

## Dead Church Podcast Notes

### Acts Initiative

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### Ep. 17 – The Narrow Road: Is It Worth It?

As Christians, we're called to be holy. We're called to be different – that's what *holy* means. We're supposed to look different than the world in our day-to-day lives. We're supposed to seek first God's Kingdom. We're supposed to prioritize his Kingdom above anything, everything, and everyone else. The Kingdom of God is the only important thing. It's what we should build our lives around.

Jesus is looking for people who care about his Kingdom. He wants people who make all their decisions in life around what is best for the Kingdom – not what's best for themselves. He wants people who he can rely on to do what he would do – who live as he lived.<sup>1</sup>

Why? Because Jesus is looking for people he can trust.

Becoming a Christian isn't just about getting to go to heaven someday and live in paradise. Jesus wants to know that he can trust us with his Kingdom – because he's looking for people to give authority to. He's looking for people to reign with him.

In Revelation, Jesus said, "Only continue in your loyalty until I come. I will give authority over the nations to everyone who overcomes and continues to be obedient to me until the end. You will rule over them with an iron rod, as when pottery is broken into pieces. This is the same authority I received from my Father."<sup>2</sup>

He said again:

"Those who overcome will sit with me on my throne in the same way that I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."<sup>3</sup>

So, Jesus said that those who overcome – who stay loyal to him, live for him, seek first his Kingdom, and don't get swept away by the evil influence of this world – they will have authority over the nations. They will rule over countries. They will sit with him on his throne in his Kingdom.

Paul said something similar to the Corinthians: "Don't you know that God's people will judge the world? ... Don't you know that we will judge angels?"<sup>4</sup>

God's people will judge the world! God's people will even judge angels! Heaven is going to be a real, physical place, just like this earth. His Kingdom is going to be a real, physical kingdom. He is looking for the kings, queens, governors, and leaders that he can trust in his coming Kingdom. He is looking for people he can trust to rule with justice and love. He is looking for people to sit on real, physical thrones. These are all promises for you! These are all things you could experience! God is offering so much more than many Christians realize! He is offering you a throne. He is offering you the right to rule. He is offering you authority. Your future could include kingship and power.

But your priorities could take it all away from you.

Will you be short-sighted? Will you be distracted? Will you focus on the wrong thing? Will you focus on this life and only plan for this life? Will you only look out for yourself? Jesus isn't going to give any authority to people who look out for themselves. He wants people he can trust to do the

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<sup>1</sup> Ref. 1 John 2:6

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 2:25-28

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 3:21

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:2-3

right thing. He wants people who will rule with justice and love. He wants people who will rule with his priorities. He wants people he can trust to make the same decisions he would make.

Jesus told a parable. In the parable, a man went away to a far-away place to be made king. When he left, he called some of his servants. He gave each of them a coin and told them to invest it until he returned. Then he left. He travelled to a far-away land, where he was made king.

This is where we are in the story. Jesus gave us some instructions. Then he left. He hasn't returned yet, but he went away to receive a kingdom. The news has already reached us – he did, in fact, receive the kingdom. We know he's coming back. We know he will be King when he comes back. But we don't know when he's going to arrive. All we know right now is that he gave us some instructions – some things he wants us to do while he's gone.

In the parable, the king eventually did return. He called his servants together, and one after another, he asked them about what they did while he was gone. The first servant told him that he had invested the coin and turned that one coin into ten coins. The king replied to him, "Excellent! You are a good servant! Since you have been faithful with small things, I will let you rule over ten of my cities."<sup>5</sup>

The second servant came to him and told him that he invested the one coin and turned it into five coins. The king told him, "You can rule over five cities."<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the third servant came. He hadn't invested the coin like he had been told. He buried it in the ground. He had nothing to show. He returned the one coin to the king. The king condemned him, called him evil, and took the coin away from him.

Two of the three servants did what they were told.

What was their reward?

Jesus wasn't just telling us some allegorical story with this parable. This is our reality. Jesus is promising that if we are found faithful when he returns, we will reign with him. If we did what he told us to do, we will rule over actual cities! He will give us authority in his Kingdom. We will sit on his throne. We will even rule over angels.

Jesus is looking for people who he can trust to reign with him in his Kingdom. That's our reality. That's what Jesus is promising us. Do you understand this promise?

Do you understand why it's so worth it to live this way?

The road to life is narrow and difficult because Jesus is asking us to live in this world like people who don't belong to this world.<sup>7</sup> He's asking us to live this life prioritizing his Kingdom rather than prioritizing everything that everyone around us prioritizes. The narrow road is full of tests and trials because Jesus is testing whether or not we'll prioritize his Kingdom or his enemy. Everything about this life is a test – do you care enough about his Kingdom? Can he trust you? If he puts you in charge of something in his Kingdom, will you reign with love, or will you be untrustworthy? Will you look out for the good of those under you? Or will you look out for yourself?

Jesus is looking for servants he can trust. He's looking for reliable servants. Remember – you're saved by faith, but in Greek, that word *faith* is actually a word that includes *faithfulness*, *loyalty*, *fidelity*, and *reliability*. Jesus wants people ruling in his Kingdom who he can trust to do the right thing.

We must do what we were told to do while the king is away. If he comes back and finds us neglecting to do the things he told us to do because we prioritized something else... we won't reign with him. We won't hear those wonderful words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" If he comes back and finds that we didn't do what we were told to do, then – at best, we will be like the person who Paul described as entering into life, but only by fire – we'll lose everything we ever did and receive

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 19:17

<sup>6</sup> Luke 19:19

<sup>7</sup> Ref. Matthew 7:13-14

no reward.<sup>8</sup> But at worst... we're risking that we'll be those people Jesus described who will excitedly call him "Lord!" but who he will tell, "I never knew you."<sup>9</sup>

Jesus is testing us. He wants to know if we will be faithful people he can trust to reign with him in his Kingdom, or if we will be people who have all the wrong priorities. He wants people who prioritize and value the same things he values. He values making sure that those under him have their needs met. He is not like the evil kings who rule this world and lord over the people.<sup>10</sup> He is a King who prioritizes the needs of his subjects, and he wants people who do the same.

When God first created the world, he created man to rule over the world.<sup>11</sup> But man messed up. Man disobeyed the commands of God. Man became evil. Over the course of the ensuing millennia, man has become more and more wicked. The world around us is the opposite of what God wants. The world around us is the opposite of how he is going to rule his Kingdom. If we want to prove ourselves to be faithful servants, we cannot look like the world. We must be different. We must be holy. We must live in this world with God's priorities – seeking first what God wants despite the fact that everything and everyone around us thinks it's stupid.

Jesus wants to see if we'll prioritize what he prioritizes. Jesus wants to see if his Kingdom will be more important to us than this world. If we value his Kingdom, he will know he can trust us with his Kingdom.

Throughout the last few videos, we've talked about a few practical ways we can seek first the Kingdom in our lives. We've talked about our possessions, our time, our energy, our money, our education, our jobs, our goals, our families, and our ministry. But it all comes down to the same basic principle. That principle is this: The Kingdom of God, and what God wants are what determine your plans, your actions, and everything you do – whether big or small.

Living for the Kingdom of God isn't something you do on the side. It's something that defines every single aspect of your life. It's radical. It must be radical. It needs to be radical because it's what you're living for. If you're living for something, it will be at the center of everything you do and say. It will drive every decision and influence every conversation.

Is the Kingdom of God the most important thing in your life? Is it not just the most important, but the core of your life – the thing you've built your life around, and the only important factor when you make decisions? Is the Kingdom of God everything to you? Are you completely given over to the Kingdom of God? Is it the only thing you really care about? In other words: Do you want to be a part of God's Kingdom more than you want to be a part of this world?

Your priorities will show what you want. It's not what you *say*; it's what you *do*.

If you can't honestly say that your life and all your decisions are always all about God's Kingdom, the answer is simple: Change. It's really that simple. Repentance means you stop living the way you're living, and you start doing the things you're supposed to do. It means you stop prioritizing the things you've been prioritizing, and you start prioritizing the things God prioritizes.

Jesus is offering you his Kingdom. Do you want it?

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. One day a man found the treasure, and then he hid it in the field again. He was so excited that he went and sold everything he owned to buy that field.

Also, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he

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<sup>8</sup> Ref. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

<sup>9</sup> Ref. Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>10</sup> Ref. Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27

<sup>11</sup> Ref. Genesis 1:28

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found a very valuable pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.”<sup>12</sup>

“Don’t fear, little flock, because your Father wants to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor... your heart will be where your treasure is... Be like servants who are waiting for their master to come home... That servant will be blessed when the master comes and finds him doing his work. I tell you the truth, the master will put him in charge of everything he owns.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 13:44-46

<sup>13</sup> Luke 12:32-44