to, for example, what we find a couple of pages earlier where you've got a lawyer in Matthew's account of the gospel, I think it is, where you've got a lawyer that asks him, you know, well, who is my neighbour and what must I do to inherit eternal life?

But he's standing, he's questioning Jesus, he's sort of interrogating him. This man is sincere, he is kneeling at Jesus' feet, he wants to know the answer. Jesus beholding him loved him but he's put his finger on the one thing that's stopping him, one thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come, take up the cross and follow me.

Now Jesus is not just being unkind, he's not just saying to this man, look, you go and celebrate, these guys, they don't have to, you know, they can carry on with the back, I'm saying to you, you've got to do this, I'm picking on you, I'm going to make you sell all that you've got.

What Jesus is doing is he's, without saying it explicitly, he knows that, you know, come the resurrection, come the acts of the apostles, the disciples, how are they going to survive?

[39 : 14] They're going to survive by those who have wealth and who have money, selling what they've got and laying it at the apostles' feet and distributing it to everybody so that nobody has need. They're going to find it in times of persecution, perhaps they're going to be imprisoned or some of them will be executed, they're going to lose everything they have then anyway.

You know, the time is going to come, this is what Jesus knows, the time is going to come when those who follow him are going to have to sit lightly to their goods anyway. In other words, if you're really going to be my disciple, this is going to be required of you sooner or later.

Are you ready to part with this if it means you get eternal life? Are you ready to let go of the life and blessings and good things of this world to gain the eternal ones to come?

Because sooner or later it will be required of you. Sooner or later, somebody is going to say, who do you love more, Christ or this thing? What is the highest thing on your agenda?

What is the highest top of your priority list? Is it your home or is it Christ? Is it your wife and kids or Christ? Is it your job or Christ? Is it your wealth, your bank account or Christ?

[40 : 25] Most of us don't end up having to make those decisions. But Jesus puts this man right in the spotlight. And because he knows that those who follow him sooner or later will be called upon to part with the things of this world.

He says, well, are you ready to do that? Are you prepared to part with what you've got? One thing thou lackest, go thy way. Sell whatsoever thou hast. Give to the poor.

Thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come, take up the cross and follow me. He was sad at that saying and he went away grieved for he had great possessions. Luke tells us he was rich.

Personally, I think this description is better. He had great possessions he had many things in this world but so far he didn't have Christ. We don't know if this man subsequently later came to Jesus. We don't know if he subsequently converted during the time of the Acts of the Apostles. We don't know anything about him. All we know is he goes off into the sunset still not having received Christ but still holding fast to what he had in this world.

[41 : 29] And how long would he hold it for? And how long will we hold on to what we have here? And how long can we continue in our Galilee before we have to bid it farewell?

All the things of this world we will be parted from sooner or later. But if we embrace Christ and come to him as little children we will be enfolded in his arms and from him we will never be separated either in time or in eternity.
Let us pray.