



## **Matthew 19:27–30**

27 Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” 28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife

or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

## **Reflection**

(Today's reflection is given by Craig Tubman)

We find ourselves at the end of a very unsettling interaction between the rich young ruler and Jesus. Remember back on Wednesday when we started this section that Matthew has placed this event right alongside Jesus' praise of the children. Those who are totally reliant on others – children – placed up against one who is totally reliant on himself – the rich young

ruler.

And this is all very unsettling because the rich young ruler is a genuinely good guy. He is clean cut, he is rich, he is moral, he is the kind of guy you dream your daughters will marry! But here he is being rebuked by Jesus and walking away sad, not entering God's kingdom.

If you don't find that even just a little confronting, then I suggest you go back and read this section again. For the disciples who were there that day, it would have been even more so! They're thinking, 'Jesus has just rebuked someone we thought would be a shoe-in to enter God's kingdom – what about us? And so Peter speaks up, 'Jesus, we have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?'

“We have left everything to follow you”

What does that mean? I take it that these disciples have left employment, their family, their home towns and their pre-planned vision of what their life would look like in order to follow Jesus – firstly as their Rabbi but as time progressed as their Lord.

“We have left everything to follow you”

Balanced against the rich young ruler who would not leave his wealth and status for Jesus, the disciples find themselves more aligned with the children Jesus was speaking about earlier than the man they had just met. And Jesus will go on to affirm their choice with some pretty grand and

intense future promises.

“We have left everything to follow you”

Now as we listen in on this conversation in Matthew 19 it's easy for us to say, 'Well, we can't actually follow Jesus like the disciples did, he hasn't come past my workplace and asked me to down tools, or to drop my Excel spreadsheet and follow him, so I guess this doesn't directly apply to me.' And you'd be right to say that Jesus has not personally walked past your office like he walked past Peter and John in their boats and called out to them 'follow me'.

But perhaps a better question to ask is this, 'What aren't you willing to leave for the sake of following and honouring Jesus?' This isn't a call for us all to quit our

jobs and take mission work in Africa, or re-train ourselves to lead churches, or start up a new organisation that serves the poor and the church. But then again.....maybe it should be!?

Maybe we are all a little too comfortable like the rich young ruler and while we don't need to go on the mission field or invest our money in Christ honouring ventures **to prove our saving faith in Jesus**, perhaps that's exactly what God is calling us to do with the gifts, money and life he has given us.

I know people of great wealth who have invested that wealth in building new churches here in Sydney, as in actually paying for the construction of new buildings. I know of men and woman who have stepped out

of their career in law, engineering, teaching and medicine to retrain as ministers and serve full-time in churches across Sydney. I know of a guy who was well set up in Sydney at a top private school who left his job and moved his family to Hong Kong to serve the church there at St Andrew's Kowloon. I know another who gave up the same career to move to France and start ministering the Gospel of Jesus to uni students in Paris, which these days is increasingly less romantic and more dangerous. My own brother had a good teaching job, was rewarded with the NSW Young Teacher of the Year Award in 1999 and left it all, moved to South Africa to train in ministry and build stronger outreach to the youth in Cape Town – he's been there 16 years.

Maybe we are all a little too comfortable

like the rich young ruler and we need to hear these words from the disciples, “We have left everything to follow you.” What aren’t you willing to leave for the sake of following and honouring Jesus? Because whatever it is, that is what God wants to work at releasing your grip on. Whatever that thing is, it’s made a promise to you and you are clinging onto that promise. The work of the Holy Spirit is to release your grip on it and strengthen your faith in the promises of God.

That’s exactly what Jesus moves onto here with the disciples. They have given up everything to follow him and in his own words, “they will receive a hundred times as much and eternal life”. You see Jesus in his discussion with the disciples moves directly to what he calls ‘the renewal of



all things'. He moves straight to reminding them of the day when he will return a second time not to bear the sins of the world but to renew the world and establish those who have accepted his rescue forever.

What the rich young ruler couldn't see is that in the renewal of all things, his personal wealth will no longer hold value. And I guess Jesus is asking us, 'Do you want the glory now for a short, finite period or do you want glory later, which lasts forever?'

What Jesus promises his disciples here is quite extraordinary. That for them, on the final day, they will assist Jesus himself in bringing judgement – both good and bad on the people of God. That is certainly one aspect of the disciples' ministry that is different to our own. For the rest of us,

Jesus has assured that whatever we give up now for him and his kingdom we will receive back more than double in the new creation. That's our promise to hold on to. For the disciples, there is even more.

We started this chapter with little children who will enter the kingdom of God, we met a rich young ruler who should have been an immediate kingdom of God entrant but was denied and we finish with a picture of the renewal of all things and a challenge from Jesus about what we honestly think really matters in life. What a chapter of Scripture!

## **Think & Pray**

Take some time today to meditate upon your Christian faith. Jesus calls us to fol-

low him and let God's kingdom shape our view of everything – our passions, our investments, our time, our conversations and our actions. Perhaps find some space for yourself today to think about what you might be most reluctant to give up in order following Jesus? Is there anything that you're holding on to just a little bit too tightly?

Pray about why this is and meditate over what promise you think that particular thing is making to you. Is it more attractive to you than Jesus' promise of the renewal of all things? Allow yourself to be unsettled. And speak to God in prayer.