

## Final Prayer

Lord God, Your marvellous presence empowers us to do things beyond our normal capabilities! May we be humble enough to give You the glory for all the great things You do through us, and give us hope that nothing can ever stop us from receiving a glorious inheritance from Your hand. Thank You Lord God, AMEN.

## Prayer

You are my heart's longing and its happiness, Lord Jesus;  
The complete and only food and drink of life, and life eternal!  
Praise You, O my Lord, I Praise You!

My soul's desire is to see its Maker, I long to see my God;  
And find that precious peaceful unity, a communion of our spirits.  
Praise You, O my Lord, I Praise You!

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: The gifts of the Spirit

*Pray today that the controversial gifts such as 'tongues' and 'words of knowledge' will be accepted by people with open minds about how God chooses to bless His people.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for the elections taking place in the USA*
- *Give thanks for the joy of Christian fellowship*
- *Pray about advertising and its influence on young people*

## Meditation

What do you expect of life?  
What do you expect of the Lord?

Will He fling open the doors of possibility  
And lead you on a journey of discovery  
As exciting and challenging as it is possible to imagine  
To pioneer some new growth within the Kingdom of God ?

Or will He open your cautious eyes  
To the call He has already placed in front of you;  
The patient and exacting work of being faithful  
When all around you are bored and want to be different?

Or will He open up a route for you alone,  
Which is not found in drama or in doggedness;  
But in daring to touch both the world and the heart of God,  
To connect the unsaved world around you with its Saviour?

Whatever you are called to do, it is important.  
Exploration, persistence, and unique endeavour  
Unite to make the mission of God's glorious church,  
When functioning in harmony for the Gospel of our Lord

## Bible Study - Matthew 19:27-30

<sup>27</sup> Then Peter answered, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. Will we receive anything?' <sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Amen, I tell you, when all creation is renewed and the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup> And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or

*mother or children or fields, for the sake of my Name, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life.* <sup>30</sup> *However, many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'*

## Review

This passage takes the teaching of Jesus about access to the Kingdom of God further than before, and it ends with a famous saying 'the first will be last and the last, first' (19:30). This is no conclusion, for Matthew's Gospel continues the same theme in the next chapter, which begins with the famous parable of the workers in the vineyard. As Jesus continued on His way to Jerusalem, it seems that He was most concerned to teach to the disciples the essential message about how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Knowing that He was going to His death, it is not surprising that He focussed on this message, as it would lie close to the heart of the message of the Gospel preached in the coming years.

**Kingdom Benefits** In this passage, Jesus responds to Peter's measured question about what it will mean for those who have followed Jesus to enter the Kingdom. Peter accepted the message that entry into the Kingdom was through Jesus Himself, and said; 'we have left everything and followed you ...' (v27). Then, aware of the previous conversations about giving all to God and the impossibility of taking anything from this world into the Kingdom, Peter naturally asked, 'will we receive anything?'

The conversation had moved on from humour about the camel and the needle. It was an intelligent question, now framed with care and based upon what Jesus had indeed taught from the earliest of days. Peter acknowledged without any sense of triumph that those of them who had followed Jesus had indeed abandoned any wealth they may have possessed, but what would heaven be like? How would they survive and what would they do? What would they need and what would they have? Would they receive anything as a reward for giving up everything on earth? Also, if wealth counted for nothing in this life, what could one expect of the next?

**Heavenly authority and rule** Again, Jesus spoke to the disciples seriously using his emphatic expression 'Amen, I tell you ...' (19:28), and using the language of the prophets, in particular Daniel, to tell them of their future responsibilities. In Daniel 7, the prophet saw a vision in which Israel ruled the nations in the ends times, but Jesus extended this vision in our passage, by speaking about a time of 'creation renewed' (literally, 'rebirth') in which the twelve disciples would sit in judgement over the twelve tribes of Israel! (19:28 - see also 1 Cor 4:8, 6:2,3, Eph 2:6, Rev 3:12, 20:4,6). This was a position in the Kingdom of God that was undreamed of, and surely enough to delight the disciples!

Jesus also spoke of 'all' that had been left behind, listing seven things, all of which were regarded by Jewish people as blessings from God; 'houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields' (19:29); He then promised the disciples a 'hundredfold' increase and benefit of family and property in the Kingdom! This sounds wonderful, but was surely this is figurative, for would anyone want a hundred houses or brother or sisters or plots of land? The trouble is that we think about the Kingdom of God with human eyes and fail to see that the wealth of the Kingdom far exceeds that of this world, in the same way that the highest yield of the parable of the sower (a hundredfold) far exceeds the normal yield of a normal, earthly crop.

**The topsy-turvy Kingdom** The last verse summarises Jesus' teaching and sets the scene for the forthcoming parable and story in the next chapter, that of 'the workers in the vineyard'. Jesus concludes; 'many who are first will be last, and the last, first'. This saying confirms to us that it is impossible for us to talk about the value of anything as being 'transferable' to the Kingdom of God, but it tells us that the relative value of things will be

radically different! It summarises the whole idea from Jesus' teaching of turning the values of the world upside down, which is something that had been behind so much of what Jesus taught. For example, the way of peace and meekness which led to persecution (5:1-12); the tiny faith that yielded huge results (17:20); and the entry of children into the Kingdom being an example to the righteous (18:1-5). This change of values was all highly controversial in Jesus' day, and remains so in ours; but this is the fundamental difference between human notions of importance and authority and God's rule.

It is very important for us to recognise that despite the extraordinary nature of Jesus' sayings about entry into the Kingdom and the reversal of values between this world and the next, Jesus had quite a number of rich friends, and He depended on their generosity at critical times in His ministry, for example, Lazarus (John 12:1f.). Jesus also debated with the rich and influential Pharisee Nicodemus, who is recorded as being a benefactor and member of the Early Church. The grave in which Jesus was buried was also made available to Him by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

It is perhaps best to remind ourselves that Jesus did not condemn wealth itself; he condemn it when it went hand in hand with sin, such as sloth, covetousness (as in yesterday's story) or greed; and where it was a reason for people to turn away from the call of God. History is full of examples of all kinds of people who have responded to Jesus in complete faith; and this has included the rich, who have used their all along with others for the work of the Kingdom.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Does this text indicate that the disciples were a mature or an immature group of individuals?
2. Why did Jesus promise the disciples to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel? What does this symbolise in Heaven?
3. What does it mean to you to hear that you will have an extended family in heaven?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*It is fascinating to read Jesus words about future expectations for the Kingdom of God (of heaven); His picture is rather like the life on earth we experience now. However, it is a more mature and complete world in which the things we know here on earth are experienced more fully and completely in heaven, and without sin and pain and death. It is hard to imagine, but surely this must be true, for how can life on earth be a trial for our eternal life with the Father unless there are these similarities? One day, we will find out!*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Ask yourself what you believe heaven to be like? Reflect on this question over a period of time. It is possible that as you do so, the Lord will show you things you have not previously considered.*
- *How can God's people speak about the Kingdom of God without succumbing to popular images of heaven which have little to do with reality or what is found in God's Kingdom?*