



Temptation-Part 3

Managing Your Ambitions

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We've heard the old story of the two high school boys sitting in the assembly, listening to their principal talk about the two biggest problems plaguing today's teens. That, the principal said, was ignorance and apathy. After which one of the boys leans over and says to his friend, "Dude, what's ignorance and apathy?" To which his buddy replies, "I don't know. And I don't care."

It'd be a lot more funny if it weren't something that we can actually envision happening. That is where a lot of folks are these days, it seems at that age. But the problem is that if good teachers and good parents don't work to motivate their teens to reach their potential, as we call it, they will suffer the consequence if indeed they remain ignorant and apathetic—the costly consequences for the rest of their lives.

And we know that, so we're pushing them and we're driving them and we're saying, "Hey, you, you got to apply yourself." And they say, "Well, there's so many competing, you know, important urgent interest in life, like mastering Call of Duty and catching the latest swells that are rolling in or, you know, shopping or keeping up with who's dating who in high school." You know, that kind of thing becomes so consuming.

And we parents say, "Well, you don't understand." Good teachers say, "You've got to get this together, because one day as you sit there trying to get your loan for your first house for your growing family, no one will care whether you were good at video games, or whether you kept in the right social circles, or whether you had great skills in your hobbies—no one will care. There are more important things about applying yourself in school that will pay off in your life, and you need to grow up." We call it maturity, and every parent wants their kid to have it.

And it's easy for us as parents to look at this next generation and plead with them to grow up. Harder for us, though, as Christians, looking at our own lives, and looking in the Scripture, to see how often the Bible keeps calling us to prepare ourselves for the next life that's coming our way—and that we need to grow up.

Because when it comes down to it, every apathetic and ignorant teen that may be labeled that is really not apathetic and ignorant at all. I mean, they're well-informed about what they want to be informed about. And they're certainly passionate about all kinds of things. The problem with us as parents: we say, "Well, it's a lot of the wrong things—you need to shift your interests." And so it is with us as Christians.



We look around laterally and we can say, “Well, there’s so many things that are important for us—Orange County lives, raising our families, paying the mortgage, doing our thing. We’ve got a lot to consume ourselves with.” And the Bible keeps reminding us—and Jesus more than any others—saying, “Listen, do you not know what’s coming up? Don’t you recognize that if you don’t start investing in the kingdom, that you pray are supposed to at least—that it’s coming—you pray every day for the coming Kingdom? Don’t you know unless you store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, unless you seek first the kingdom of God and let all those other priorities become second in your life, don’t you know you’re gonna lose out, you’re gonna miss out. You’re going to,” as the Bible says, “suffer loss.” How desperately heaven wants people like us to grow up—to mature—that when it comes to kingdom issues not to be apathetic or ignorant.

Last time we got together we talked about the first of the three listed temptations of Christ in Luke 4. And we looked at our vulnerability as it relates to our appetites—our human desires. And that took us in a lot of directions, but we recognized the need for us to be real careful about that. This week, Luke lists the second temptation as a temptation that Satan comes and seeks to find vulnerability in Christ regarding his ambition to be the Lord of the world.

We’ll look at it here in just a second. But unlike simply looking at our appetites and realizing we need to get them under control, when it comes to our ambitions, it would be wrong for me to preach to you a sermon and say, “Well, listen, Christians, you just need to stop being ambitious. You need to stop with all this wanting to do something great or be something great.” That would be a sermon I can’t preach to you because it’s not biblical.

Jesus more than any other figure in the Bible is trying to call you to some kind of greatness. It’s just a kind of greatness—an investment in things—that it seems we’re so distracted, we seem to never have time or energy for. It’s not about not being an ambitious person. It’s about being ambitious about the right things. And so as we look at this, we could examine this text in Luke chapter 4 and just try and examine it for all the things you shouldn’t do. But I want to flip this outline around this morning and examine this text to see how Satan tried to take a very righteous ambition—an appropriate godly ambition—and twist it and divert it.

And I think the defense for that is to realize that God would have you and me be very ambitious about the things of God and the coming Kingdom, and even about—as selfish as it may sound, or self-serving as it may sound—storing up treasure for ourselves in heaven.

Take your Bibles, if you haven’t already, and turn to this. We’ll look just at the second temptation this morning of Christ, listed in Luke chapter 4, beginning in verse number 5, as Satan comes. And



I know we read this, it seems so simple and obvious. But perhaps it's not as simple as it seemed when we read it in Sunday School. This is a much more pressing and enticing temptation than it seems on the surface. But let's read it, and then we'll dive into it.

Verse 5: "And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

Verse 6: "And Satan said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.'"

Verse 7: "'If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.'"

Now, before we even look at Christ's response, let's just take that in for just a second. Here is Satan, saying, "Here are the kingdoms of the world—glory and authority—I can give it to you. You worship me." And you think, "Well, how repugnant. Christ would never do that. That's just silly. I mean, I don't even see how this is a temptation. I can't imagine Christ that we worship bowing down to Satan and taking all the authority and the glory of the world."

Well, it is a temptation; it's a very real temptation—an enticing temptation—because as we look through the life of Christ, the one thing we see Christ seem to respond most—I don't know, can I say it—violently to, or even in the garden of Gethsemane, the most sorrowful about—it's the cross. It's thinking about the darkness of hanging on a Roman execution rack, and being the target of the Father's anger toward your sin and mine, and taking that all in himself.

You see, because there are two kingdoms for which Christ now has in view as Satan offers. The second one is you're going to be the King of the world—as we often sing, at least at Christmas—"the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." That's God's plan. The plan of Christ is—and it's an appropriate, godly ambition, certainly for the Messiah—to be the King of the world. That's the end game.

Satan comes in and says, "I've got an end game for you. It's just—it's a little shortcut for you. You can have all the authority, and you can have all the glory, and you can have all the respect and allegiance of the world. You just have to follow my cue here. You have to worship me," which sounds so repugnant to us, thinking of Christ worshipping Satan, "but just take from me what's already mine."



Now, we established earlier in the series—it was our first installment—that there’s some legitimacy to this. And the commentaries that want to say, and the people that want to say, “Oh, this was foolish—he’s just a liar,” you don’t understand the rest of the New Testament. He clearly is the prince of the power of the air. He clearly is the god of this world. He clearly has dominion over this place.

And you say, “Okay, let’s think about those two kingdoms.” There are two kingdoms: one that is in view from God’s perspective that Jesus is supposed to inherit. It’s one filled with redeemed hearts, people in resurrected bodies, the curse reversed, living in a place where their impulses are righteous, and that requires redemption. That’s going to include the cross.

There’s another kingdom. And I know it seems, as we think about it in church, it seems so—I don’t know—so rotten and so awful and so wicked and so evil, but it’s really, on good days, not all that bad. And if you really could see all the kingdoms of the world—as they do in the preview shots and establishing shots in all the shows that you watch—say, flying over Manhattan as the sun is setting, or maybe, you know, at the Griffith Observatory looking down at LA on a day that’s clear. Or maybe taking a cruise up the Chicago River in the spring and looking at the towering buildings and the bustling businessmen on the sidewalk—not to mention going to Florence or Rome or Paris or London—it ain’t half bad on a good day. If someone said, “You want to be in charge of all this and have all the allegiance of all these people?” Yeah.

Now, here’s the enticement: no cross required. Oh, I know they’re fallen hearts. And I know that really, they’re sinful, but they’ve got a conscience and, you know, you can work with them. And you can be a good moral teacher, and you can take these people—you can be their king without a cross.

That’s enticing. Why? Because when it came to Christ’s mission, the most unthinkable thing in his own heart was going to the cross. This is to be a template for our temptations. And I suppose what we need to understand is what Christ ends up doing—and that is choosing to follow the path that God had laid for him. And we—hopefully we’re going to anticipate that in this—that there would be no doubt that he would do that. But it’s a genuine temptation for him to say, “Why don’t I take leadership now in this world? Why don’t I take the allegiance and the accolades of people now, and maybe I can improve what I’ve got here, instead of having to go through the pain of the cross? And maybe I can have it now instead of later. And maybe we can work with what we’ve got, instead of going through all the transformation of redemption and all the pain of the cross—crucifixion.”



You and I have to make the same kind of decision. There are two kingdoms: one that's yet to come, one that's not here, one that you can't see, one that the preachers are always talking about that you ought to be working toward; and the other one is here and now. And on good days, it's not that half bad. If you've got a good job and a nice house and decent kids, I mean—whatever—it's a good place to live. We can write songs about it and feel good about Planet Earth and people getting along—people, even when bad things happen, coming together and helping one another—"Look at the goodness of humanity."

And we can make the same decision that Jesus had to make, and that is: which one am I interested in investing in? Which one am I willing to pursue greatness in? Now I said ambition is not the problem. It's not that God doesn't want us to seek to be great in the kingdom; it's just that we've got to choose which kingdom.

Number one—if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would—would you write this down: we need to seek greatness in the right kingdom. And that is not as easy as it sounds. Because picture this now: the spheres of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth—they overlap in varying degrees depending on where or when we live. And when they overlap, there seems to be a great place in the middle where I can kill two birds with one stone and really please two masters at one time.

And Christ could have said, "Well, let me take what I got. It's a broken world, I understand, but I can be the leader here. I can be great in this kingdom. And I can avoid the pain of being rebuffed by this kingdom. I can be accepted by this kingdom. And I know it will be a compromise to the other kingdom, but we can make the best of it—particularly because we're not looking at a kingdom that's, you know, entirely as evil as it could be."

Let's take—I want to take you to Matthew, and there are several passages I'd like you to look at here. But because they're all in the same book, it won't be that difficult, I trust, and even if it is a little hard, you can do it. Matthew chapter 16—let's start there.

I said to you earlier, one of the things that caused the very terse and abrupt—I even called it violent—reaction from Christ was the times when he felt the temptation of establishing some allegiance in this world without the cross. And this is a classic example, which most of you are familiar with. But let's look at it afresh. Drop down to verse 21.

Matthew 16:21: "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders"—that's the power brokers of Israel—"and the chief priests"—



that's the most religious guys in the nation—"and the scribes"—those are the people that held the Word of God and transcribed and copied it. These guys are the top of the top—"and they're going to turn on me and kill me. And then the third day I'll be raised."

Well, that is hardly a hopeful addendum to the setup to that. "Are you kidding me? You're gonna be turned on by the leaders of the kingdom? I can't imagine that." Peter takes him aside; he began to rebuke him. He rebukes Christ, and he says, "Far be it from you, Lord—Master, King—you're the King, man. It's not gonna happen to you. This shall never happen to you."

But **verse 23**, Jesus turns to Peter and says, "Get behind me..."—you think the wilderness is not in view right here? The pain of the temptation? If you think Jesus looked at this temptation in the wilderness and said, "Ah, no problem. I'm never gonna bow to you—forget it—move on," that isn't how this happened. This was a genuine enticement of the humanity of the Lord.

And now he looks at his own follower saying, "The cross? No way." And he looks in the eyes of Peter, and he says, "Hey, Satan, get behind me. You're a hindrance to me."

I know that sounds so insidious and so evil. But if you want it in terms that you and I maybe can identify with, look at the last line in verse 23: "For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." If I'm ever accused of doing something that a man does, I'm gonna say, "Hey, dude, I'm a man. Right? What do you expect from me?" You see the irony in that? I mean, when someone says, "Hey, you need to put your minds on things of heaven and not on things of earth," I'm thinking, "I live on earth—of course I gotta put my mind on the things of the earth."

See, that's the difficulty of Christian maturity. When I have to tell a teenager to stop acting like a teenager, they're gonna say, "But I am a teenager. What are you talking about?" Well, here's the deal: you'll never be prepared for adulthood unless you stop thinking like a teenager and start thinking like an adult.

Now, you and I, we live in the world. We try to—because of the inherent, and I would say godly, drive—we have to do something purposeful, significant, and even great with our lives. And we've got a choice to make. Where are you going to do that? Are you going to do it like everyone else and try to establish greatness here? Or are you going to recognize that it's something very counterintuitive for us to say, "I need to seek greatness there"?



“Peter, you don’t have your mind in the right place. Oh, I know it’s the natural place to have your mind, but it’s not the right place.”

Verse 24: Now he turns this. Now keep this two-kingdom idea in mind: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” He just said, “I’ve got to go die.” He knows how he’s going to die—he’s going to die by Roman execution on a cross. He says, “If you want to follow me, now, you’re going to have the same experience: the clash of the kingdoms. You can either set your mind on God’s kingdom, or you can set your mind on this kingdom. And if you want to advance in God’s kingdom, you’re going to clash with this kingdom.”

“It’s going to be that the leaders of this kingdom are going to crucify me; the leaders of your kingdom on earth are going to oppose you. You’re going to have a cross. You’re going to follow me down a path that the world is not going to see as a good one.”

Verse 25: “Whoever would save his life”—now, you want to guard yourself from that. You want to make sure that you don’t have that opposition. You want to live in this kingdom so that everyone goes, “Great job. You’re doing a great job in this kingdom. We love the way you’re working down here.”—“then you are going to lose your life. But whoever loses his life for my sake”—if you’re willing to stand and invest in the pursuit of greatness in my kingdom—“then you’ll find it.

“For what does it profit a man”—there’s a good word that appeals, by the way, to desire and ambition. Ambitious person wants to profit with his life. “Well, what does it profit you if you gained the whole world?” Do you see the wilderness temptation here? Wasn’t that the temptation—get the whole world? “What would it profit you to get the whole world, and in the end, you forfeit your soul?”

Because the redemption of your soul in a kingdom that requires a cross—that ends you up in a place where there is something eternal and perfect, as opposed to compromised and manageable—there’s no middle ground here. You will forfeit your soul even if you’ve got everything here.

“Or what shall a man give in return for his soul,” if you think about it long enough. “For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father”—when the kingdom is established—“and then he will”—here’s another word that certainly appeals to desire and ambition—“he will repay each person according to what he’s done.”



Now, again, church sermons can make things seem so polarized and black and white and all that. But you need to understand: when it comes to living for the kingdom and the kingdoms of earth vs. the kingdom of heaven, you need to know—as I said earlier—these spheres of values overlap. And what I’m saying is there’s conflict always, because they never perfectly overlap until the kingdom of heaven is established on earth. And that happens only with the coming eschaton—the coming arrival and revelation of Christ.

Until then—depending on history, depending on what subculture—and the kingdom spheres and values, they overlap to certain degrees. Just for the sake of illustration, they can part completely. Let’s talk about a sub-kingdom: you want to go and be in a gang in East LA, let’s just say, for some reason you do. Try now to live with the kingdom principles of God’s Word, follow Jesus Christ, value the Word of God—you’re getting up in the morning, you’re studying the book of Galatians, you’ve got prayer time—you’re the leader of the Crips. I don’t know—are they still out there? Can you see that the values of that kingdom and the values of this kingdom are so polarized that you’re not going to last very long as the leader of that gang?

Or the mob—go back in time, New York in the ’20s, or—I don’t know—whatever. There are some things that just—there’s absolutely no compatibility.

Here’s the problem with the church today: when the kingdom values overlap, you can sit here with a sermon like this and go, “Huh.” Because you’re working some job in Orange County; they value the things that you value. Whatever—you can be a good Christian; they don’t care. If you’re studying your Bible in the morning, no one’s going to kick you out for that. As a matter of fact, you can climb up in the organization; you hear a sermon about honesty or truthfulness or integrity or loyalty, and you see the principles of God’s Word, you say, “Man, I get it.” And that’s helpful. They even want me to be a manager and upper management, or be an executive, or a partner—one day I could be the CEO of this company, and I’ll be a good Christian man. It still works. Why? Because your kingdom values of this earth overlap here.

And I get that that may be possible. But because they never perfectly overlap, and because at some point there’s divergence between the two, there’s always tension. And you know that—even if you’re in a good, upstanding, legal, honest company that’s doing good in society—at some point they’re gonna go, “Hey, dude, just tell the guy on the phone I’m not here.” “Hey, just take that number on the spreadsheet and fudge on that, because you know what? We can’t have that—we can’t submit that report.” “Hey, get on the website and would you disparage our competitor over here?” “Would you recognize that this client is never going to stick with us unless you promise them something that you know is...” Eventually the spheres are going to put tension between you and the kingdom of God.



You're going to be stuck in the middle of this. And you're gonna have to make a decision: Am I going to be great in this kingdom, or am I going to be great in this kingdom?

You got to make a decision. When, by the way—here's the forecast. I even wrote about this in these terms in the bulletin this week. Did you notice? The forecast is the spheres—and I didn't put it this way, but picture it this way—the spheres of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth are continually being stretched, and the circle of overlap is increasingly going away. Have you noticed that?

There's a lot of things I can stand up in a pulpit and say that every, you know, person out there in the society that doesn't give a rip about church or God or the Bible or Jesus—they would applaud for the things that I preach from this pulpit. Well, that is if you live in America in the 1950s. But today—I mean really—if you were to play some of my sermons just from the book of Romans, and you go and play those out there—I don't know—pick a high school auditorium filled with high school students: that'd be a revolt. And there has been, right? We've seen this kind of stuff happen. And it's only—here's the forecast—getting worse. The reality is, the Bible says it will go from bad to worse; evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse.

So the decision that I'm talking about has to be made in your life, and will increasingly need to be made, the more the kingdom sphere of values and priorities of this world continues to float away from the kingdom of heaven—where you may get to the place you feel like you're working for an East LA gang; to where, if I just live my life according to the principles of heaven, I'm going to be fired. Yeah, you might be. And there may be—what we've seen around the world in a lot of periods of time—persecution for anybody who stands up to live by kingdom values.

Get ready for that. It's happening, it's coming. And I hope you see that even if you just tune into the world and what they're talking about every day, it should feel increasingly tense between what you know is right and what God calls you to do and how he calls you to live—and the world. And the question is, which one are you going to choose to establish yourself in, to progress in, to be lauded by, to be cheered on by, to be graded by?

I don't have time for this one, but you should write it down at least if you're a note taker—and if you're not a note taker, you learn to be one soon—**Matthew 5:19–20**. I just want to show you if—because here's the problem: anytime I teach on rewards or greatness, people, they think, "Oh, that's wrong, that's sinful, that's self-serving, that's, you know... oh, it's too... that's not right." It is right. And I've preached on this many times; the Bible is clear on this. And even in this text about who's going to be great in the kingdom, all you have to do is just track the teachings of Christ. He's constantly beckoning you to be great in the kingdom, to be rich in the kingdom, to have power and authority in the kingdom.



Let me just show you one—**Matthew 19**—you’re not far from this one. Matthew chapter 19—we’re in Matthew 16; let’s go to 19 real quick.

Look at the all-out appeal in this passage, **verse 23**, at the end of the rich young ruler. Remember that passage? And they had this showdown—rich young ruler; he’s got everything going in this kingdom; here’s the leader of the other kingdom, and he says, “Listen, your values are wrong. Let me just put that tension really clear by saying, ‘Let’s go to the center of this kingdom—live by these values—and let me just see if you’re willing to abandon your place in this kingdom.’” And he says, “No, I can’t do it.”

Well, in **verse 23** he turns to his disciples, and he says, “Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.” Why is it hard for a rich person to get into the kingdom of heaven? Think this through. Because how do you get rich in this kingdom? Most people get rich in this kingdom by everybody going, “Yeah, what you’re doing and how you live and what you value is what we’re all about.” You advance in the kingdom of the world, and one of the measures of that is riches—and fame and everything else—but riches in this text.

Now, when the kingdom of heaven comes along and says, “Now jump into this kingdom and be great in this kingdom,” it’s really hard if you’ve done really well there. Think about—I don’t know—actors and celebrities and the rock stars. Or if you are really rich, and have really been accomplished and proficient over there—and the world lauds you, “Great!”—find out how many people are doing their quiet times in the book of Galatians this morning in those circles. Why? Because it is hard if you’ve made it here to say, “I really want to live in the center of what God calls me to by kingdom principles.” That is a radical jump.

And Jesus just says, “Well, that’s just the way it is. It is hard for people that are very established, very lauded, very great in this kingdom to get over into this kingdom.”

Verse 24: “Again I tell you”—I mean, did you catch that? Disciples sometimes—they’re a little slow—he’s got to illustrate: “It’d be easier to jam a camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

If they didn’t get it the first time, their attention is piqued now. **Verse 25:** The disciples heard this and they go, “Are we hearing you right?” “We are greatly astonished; who then can be saved?” Because we kind of thought a guy like that—a rich, young attorney, who seems to be blessed by



God—would clearly be blessed by God, and maybe he’s already in the kingdom. I don’t get it—why you say this is so hard?

And Jesus—well, he could be saved. “With man it’s impossible; with God all things are possible.” And every now and then we hear about it: someone who lives completely sold out for the kingdom of the world, and the popularity polls of this world, and what people want to laud in this world—they are great in the world—and every now and then we hear of one—the impossibility of stepping over into the kingdom, and great in the kingdom of heaven—and that happens only because with God all things are possible.

Peter replies, **verse 27**, “Hey, what about us, man? We’ve left everything to follow you. What will there be for us? What are we gonna have?” Now you picture right now a really, you know, a bent brow from Christ and a rolled set of eyes and going, “Shut up.” I mean, that’s kind of what you would expect. That’s not what Jesus does. And that is telling.

Why doesn’t he rebuke Peter for sitting here: “What are we gonna get? What are we gonna get? We left our fishing thing; we left all that. We skipped the old kingdom of the earth; we’re here in your kingdom—we’re all about you. What are we gonna get?” He doesn’t say, “Man, stop it.” Because really what I want is I want preachers to get up in pulpits for the next 2000 years and tell people to stop being ambitious. “Stop it. Just settle down. Just be humble and content.” And what that means is, “Yeah, don’t worry about greatness. Don’t worry about what you’re gonna get.”

That is not what Jesus does. He goes back—like in the old passage we were reading, Matthew 16—talking about profit and repayment. He’s going to talk about profit and repayment.

Verse 28: Jesus says, “Truly I say to you, in the new world”—when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ—“the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, and you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones”—not folding chairs; think that through now—“judging”—that’s the word for leading, being the administrator, being the boss—“the twelve tribes of Israel.”

What’s with all of that? Why would you feed this young fisherman’s ambition to be someone great? Because that’s the goal for you and I—to pursue greatness in the kingdom of heaven. And the choice that we have every day is: Which kingdom are you going to be great in?



And just like our high schoolers: “You’re gonna fit in here and be cool here? We’re going to have that?” Great—you can do all that; you can advance in the little social climate here among the ignorant and the apathetic if you’d like—or you can step out of that, and you can do something that will benefit you for years to come. That’s a microcosm of what Christ is saying to Peter right here: “You’ve left everything to follow me. And you know what? The payoff—amazing. You’re going to be in a place you can’t even imagine.”

Verse 29: Now, he turns to us and everyone else: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name’s sake”—if you ditch that kingdom to follow this kingdom—and of course, we’re not all just leaving our houses when we become Christians; but if, because of following me, the tension of the two spheres of values takes you out of the advantage and riches of this one and drags you over here without all of those things—here’s what the Bible says: “Just be content.” Would you just be content? Is that what it says? No. “Just know this—just hang on: you will receive”—future tense; it’s coming—“a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.” Because switching kingdoms—that’s all about inheriting eternal life. “But you’re going to get a hundred times payback for every sacrifice that you had to pay when you said, ‘I’m going to live for this kingdom, not that kingdom.’”

“And many,” and Jesus said this often, “who are first will be last, and the last first.” What are you talking about? In this kingdom, the people that are first—that’s not a good thing. What do you want—everybody speaks well of you? They are going to be, when the kingdom comes, last. And the people over here that lost their jobs and went through all these problems and got ridiculed and mocked because they were great in the kingdom of heaven—when the kingdom of heaven arrives, they’re going to be first.

Which kingdom do you want to live for? Kind of like looking at teenagers. All the cool people that everybody thinks are so cool—they won’t be cool down the road. And we always talk about “the nerds,” right—rule the world. Think about that in high school. Why? Because they were studying and doing their homework and doing what they were called to do.

What’s the point? You got a decision to make: seek greatness in the right kingdom.

Luke 4:7—it’s on your worksheet there—here was the deal; here was the *quid pro quo*; here was the option; here was the qualification: “You want all this—you want to be great in the current kingdom, which ain’t half bad on a good clear day—well then all you have to do is take your cue from me. Submit yourself to me—it’s mine; I’ll give it to you. Worship me; all will be yours.”



Now, again, that seems so—it seems so wrong. But the goal is right. The goal is to be the King of the world. That is the goal for Christ. This is what we call—here’s the word we should inject into the conversation—compromise. It’s the seemingly right goal; it just happens to be in the wrong way. Let’s put it this way—number two on your outline: we need to seek greatness, but we need to seek greatness in the right way.

And if, in the spheres—as you write that down, think this through as they overlap—and you’re going to seek greatness, and hopefully, “I can get greatness in both spheres”—listen, you need to really stop with that thinking, because it’s not a good way to proceed with your life. But if you continue to live by kingdom principles, and you hope that you’ll advance, you just need to remember this: you got to make sure you never compromise. And if your non-compromise kingdom living seems to do well for you in your Orange County job, or your life, or however you’re doing life here and paying your bills—well, that’s great—but there’s going to be conflict, and every day Satan will tempt you to compromise.

I want to turn you to where we’ve been in our Old Testament reading. Hopefully, you’re following along with us. We got our DVR thing fixed on the website—have you noticed that? We just finished the book of First Samuel. So let’s go back there. And I just thought, as I was reading through this with you, “There are so many great examples of what we’re dealing with in this message.”

So let’s go to **1 Samuel 8**. Let’s start there. We’ll pick a couple of illustrative stories here—narratives that will help us—because the compromise is all around us. Why? Because we live in the world. I think like a man because I am a man; I think like a person of the earth because I live on the earth. That is the compromise that happens with the pressure.

If you think through that classic Sunday School verse in **Romans 12:2**, we’re called not to be conformed to the world—which, again, if you rightly look at even the grammar of that, has that sense of the pressure of the mold of the world is trying to conform you; you need to resist that formation—“but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

That pressure to conform is the compromise: “Listen, you’re a real weirdo outcast here, Jesus. If you just live by my rules and my sphere, then you could be popular here—you could have everything you need here; you can have all the accolades and all the prosperity and the wealth and the glory and the honor and the authority and the rule of earth. Just do it our way. You’re in the world; let’s be like the world.”



That compromise is going to be pressured every day in very specific ways on you because of the world you live in.

1 Samuel 8, we read this not long ago. Look at verse number 4—just to underscore their thinking, which is more of a feeling than a thinking—look at it: “All the elders gathered together; they came to Samuel at Ramah, and they said to him, ‘Behold, you’re old, and your sons do not walk in your ways—your kids aren’t a chip off the old block. So here’s what we want: appoint for us,’ the people said, ‘a king to judge’”—which, again, that’s the word in the Old Testament often, even in the New Testament—to be the administrator, the leader, to be over us—“like all the nations.” Underline that.

And then drop your eyes down, if you would, to **verses 19 and 20**. Here’s the motivation: “The people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, ‘No, there shall be a king over us’”—here it is; underline it—“that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge and rule over us and go out before us and fight our battles.” We just want to fit in, man.

Go back up **verse 6**: “That displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge over us.’ And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you.’” And I wrote on this recently—“We got to be careful what we ask God for,” right? He might give it to us. This was not a good thing. “And then he said, ‘Listen, I just want you to know, they’re not rejecting you, but they’ve rejected me’”—here’s our word back to our sermon now—“from being king over them.”

See, the whole thing about being a kingdom person, living within the sphere of the kingdom of God—or the kingdom of heaven—is that we live in the center of the kingdom and its values, knowing that when we do, we are acting as appropriate servants of the King—in line with the King. We live for the King and the King. We don’t want to reject his leadership to step over here to the edge or the middle, or even cross and transgress the line and be accepted and like everybody else over here. And that’s the tension. And when they said, “Everybody else does it; we want that,” God says they’re rejecting me, the King of the kingdom.

He says, “Listen, if you’re feeling the pain, I know that feeling,” **verse 8**: “According to all the deeds that they have done from the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day—they’ve been forsaking me, serving other gods. They want to be like everybody else, having their gods. So also they’re doing to you. You’re feeling a little bit of my pain now. Then obey their voice,” **verse 9**, “only, you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.” Warn them—it won’t be good for them.



And every time you reject the lordship of the King of the kingdom to step up over here and be like everybody else in this kingdom, you just need to know: not only are you rejecting the King, but you're going to incur a lot of the penalty—as the Bible says in the New Testament, the corruption—that goes with that.

You get that pressure. I talked about work; I talked about how many times there is that temptation in often subtle ways—when God says, “Tell the truth,” and you're there in so many situations told to lie. As a parent—moms—you're told to raise your kids in a certain way, and there are clear, definitive statements about how to discipline and raise those kids and to instruct those kids. And the pressure of the world—and every parent magazine—says, “Don't do it that way.” And you've got to make a decision about whether or not you're going to be like everybody else that you chat with at the park, or whether or not you're going to do it God's way. The tension is there every day.

We got to seek greatness; we got to seek it in the right way.

One more passage on this in First Samuel—just forward the story here to **chapter 15**. King Saul becomes their first king—he's the first king that's appointed. Now here's the deal, though: God picks him out clearly. He says, “They've picked him,” because he picked someone that they wanted. They were so happy to see Saul. Why? He's exactly the kind of king we wanted—because every other king looks like this: tall, handsome, big build, chiseled—he's going to be great to go out in battle before us. So God says, “You want a king like everybody else? I'm gonna give you the archetypal king everybody wants—he's the quintessential king. Here—take him. They won't be good for you, but you can have him now. You can reject the King of the kingdom—God himself—and you can now have your king and be like everybody else. Won't go well for you, though.” And it didn't.

And that king, now unfortunately, wants to be like all the other kings—because he is. He's cut from the same cloth. He had some good moments before this—we just read First Samuel; you know that—but in the end, he ends up being a compromise king, wanting to be like all the other kings. And one thing you do when you go to battle, for instance, as we see here in chapter 15, he falls to the compromise of doing what every king does: you go into a place and you're led into battle; when you conquer that opposing army or that opposing kingdom, you become the king and the lord of all that and you take it all. It's called the booty or the spoils of war. Everybody does it. “Of course we do that. It's good for the troops; it rallies them; it compensates them; it's good for them—the prosperity. It's like, ‘Don't muzzle the ox while he's threshing.’ I even got biblical verses. I can say it makes total sense.”

Only, when it came to the Amalekites here in chapter 15, God says, “These are rank, evil, sinful people. I don't want anything of theirs to remain. I want you to go in there...”—they've been an



incessantly evil, nomadic tribe that have been cantankerous and difficult and persecuting Israel—“and I’m done with them. So I need you to devote everything to destruction and kill them all.” And we got problems with that, but get over it—God can do what he wants to do with the people of earth. He says, “I’m done with these people. We’re done.” Like if he said, “Done with the people in Mission Viejo,” let’s just say—so all you people here in Aliso, we’re going to go and pick up the people from Laguna Hills, and we’ll get some folks now from Dana Point—we’re going to go take Mission Viejo. But everything that we’re going to do there is going to be devoted to destruction.

Now, do you know the story? He doesn’t do that. Take a look at this text—**verse number 9**: “Saul and the people spared the king”—because that was always something that ancient Near Eastern kings did; they would humiliate him; they would cut off his big toes or his thumbs; they would make him grovel under the table of the conquering king—“and then they kept the best of the sheep, the best of the oxen, the fattened calves, the lambs, and all that was good.” Now, the rest—by the way, I should say—oh, they wouldn’t utterly destroy them. “But all that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.”

We go into Mission Viejo to conquer Mission Viejo under the banner of God’s—you know, he’s fed up with them. It’s like Sodom and Gomorrah—we’re going to kill them all. It is easy to torch the Ford Fiesta in the driveway. No problem with that—I can devote that to destruction. But after I’ve ransacked the house and found the keys to the BMW in the driveway, I’m thinking, “I mean, this is the way every other nation does it—take the spoils of war.” And Saul the king says, “Well, of course—yeah, grab it. A Rolex on the counter too? Grab that. Take a nice pearl necklace—grab that for your wife—of course. All that other stuff—torch it. Torch it—makes sense.”

“The word of the Lord came to Samuel,” **verse 10**, says in **verse 11**, “‘I regret that I made Saul king, for he’s turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.’ And Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all night. And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. It was told to Samuel, ‘Saul came to Carmel—Mount Carmel—and behold’”—love this now; you want to talk about being like every other king—“he set up a monument for himself.”

Love that. “We need a nice statue of me right here.” And he turned and passed by and went on down to Gilgal. “And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to Samuel, ‘Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord. Isn’t it great? And I got a brand-new statue over here on Mount Carmel.’”

“And Samuel said, ‘Hey, if you’ve done what the Lord said, what’s the humming of the BMW I’m hearing over your shoulder? What’s the bleating of sheep in my ears—the lowing of oxen? What is all that? I notice a new watch on your arm. What do you mean you did what the Lord said?’”

It's called compromise.

“And Saul said, ‘Well, they...’—love that; he gave the command—“they brought them out from the Amalekites”—sounds like the garden—excuses—“for the people spared the best of the sheep”—of course; we’re going to torch the BMW?—“and the oxen. But I’m telling you what: we just did that so we can dump them in the church parking lot as a donation to the church. That’s the only reason we got ’em. I’m just going to get this Rolex off my wrist right now and put it in the offering bag. That’s what I was going to do, Samuel—gonna sacrifice them to the Lord your God.” I love that—“the Lord your God.” “Isn’t that what you want? Wouldn’t that be good?” “And the rest of it—I know he wanted everything devoted—we did a lot of that. We burned a lot of Yugos and Fiestas and, you know, whatever—pick your most despised car.”

“And Samuel said to Saul, ‘Stop. I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night.’ And he said to him, ‘Speak.’ And Samuel said, ‘Though you are little in your own eyes’”—is that how you go about thinking, just setting up your own monument?—“are you not the head of the tribes of Israel?” “I know you think you said something shouldn’t have any effect, but you’re leading the tribes of Israel—you compromised. “The Lord anointed you king over Israel. He sent you on a mission—he said, “Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites; fight against them until they are consumed.” Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce on the spoil?” “Stop talking about them—you did this. “Why did you do what was evil in the sight of the Lord?”

Compromise—evil. “Well, that’s big words.”

“And Saul said to Samuel, ‘Now listen—I’ve told you this before: I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I’ve gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me—I did the work, man; I was there risking my life on the battlefield; I brought Agag the king of the Amalekites back—I understand that, but that was just what everybody else does; and I did the same—and I’ve devoted the Amalekites to destruction.’”

““And they killed him. But the people—really, it was, you know, them doing it; I may have approved it—but they took the spoil, and they took the sheep and the oxen and the best of the things that were devoted to destruction, and they brought them to sacrifice to the Lord your God. Did you not understand what I said? This is a benefit to you. They got stuff now to worship with.”



“And Samuel said”—you got this highlighted in your Bible—““Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than”—putting more money in the offering plate—“sacrifice, and to listen”—to God and what he says—“than the fat of rams.””

For what you did—it’s called compromise. But let me call it what it really is: “You have rejected the Lord over you—the King. It is called rebellion.” And rebellion—now this is what should be highlighted—“is as the sin of”—you want to go back to the wilderness now and Jesus—talking about getting outside of the will of God—“witchcraft, divination.”

“What—you mean at work, when I do something for the boss that he tells me to do, and I know it’s not what God says—it’s just a compromise? But if I didn’t do it, I could lose my job. And if I lose my job, God’s called me to supply for my family. How in the world am I going to be a godly father, maintaining my lifestyle and helping my family and putting money in the offering plate? If I compromise—is what you mean to tell me it is better for me to lose my job just for some rule? I don’t want to be a legalist.”

The answer is: yeah, it’s better. It is better for you to obey the voice of the Lord than for you to compromise. Because God values obedience to the kingdom principles—to the values and instructions of living for the kingdom of heaven—more than you fitting in and compromising in the sphere of this world—the kingdom of the world—and hoping that maybe, because I’m successful here, I can throw a few shekels toward the middle of the kingdom of heaven and that’ll be a good thing and it’s a win-win.

It’s not a win-win. As I’ve often said, God can do more with your obedience than you can do with your compromise—no matter what your excuses are for it, no matter how you rationalize it, no matter how you think, “This will be good ultimately for my family, and that’s a godly thing and a good thing.” You got to seek greatness in the right way. And to put it in terms we’ve used, it’s a life of no compromise.

One passage we don’t have time to turn to, but jot it down at least—**Luke 16**; we’ll get to this down the road, Lord willing—**verses 14 and 15**. Jesus dealing with the Pharisees, who were lovers of money. You want another way to put it? They loved to have all the accolades, all the advancements, all the bonuses, all the benefits of living in this kingdom. They didn’t want to do anything that was going to hurt their advancement in this kingdom. They loved money. When they heard Jesus talking about those things not being important, and what’s important is living for this kingdom, they ridiculed him.



And Jesus replied this way—listen, this is a great verse—**Luke 16:15**: “And he said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves before men’”—you’re always making excuses as to why this is all right, to be successful and great in this kingdom—and you do it with compromise. “‘But God knows your hearts.’” You’re casting off the lordship of Christ—the lordship of God, in their case. Here’s the stinging line: “For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

Did you catch that? It’s another verse you’ll never find on a Dayspring greeting card: “For what is exalted among men”—what they think is so great in this world—“is an abomination in the sight of God.” And that just doesn’t relate to some weird picture of the most evil segment of society drinking blood out of a skull at a rock concert. We’re not talking about that. We’re talking about the subtle ways the tempter comes in and tries to divert our ambition to do something important, significant, purposeful, or great. It’s called compromise.

So as you seek to be a good Christian employee, a good Christian employer, a good Christian parent, a good Christian husband, you’ve got to do that and seek the greatness God’s way—in the right way.

Verse 8—we haven’t read this yet—Luke chapter 4. Jesus responds with a kind of slam dunk. You think, “Well, that’s why it was so easy.” Well, it’s not all that easy, as we’ve tried to point out; it’s not all that simple. It’s not like this was no temptation. It was enticing to skip the pain of the cross to have the kind of acceptance and the goals that are ultimately the good goals anyway, it seems.

But he says, “Listen, I can’t compromise.”

Luke 4:8: “And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written’”—back to the Word of God; he’s quoting now **Deuteronomy 6:13**—“‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

He said, “I can only serve the Lord, and you can only worship the Lord. I can’t bow to you, and I can’t do it your way. I can’t take my cues from you so that I can get advancement in this kingdom. I take my cues from God, and I gotta do it his way.”

I love the fact that this begins with worship, because it’s that kind of orientation: “I’m not taking my cues from you. It is not about you.” And it’s not even—in the incarnate, subjected place of the humiliation of Christ—not even about Christ at this point. It’s about the Father. It’s about doing it his way. It’s about worshiping him and serving him.



I said this is a bit of a dangerous thing—to take an outline like this and invert it into something positive. Well, if you look so far, I got “Seek greatness; seek greatness.” Oh man, how’s that going to go over in home fellowship groups? “Seek greatness.” “We shouldn’t seek greatness.”

Here’s the problem—and the reason it almost seems heretical—is because we often think, when we think about someone seeking greatness, that the end of the greatness is about them. But when Jesus talks about what his response is to the compromise—to accomplish a goal that he’s going to accomplish anyway (it’s just a little different timing and a very different way)—he says, “This is about God.”

Put it this way, if you would—number three on your outline: we need to seek greatness—get this now—for the right person. We need to seek greatness for the right person. Does God want you to be great in the kingdom of heaven? Absolutely. Does that mean you’ll be great here on earth? Probably not. But when you seek the greatness that God looks for us to accomplish, the point of it is not for you. The goal of it is not self-aggrandizement; it’s not self-promotion; it’s not about people seeing you, as Jesus said, as the benefactor. That’s not the point. You’re not the end-all in this.

You see, to be great in the kingdom of God is to be the servant—not just of God’s people—but ultimately, as this text says, “I’m serving him.” This is for his good.

One text on this—**James chapter 4**, if you would, please. James chapter 4. As you turn there, I want you to think of how this works even in that great text of the Incarnation in **Philippians 2**: he humbles himself, taking on this form of a servant in human form, obedient even to death on a cross. And therefore, then, God highly exalts him—name above every name—that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow—those in heaven, earth, under the earth—and every tongue should confess. And then it ends with this: all of this—the whole point of this—is “to the glory of God the Father.” I’m willing to live by the principles of the coming kingdom, not this kingdom—and that may be a humiliating thing in this kingdom. But here’s the good news: God exalts people that do that, and there will be greatness at the end of that; and he will repay; and there will be profit; and he will reward—but all of it is to the glory of God the Father, not to your glory. It’s not the point. It’s not being great for you. You’re not the end of this.

James 4:1: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions”—now, underline that—“are at war within you?”

Now, to get that in context—I'm sorry—you have to look back up at **chapter 3**. He's just talked about the kinds of passions that he has in view. Start in **verse 13**: "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth." That's not the wisdom that comes down from above—that's earthly, unspiritual—gonna go back to the wilderness now in Luke 4—demonic. That selfishness, that bitter jealousy, that looking laterally and seeing that "I'm going to be great—I'm going to be great; look at me—I'm the benefactor"—that's not it. That's demonic.

"For where you see jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above"—it's different—"is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere." It reaps a harvest of righteousness, sown in peace by those who make peace. There's real greatness.

But that passion—to be that bitter, jealous, ambitiously selfish, boastful person—that's waging war against your soul. You have to manage that passion and redirect it to the passion that God desires for us.

"You desire"—**James 4:2**—"and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask." Oh, well, there you go—let's just start asking. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly"—to spend it on your passions. What's the context of the passions? Bitter jealousy, selfish ambition—it's about boasting; it's about me. "You adulterous people! Do you not know"—talk about the spheres of the kingdoms—"that friendship with the world"—you want to hang out there? You want to be about that? You want to share their passions?—"is enmity with God." Those kingdoms are in conflict. "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world"—I mean, we've seen this phrase in many different forms this morning—"makes himself an enemy of God."

"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says he yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?" Classically difficult grammar in Greek, but I think we got it right here: he wants us. Why? Because he is the Creator—nothing better than the creatures to be focused on for the glory of their Creator. That's the greatness we're looking for—and that is the definition of greatness.

"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud'"—if this is about you, that's not the greatness we're talking about—"but gives grace to the humble." What's that? "We're here for the glory of God." "Submit yourselves therefore to God"—back to the wilderness—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," as Jesus did in Luke 4. "Draw near to God, and he will draw near



to you. Cleanse your hands”—if you see this compromise—“you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” You try to have a foot here and a foot there—stop with that soul.

“You”—**verse 9**—“be wretched and mourn and weep.” Over what? Over that. “Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.” You’re driving the Beemer home—stop. You got to realize there’s compromise involved, and humble yourself there. “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

The greatness that we’re talking about is a greatness that’s not focused on ourselves—it’s focused on God. That is greatness for the right person.

You want a quick diagnostic for this? How often are you trying, in your greatness, to serve the Lord—in trying to seek the greatness in the kingdom, to be—as Jesus kept beckoning us to be—to store up treasure in heaven, or to be great in the kingdom of heaven? How often does that involve a lateral comparison? Stop that. You know you’ve lost track if that’s the point.

Here’s a good example of this. You can look it up later—**John 21**—when Jesus has to come and make breakfast for Peter, because he’s out fishing when he should be preaching after the resurrection—remember that? And he comes in; he says, “Do you love me?” “Oh, I like you.” “Well, feed my sheep.” “Do you love me?” “I like you.” “Feed my sheep.” “Do you like me?” “Yeah, you know I like you.” “Well then feed my sheep. You got a job to do.”

Now, we all know that story, and we understand it—we get it: he has to recommission Peter because he’s lamenting over denying Christ three times in the courtyard of Caiaphas. But here he is saying, “Get out there—do this. I got a job for you, and it’s important that you fulfill it.” I mean, you’re going to be the quarterback. “On this rock I’ll build my Church.” Even if you interpret that wrongly, Peter is going to be the key pastor in Jerusalem—key pastor—quarterback of the first segment of the whole book of Acts. There’s greatness that God has planned for Peter, and he’s licking his wounds there out in the Sea of Galilee fishing.

Now, you know that story. Finally he gets the point, “Okay”—he’s going to wrap up his nets, and he’s going to go back. Jesus then says, “Hey, you know what? I just want to tell you”—he gives him this kind of almost poetic discussion about “When you were young, you used to dress yourself; when you’re older, you’re going to stretch out your arms.” And as John says—he was writing this—he was indicating the way that Peter would die.



Now Peter got the point. This isn't good. "You're talking about me being executed—martyred—for this."

Remember when—by the way, just another sidebar on a sidebar—when Peter—I'm sorry—when James and John's mother asked, "I want my sons to sit at the right and left hand of you," what did Jesus say? "Are you able to drink the cup that I'm going to drink?" See, if you want the greatness of the crown and the greatness in the kingdom, there's a price to pay in this kingdom. Here's the great example—Peter: "You're going to be so important in this, but I got to tell you—you're going to be crucified. It's going to cost you. I just want you to know that." "Well, thanks." But that's what's going to happen.

Do you remember what Peter did right then—Sunday School grads? You know John 21. He says, "What about John?" Remember that? "What about him? How's he going to die?"

Remember Jesus's response? "What in the world is that to you? Who cares? I want you to focus on me. I want you to fulfill the role I've called you to."

See, that's biblical greatness—to say, "I want to be great for the right person, and I'm not in competition with anybody else." Isn't that what Paul is trying to say in that picture in **1 Corinthians 12** about the body—when the eye wants to be, you know, the ear, and the ear wants to be the lip or the nose, or whatever—what everybody's worried about? Stop it. "If God has called you to be the toenail, be the best, greatest toenail for the glory of God that you can be." Stop with the lateral comparisons.

He says, "What if it is my will that he remain until I come? What is that to you? You—follow me." It's like the blinders on a horse—we've got to get to the place—and I'm telling you, because I've been doing this for quite some time—there is a price to pay for wanting resolutely to be great in the kingdom of heaven. You've got to put the blinders on and say, "Nothing else matters. I'm doing this for an audience of one. I do this for the glory of God."

Jesus had that perspective in the wilderness. I hope that you and I would get that too.

Would you stand with me as we close?



We can't be ignorant or apathetic. And unfortunately, though we may be very informed and very passionate, in our lives we may be passionate and informed about a lot of the wrong things. This is a sermon about shifting priorities. It's about recognizing that Satan wants to subtly redirect you to have purpose in life at the wrong time, in the wrong forum, in the wrong way, for the wrong person. God would have you pursue greatness the way that Christ did. "For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising its shame." You lose a job over it—fine. You lose a relationship over it—oh well. You lose comfort and convenience and promotions—whatever. When you get there, remember this one word: *a hundredfold*. Isn't that what Jesus said? *A hundredfold*.

And here's, I guess, the perspective we need: eternity is a lot longer than this life. Have you noticed that? You'll be dead a lot longer than you were alive here. And when I say "dead," as Moody used to say, you'll be more alive then than you ever were here. So let's invest in the right things.

Pray with me.

God, such an important principle for us to catch. The subtleties of Satan tempting us in this way, I know, are myriad—they're going to come probably before the day is over. And we'll have to make a decision: "Am I trying to fit in here, or am I trying to fit in there? Am I trying to establish progress in this kingdom, or am I really working for progress in that kingdom?"

Of course, this sermon is not about a call for everybody becoming a missionary or a pastor. As the Puritans used to say, all of us have a role to play in our society. This is our vocation—our "calling," a word that used to only be used for clergy, and then it was beginning to be used—it's even made it into our English idioms today that our job is—we call it our vocation—came from those Puritans, you know—God to tell us that we ought to see what we do as the place in which we serve and strive to glorify you; to be great in the kingdom of heaven as an accountant, an architect, a mom—whatever it is we're called to do every day.

So God, let us do it this week without compromise. Let us not be like Saul. Let us not be like the leaders in Israel coming to Samuel saying, "We just want to be like everybody else—we'd just like to fit in." Let us be willing not to fit in this week. And when we suffer ridicule, and when people malign us, let us say—and recite even—the words of Christ, that in that situation we ought to rejoice, we ought to be happy, because so they treated the prophets that came before us.

So God, let us live for the next world. Let us get past this thought that this world is all that really matters; let us realize where we're headed and live like we know where we're going, investing in the right things.



Dismiss us now with a sense of your guidance. Let this sermon kind of just filter through our hearts today. We think about it even as we go to bed tonight—let this sermon be marinating in our minds and the truth of this passage. Let it be a great kind of a calibration of our thinking for this week. Help us in this, I pray. Do this for your own glory. God, we're here to serve you; we want to do it as best we can.

In Jesus' name, Amen.