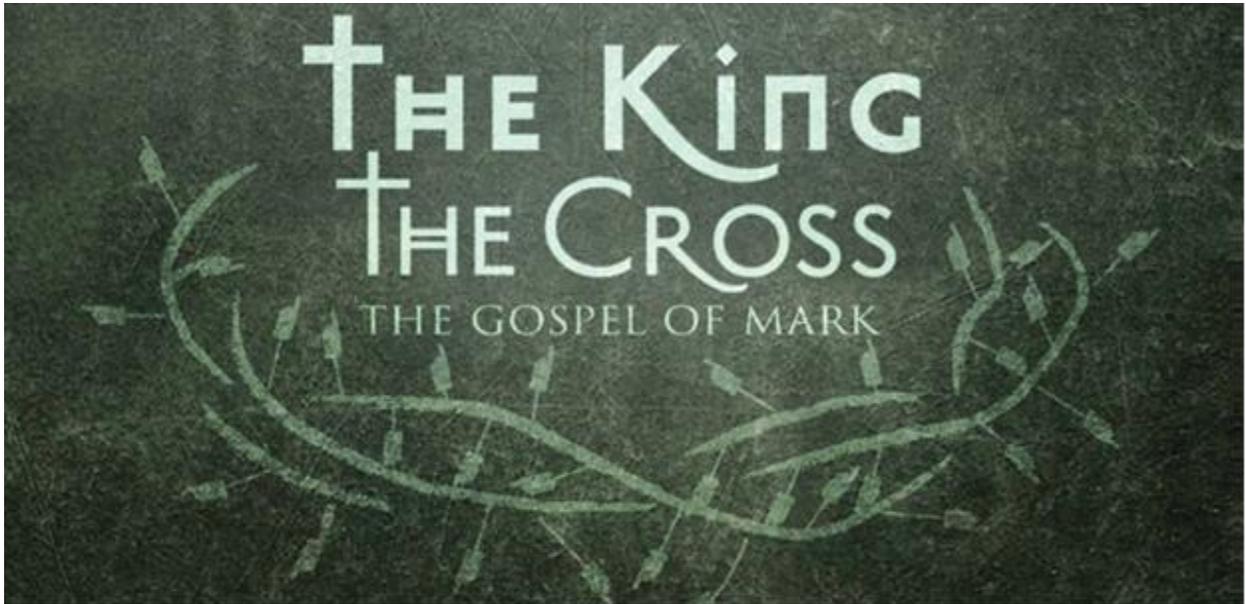


The King-The Cross - Part 8
Sermon Series on the Gospel of Mark
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
July 22, 2018

TEXT: Mark 10:1-34



Good morning, Beloved. It is a privilege to open God's Word together this morning. We praise God for this summer series on the Gospel of Mark. We are looking at the Gospel of Mark: *The King-The Cross*, and together in this series we have been challenging one another in our church community to engage in intentional evangelistic outreach. This has been one-on-one, small group, workplace, family, discipleship, and I want to share with you just one small window of a conversation I had yesterday. It was a special day for us as we remembered our dear sister Ruth McGregor who is with the Lord and served this church and loved this church for many, many years. The Lord gave us probably the only window of time in recent memory that we could have actually met outside. The memorial service was in the shelter house, it was cool, with a divine breeze and low humidity. Kurt Backlund said right that after he finished packing up and putting things away, the rain came. We praise God for this gift. Within the conversation during that celebration of Ruth's life, one of our church members grabbed me. She was glowing even before the conversation began, and she shared a story with me of her brother's coming to trust Jesus Christ in just recent days. She shared how this happened and the miracles around it. Brothers and sisters, this has been our prayer for this whole series. We started praying that 10 people would come to trust Christ this summer in and through all of you, and we are seeing this

happen. I want to praise God for that. It is encouraging to me and the other members of the church leadership that we are taking Christ's words seriously and seeking to share, and He will bless that.

Let's take His Word seriously together this morning in Mark 10. We have been looking through the lens of the Gospel of Mark through a resource called *Christianity Explored*. *Christianity Explored's* sub-question is: *What's the best news you've ever heard?* There are three questions in this inductive study of the Gospel of Mark, and you should be familiar with these questions by this point: "Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus come? and What does it mean for us?" I keep urging you to write those down. They are great questions. We began the series with a clear answer in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus is the Promised King. He is the King God Himself would promise to send, who would put everything right by setting up the kingdom of righteousness and love. Jesus is the Promised King and sets up the kingdom of God. It is the reign of God, the rule of God. It is turning everything in this world that's upside down and setting it right side up. Why did Jesus come? We looked at this last week in detail. Jesus came to be rejected, to be killed, and to rise again. Jesus came to absorb the wrath of God against the sin of the world, to absorb our rejection of God, our upside-downness, our sin, our rebellion. Jesus came to take the worst act of injustice that has ever happened on the planet, which is human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, killing and condemning their Savior. It is the worst thing that has ever happened, and when people raise the question of the problem of evil or what is so terrible in this world, that should be the first thing that comes to your mind. That is the worst thing that has ever happened, and yet Jesus came to take our rejection, to die in our stead, and to rise again. The heart of the gospel is life that's offered to us in light of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The third question, "What does it mean for us?" is the question that we will center on this morning. What does it mean for us that Jesus is the King? Is that something that you can relate to with indifference? What does it really mean for us that Jesus was rejected, killed and rose? Does this affect us? Does it have a meaning? Does it change our lives? I believe that it does. *Christianity Explored* expresses it this way: "So, today, right now, Jesus is inviting people to come into His kingdom." That's what it means for us. In other words, it means that Jesus Christ is alive and that He is inviting people into His kingdom. Now, there are conditions for entering the kingdom. Again, *Christianity Explores* says: "He tells us to repent and believe the Good News." "Repent" is an offensive word for so many. Repent means that you have to say what is very hard for adults to say. It's hard for children to say. It's that phrase. Sometimes we say it's two words, but it's really three: "I am sorry." It's so hard. It's so hard to say that, isn't it? I'm wrong. I've sinned. I've preferred lesser things. Sometimes we think of this as just what we've done to offend God. But, you know that sin in the Bible is also omitting to do things that we

should do. What is the greatest commandment according to Jesus Christ? The greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Have we done that? Jesus calls us to repent and believe, and then Jesus invites us to live a life, the life of the kingdom, a life of deep security, satisfaction, and joy. What does it mean for us? It means that since Jesus is the King, since He was rejected, killed, and rose again, Jesus is alive and is inviting people into His kingdom today, not just back then, but today. Coming into His kingdom means that you have to turn from some pseudo-direction that you're facing, some off-direction, some misdirection, some place where sin has a hold of your life and you're not walking in the right way. You have to turn and believe in Him, and then you can live the life of the King. That's what it means. That's a pretty profound meaning, and really that's what we want to see in our passage this morning.

In Mark 10, there are three interactions that Jesus has with people along the road, and in each of these interactions, there is a subtext of conversation with the disciples—that is, those who are already following Jesus—to clarify the meaning of His interaction with them. Keep your Bible open, and let's look at Mark 10. I want us to follow Jesus as He invites people into His kingdom, and this will be profoundly instructive for us. Mark 10:1 says:

“And He left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to Him again. And again, as was His custom, He taught them.”

He has come down from Galilee and moved into Judea. Now He is taking the pilgrimage route across the Jordan, preparing to come up to Jerusalem. We read that crowds gathered to Him, or literally, Mark says that the crowds were co-traveling with Him, which I really like because that means that people are walking with you and alongside you all the time.

You may be a classic American who really likes personal space. You like about four feet of personal space. My wife grew up in Greece, and Greeks have a very different sense of personal space, and they have a very different sense of what a line looks like. We went to Starbucks the other day. We walked into Starbucks and we had to close the door right behind us because the line went all the way to the door. The problem was that there were only seven people in the line, which meant that each person had about three feet in front of them, lest, I mean lest anyone peer over your shoulder and maybe obtain secret information. That's the culture we're in. I need this bubble because you might see my password, or who knows what. So, one line, seven people covering a space of about 26 to 28 feet. My wife just looked at that and said, “I don't get it. It looks crowded, but it isn't.” In Greece, that same space would accommodate 30 to 40 customers, double, triple wide, a mob scene with highly skilled serving of the coffee. The crowds are traveling with Jesus, rubbing shoulders with Him along the way. It's not that they gathered to Him. It's that they are traveling with Him. People are around you, so if you're going

to share Christ. At one level you have to be comfortable with people around you, and Jesus was. It didn't bother Him that there were crowds of people walking together with Him, and as was His custom, He was teaching them. He was teaching them as they were going, as they were walking, as they were living, and in Mark 10:2, we meet our first group:

“And Pharisees came up and in order to test Him asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’”

So, all of a sudden in this pilgrimage crowd, we have a subgroup. Notice that it is a group. It's not an individual; it's a cluster of Bible Study Fellowship teachers, small-group leaders, and all the sudden they come into focus. It's the adult Sunday School teachers, and they gather around Jesus. It's the long-term churchgoing folks who have deep familiarity with the Scripture, and they've got a question, and they come into focus.

The Pharisees were a lay-movement in the first century. There were about 6,000 Pharisees in the first century, and they highly valued a Scripture interpretation and study as a means to discern the right praxis. The works of the Pharisees, the thoughts of the Pharisees, were preserved in the first century. They were largely an oral body of teaching. That body of teaching was written down after the New Testament period in what is called the *Mishnah* or the *repeated teaching*. The Pharisees themselves call this the *Oral Torah*. You have the written text and then you have the oral tradition, that is the commentary.

One of the major divisions of the *Mishnah* is precisely on the topic of women and the topic of divorce and remarriage. So it was a major topic. You know the divorce rate in the United States today is 51%, the same as in the Roman world in the first century. They asked Jesus: “Is it lawful, is it permitted for a man to divorce his wife?” It was a topic that was heavily discussed, and notice the question comes, as I said, from the small-group leaders, the Sunday School teachers. Sometimes I am accosted in the narthex, and sometimes I get caught with a question of Bible study leaders with their favorite passage or top issue: What translation do you prefer? What's your eschatological view? What is your opinion on baptism, infant baptism, women in ministry? Who is your favorite preacher? That's always an awkward one for me to answer. What do you think about the new perspective? I'm interested in evolution, creation, millennial views. What is the relationship between the sovereignty of God and human decision? Those are fun narthex questions, and they often come from Bible study people. Very few visitors ask those questions. But, notice that the question is about a theological topic. It's a Bible study question, and Jesus answers the person who is coming from this point of view. He answers in good rabbinic fashion with a question. Somebody asks you a question, you can always just ask a question in return to buy yourself some time. Jesus doesn't need extra time, but He does know that by asking the question in return, that will bring to light where someone is coming from.

When I get a difficult question like that or a topic issue type question, I will often ask a question, an introductory question like: "Tell me why that is so important to you." It's a safe question, and it helps me know what we are really talking about, because often times when someone brings up a Bible passage, there's another topic really in view. Why is that so important to you? Tell me a little bit about that.

Jesus answers: "What did Moses command you?" and they answer: "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." If you're looking at this in the original text, it says a book of divorce, this word can mean just a document. So, they answer with the issue that's behind the question. The real issue has now come to light. They say that divorce is permitted. That's really what the question is behind the question. Moses allows divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1. They don't give the full citation, because the full citation includes the phrase that divorce is permitted if the husband has found indecency in his spouse. This is the only biblical criterion for divorce, that if there is unfaithfulness, and unfaithfulness is not just in our intimate lives, but unfaithfulness to the covenant bond. This is the only provision in Scripture. Jesus says to them, though, startlingly, in Mark 10:5:

"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."

All Bible Study Fellowship small-group leaders, and Sunday School teachers are offended now. Do you feel that? All regular churchgoing people are thinking: "Hey, I'm a small-group leader, and you just told me that God's Word is due to the fact that my heart is hard." You see, Jesus is inviting people into His kingdom. That's what we said in the beginning, and that means that we have to repent and believe. That means that in every one of these interactions, there's a call to repentance, and here is a call to repentance away from saying: "Yeah, I know the Bible well, and Jesus, I just want You to agree with my opinion so I can keep living the life that I live." We often will invite Jesus to agree with us so there's no change required of us. Jesus says: "Let's talk Bible." He could have said: "You know, I wrote it." Jesus says from the beginning of creation: "Let's talk Bible. Let's talk about it." "From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female," Genesis 1:27. This is the only place on the planet where you can be told that human beings, men and women, are made in the image and likeness of God. Men and women, male and female, together are the creation of God, and God made them both. Jesus continues in Mark 10:7-8:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh."

You may recall the sermon series we preached in January on the meaning of marriage and that this idiom, "the two shall become one flesh," is actually the language of kinship, that they have become one family, that God has done something in bringing these two together and made them a new family. Jesus says they are no longer two separate families, but they are one. They

have a kinship relationship. That's why marriage is called a miracle, something only God can do. Jesus says in Mark 10:9:

"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

This has a very sharp point as a comment to the Pharisees, because remember that the word Pharisee *pharise* in Hebrew means *to separate*. It means to be separate from everything ritually unclean, and Jesus says at the end that there is a separation that really matters.

The issue behind the Bible study leader's question was actually about when can I do what I really want to do? Let's split the theological hairs to a degree that allows me to do what I really want to do, and Jesus presses inside that and reveals the discipleship issue which is about a radical commitment to faithfulness. With the disciples in private, Jesus says to them in Mark 10:11-12:

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

That's really strong a statement, isn't it? In another place, Jesus does grant that permission for divorce on the grounds of unfaithfulness, but here with the disciples, in a very clear and concise dramatic statement, Jesus urges His disciples that the life of the kingdoms rooted in marital fidelity, and that faithfulness must be pursued. In other words, the question: "Is it okay to divorce?" is the wrong question. The question really is: "How can I pursue kingdom faithfulness in my marriage?"

The next group that comes rushing up to Jesus is a group of kids. A group of kids rushes up to Jesus. In Mark 10:13, it appears that their parents and grandparents are bringing them, although the text is a little ambiguous. They are bringing children to Him that He might touch them or bless them. So, it was a quick, hard turn from a scholarly discussion on the meaning of the Bible in Genesis and Deuteronomy, and all of a sudden a group of kids is coming up and their parents and grandparents are bringing them, and you know what happens when a large group of kids comes in. It's hard to discuss Genesis and Deuteronomy in detail. The kids come, and kids are loud, and the disciples rebuked the parents: "You're in the wrong service. Kids are allowed in the service just up until this point. I've got to hear the sermon. I need to focus on the worship, and your loud son or daughter may be cute to you, but it's distracting to me." One of the former pastors of Kenwood, Dave Hansen, a mentor and a beloved friend, came over to our house once and he was asking Christine a question about inaugurated eschatology, and our kids were wailing. I was feeling awkward. I was new on staff, and I wanted him to see my house really is normally under control. He sensed my unease, and he looked me right in the eye and said, "If you can't talk about inaugurated eschatology with wailing kids in the background, you're nothing." Parents, grandparents, it never distracts me when I'm preaching if I hear a

child cry. I want the children in the service with their families. It never distracts me. Some people say, "Well, the kids shouldn't be in here because they aren't going to understand everything you're saying." I don't understand everything either and neither do you. So, that's not a good criterion. Jesus saw this, and this is one of the few moments in the Gospels where Jesus gets upset with us, strongly. Jesus is upset when we think to exclude children and keep them far from Him. Jesus says in Mark 10:14:

"Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

Then He says to us in Mark 10:15:

"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

To the scholars in the previous paragraph, Jesus said: "If we want to talk about the Bible, let's talk about what the whole Bible says." To those thinking to exclude the children, He says: "You have got to enter the kingdom like this, like a child—receptive and open and humble." Then Jesus, in a very beautiful scene, takes the children in His arms and puts His hand on them and blesses them.

The third and final interaction in our text this morning is not a group of Bible study leaders. It's not a group of children. It is just one man who emerges from the crowd, and Mark is explicit to say that one particular individual man ran up to Jesus. In Mark 10:17, we read:

"And as He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"

This is a great question. "Eternal life, the age to come, the kingdom of God, what do I need to do, good teacher?" We expect Jesus to compliment him, and yet Jesus says to him in Mark 10:18:

"Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

Jesus sees something in him that we don't yet see. This is not a statement of Jesus' lack of goodness or lack of divinity. It's a statement to this man in this conversation that is bringing to light something going on inside this man. Jesus goes on to say in Mark 10:19:

"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.'"

Jesus quotes a number of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5, and this man says in Mark 10:20:

"Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."

Then the interaction takes a very decisive turn in Mark 10:21. It's actually my favorite line in

this text. Jesus looked at him. Mark says He looked into him and He “loved him.” He looked into him and He saw that there was something that was blocking him from entering the Kingdom, and He didn't loathe that thing, but seeing it He loved him enough to tell him the truth. He says in Mark 10:21b:

“You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Scholars and commentators over the centuries have been puzzled by what the one thing is that he lacks, because Jesus gave him four verbs. Does he lack going? He is on the road. Whatever you have, sell, give it. Is he hoarding? Is he unsure about treasure in heaven? Or is it the last verb, “Come, follow Me”? I think it is what he has that has occupied his heart to such a degree that it is blocking him from following Jesus. Whatever is hindering you and preventing you from following Jesus, Jesus says to get rid of it. Sometimes we are in a relationship that we know isn't a good one, and we are unwilling to get rid of it because we prefer the comfort that it gives temporarily. Sometimes our things make us feel secure and comfortable or make us feel like we have a certain status and value before God, and it's blocking us from following Christ. Jesus says: “Whatever you have that's preventing you from following Me get rid of it.” That's a challenge, isn't it? It was a challenge to this man, In Mark 19:22, we read:

“Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

The word that Mark uses here literally says that he was *startled*—What! It means that Jesus saw right into it and saw the thing that was blocking him from following the Lord, and said: “Just get rid of it.” And he was startled, and then he left, sad. Brothers and sisters, friends, don't leave your interaction with Jesus sad.

What does it mean for us? It means that Jesus invites us to enter the kingdom; we have to repent and believe; and then we get to enter into life. Repentance always feels a little challenging, doesn't it? But it comes with that promise of life. The disciples are stunned. Jesus says to them in Mark 10:25 that it is difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom:

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

This is what preachers call homiletical hyperbole. It's fun. It's a great image, actually. Now, sometimes you may have heard people say there was a side door or gate that was the camel door. That's desperate preachers trying to find an archaeological basis for a biblical metaphor. It's as obvious as it looks. Camels heavily loaded have a hard time going through gates. It is like Pompeii the Great who insisted on celebrating a triumph over his African conquests, and he was told: “You're too young to celebrate a triumphant.” He said: “Well, I've conquered in Africa and I want a triumphant.” They said: “Okay, you can be third in the procession.” So, he showed

up for the parade riding an elephant. “I’ll be third, but, by the way, this what I did.” Everybody was saying, “Wow, you’re awesome,” and then when he got to the gate of the city, it was slightly less awesome because the elephant can’t go through the gate! So, he had to get off it. It’s hard to go into the kingdom when you’re heavily loaded down with other things, but Jesus says to us in Mark 10:27:

“With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”

Do you believe that? Do you believe that it is possible with God for anyone to enter the kingdom?

Jumping down to Mark 10:31, Jesus says: “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” Pastor Scott mentioned in his sermon a few weeks ago how the response to the kingdom is surprising. The people that we expect to respond sometimes don’t. The people that we think will never been a respond often do, and Jesus wisely reminds us that you can’t tell and I can’t tell. Many of those who seem first or close to the kingdom, they are the last ones to finally come, and many who seem like the last person in the world who would believe come rushing first in line. Jesus is inviting people into His kingdom.

What does it mean for us? That is the third question from *Christianity Explored*. It means Jesus is inviting people into His kingdom today. How does He do that? He does that largely through you. In fact, just on statistical probability, the congregation has an exponentially greater opportunity every week to share Christ than pastors. People are often vaccinated against pastors, and yet Jesus invites people through you. Let me call you to action briefly.

Firstly, I want to remind you from this passage that **most of life and ministry takes place along the road**. It’s in the everyday living; it’s in the everyday moving; it’s in the crowds of people—someone sitting next to you at work or on a bus or a subway or on an airplane, or someone who gathers with you at a neighborhood barbecue or a community swim meet. It’s an opportunity to rub shoulders with people around you and to notice them. So, number one, I want you to feel empowered: I’m on the road; I’m on it! We are together on a road to the new Jerusalem; we are on the pilgrimage road, and there are millions of people all around.

Secondly, I want you to notice that in this passage **people of all different types are drawn to Jesus**. They are being drawn to Jesus. The Pharisees are coming up to Jesus; the children are coming up to Jesus; this one man is coming up to Jesus. Sometimes we feel a pressure that I have to get someone to be interested in Jesus. That’s not our job. Jesus is interesting. People are already interested. They are already coming, Notice that Jesus doesn’t send out the disciples in advance of Him and tell them to try to drum up a crowd and tell them a few things

about Him so that they might be interested. They're going and people are interested. Do you believe that? I really believe that.

The third call to action for us this morning is that **the third question always has to be asked.** The third question is, "What does it mean for us?" It is not enough to give information out about Jesus. It is really not enough just to say what a difference Jesus has made in your life. The third question includes the person that you're talking to. What does it mean for us puts you in that category, but it includes them. What does it mean for us? We answer that story, that question, with sensitivity to the person that we are talking with. For the Bible study leader, you have got to be willing to talk Bible, but let's talk about what it really means and what God requires of us. Let's not talk about Bible in a way that says Jesus has confirmed my opinion so there's no change required of me. For the children, it means making room in your life for a little bit of chaos and temporary disorder and disruption that helps us to see the state of heart required to enter the kingdom. For this one man with many possessions, it means seeing into people and loving them after you see what's keeping them back. There's a great temptation to look into people, see what's holding them back from the kingdom, and judge them for that. Jesus looks in, sees what's holding this man back, and loves him enough to tell the truth.

I had lunch last week with a family at Kenwood. We were having a great conversation getting to know each other, talking Bible theology. It was sort of an off-time of the restaurant so there weren't a lot of people there. There was actually just one other person in this section of the restaurant, and this young man was sitting at a table next to ours. We were having a grand time, and then this man at the table next to ours interrupted us, and he said: "Excuse me. Can I just ask how the conversation that you're having is enhancing your experience of the Divine?" That was an awesome question from the next table, and it was really moving for us, because we all just switched gears and began to talk with this man. It was clear that he was someone seeking after God, raised with some exposure to Christianity, but had walked away from it. He had suffered in his life things that were fearful and dreadful, and he was looking inside of himself for the truth and for the answers. It was just so exciting, and I watched the family I was with. We didn't have time to call a play or anything. We didn't have time to sit down and strategize. It was real time; it was "along the road," and we each tried to share. I'm verbose and long-winded, so I told the story, and then the family I was with, they were more just wanting to get to the key issue. I thought, "That's good! You keep talking." It was very powerful. God is working all around us, and we see that in our text today. Let's be open to how God will use us and have the courage to answer the third question: "What does this mean for us?" Let's pray.

Dear Lord Jesus, we honor You and praise You. You are holy; You are righteous; You are good. Lord, it is our privilege to be with You in Your presence. It is our privilege, Lord, to watch You

interact with people and invite them Into Your kingdom. Lord, I thank You that You have invited each of us as well. Lord, if there are some here today who need to repent and believe, would You open their hearts, even right now. Lord, if there are others who are struggling to enter fully into the life of the kingdom and there is something holding them, set them free, and Lord, may all of us be like children coming to You for blessing, and would You put Your hand upon us and bless us, for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God.

Amen.