

21st June 2020 10am Reaching the End of Ourselves *Transcript only of talks including copy of reading*

Service led by Michelle Harris, talk by Andrew Attwood
including contributions by Jane Garsed, Heather Homes and Dot Powell,
and reading by Jess Harris

Contribution 1 – Jane Garsed.....	2
Contribution 2 – Heather Homes.....	2
Reading: <i>Matthew</i> 19:16-30 [NIVUK].....	2
Exposition of the passage.....	3
Contribution 3 – Jane Garsed.....	5
Continuation of exposition.....	5
Contribution 4 – Heather Homes.....	6
Conclusion of talk.....	6
Contribution 5 – Dot Powell.....	7

[Andrew Attwood:]

Let's just continue to pray for a moment.

Lord Jesus we do fix our eyes on You. We concentrate on You and help us, Lord, just to be aware of Your presence there. Help us to breathe in Your presence.

And Lord, would You help us all the way through this time together to be open, to be receptive, to be listening, to be hearing.

And we pray, Lord, that as You speak, that Your words, Your message would go in.

In Jesus' Name.
Amen.

I'm just going to spend a few moments describing how this morning's service is slightly different. One of the things that's been a real privilege over these last particular few weeks since lockdown is a sense, a growing sense of people saying that they're drawing nearer to God, that they're beginning to discern what He's showing them and saying, and so I've been spending a bit more time with a few people in particular, who are getting reasonably good at discerning God's voice and being prophetic. So there's a particular prophetic emphasis for this morning's service, it's going to be teaching and I'm going to be doing that, but kind of peppered through this service, there's going to be a couple of people who are on recorded video, who are going to be sharing some particular insights that they feel God has shown them. Just to set this in context, we believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We recognise Scripture endorses the use of these gifts. We know that prophesying these days isn't the same authority as the Bible, because we prophesy imperfectly, but nevertheless, with a bit of weighing and discerning, we can hear God through these kinds of insights that people share. So I've got today Jane Garsed and Heather Homes who are going to be sharing some words, and there'll be one video in a moment that they'll share and they're going to be on that one. And then throughout my talk is going to be another couple of occasions where they share too.

So the purpose of this today is to help understand what God is saying into the 'now' as well as what He's always said through Scripture for all time, and I just want to encourage you, if you do have pen and paper, and if any of these things start to ring true, make a note. It's important that if we are hearing and discerning, we make a note and we do our own weighing and discerning for ourselves. So in a moment, Jane and Heather will be on a video. And following

that Jess Harris is going to bring our reading. So let's listen now to the first video.

Contribution 1 – Jane Garsed

So yesterday as I was praying, I had a picture of a boat, a wooden boat, that had been washed ashore and was upturned on the beach and sunk deeply into the sand and there were lots of people around, desperately digging away with their spades to try and resurrect, to try and get this boat back up, and get it into a place where it could be reused, but however hard they tried, they just couldn't get it up, they couldn't lift it out of the sand. And I felt that God was saying that this is a new season. And you can't resurrect what He has set down, what He has laid down, and that we need to be forward-facing and in a place where we look ahead and not back to what was the former things. And I think God is calling the Church beyond the here-and-now, that sense of not allowing ourselves to be focused so much on the trials and the difficulties that we're in now, but actually to look beyond, to have our eyes going beyond, and to try and dream and envisage what a church might look like to... yes, just bring our focus alive really to what we hope for, what we see in the future and overcome the things, the massive mountains, that are in front of us at the moment.

Contribution 2 – Heather Homes

So the church has been scattered at this time. It's changed the way that we do things, the way that we communicate. And it's distributed out of the building as a body. And I feel God is saying that He is going to build the Church outside of the building. I also feel that the "No Fishing" sign in the Abbey Fields has been removed and I feel that God would say it's time to fish, and I was reminded of the fish that eat just absolutely anything you feed them in that lake. So just be encouraged that it's time to fish.

Reading: *Matthew 19:16-30* [NIVUK]

[Jess Harris:]

¹⁶ Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?'

¹⁷ 'Why do you ask me about what is good?' Jesus replied. 'There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.'

¹⁸ 'Which ones?' he enquired.

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honour your father and mother," and "love your neighbour as yourself."

²⁰ 'All these I have kept,' the young man said. 'What do I still lack?'

²¹ Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'

²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?'

²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'

²⁷ Peter answered him, 'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?'

²⁸ Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Exposition of the passage

[Andrew:]

Fantastic. Thank you so much, Jess. That's a really wonderful reading. It's lovely to hear you on this Sunday morning, we very much appreciate that.

Okay, I'm going to be talking a little bit now about this story from Matthew 19, verses 16 to 30. So if you do want to open your Bibles, that's where you're going to find this passage. The reason for me choosing this particular passage, again, is to do with just a particular insight Lindsey happened to be mentioning a couple of weeks ago, that this seemed to ring true for her, and it's resonated with me ever since she said it. So I'm going to just do a little bit of Bible exposition and see if you think it connects with where we are as well.

We must have said numerous times now that this is an age, this is a phase where we seem to be going deeper with God. But one of the features of going deeper with God is that it exposes you, not only to God, but to yourself. One of the things that continues to make me smile, now that we've got both of our girls back in the house at the moment, is there's a kind of an etiquette upstairs when people are using the bathroom. And there's always this kind of dash that happens when people have just either had a shower or a bath or whatever. And me too, there's a kind of moment of leaving the bathroom and dashing in a towel to the bedroom, and dashing back to the bathroom, whatever, because you might not quite be dressed in the usual kind of way, when the house is full of other people who aren't usually here. So that question of being a bit exposed is something that that feels funny and nervous, but it's also a spiritual thing. Choosing to be more naked with God is actually a sign of growth and maturity. You see, increasing honesty with God requires quite a lot of bravery. Looking in the mirror and seeing ourselves is one thing, but looking in the presence of God and seeing ourselves is quite a challenge. But this, I think, is an inevitability of this particular season that we are in - it feels like the spiritual temperature has gone up. And you will find in this story that the spiritual temperature around Jesus is always high. Whoever comes into His company, it kind of exposes, it turns the heat up, and it can both attract and it can repel.

Here's a thought: have you ever wondered why you feel sluggish sometimes? Have you ever wondered why you might feel spiritually sluggish, where life feels like it's leaden and you can't move forward spiritually? I had a small problem on my computer this last week, where it seemed to slow down. Sometimes that happens to computers, where everything kind of grinds and goes much slower than normal. And I clicked on a particular app which is called the Activity Monitor. And I realised that in the background of my computer's activity there was a host of things that were grinding away that were taking all of the energy, and using all of the RAM of the computer, which meant it couldn't function properly. And so I had to actually select them, stop them and actually delete some of them. So here's a question as we explore this story to do with the rich young ruler. Are there things that are whirring away in the back of our lives, that might be getting in the way of what God is calling us to? Some things might need to stop. Some things might need to be deleted.

So let's think about this young man. Who was he? What do we know about this character that met Jesus? He's a man. This particular version of the story from Matthew says he was young. This version and Luke's version says he was rich - a rich, young man. It's also pretty clear that he would be described in certainly his own time as being devout. He is someone here who is devoted to God. He can quote and know and live out the commandments of God. He's also called a ruler, a rich young ruler. Luke emphasises this and we don't quite know what that means in detail. Perhaps he was a member of the Sanhedrin, perhaps he was a local synagogue leader, we don't really know. But he's someone of influence - he's a ruler. So he has his own wealth. He has elements of control and influence in the local area. He's used to directing. He's used to shaping things. He's free in all kinds of ways because of his status and his money. He can say "I will do this if I choose. I will go there if I want to."

And yet, despite all of these so-called positive things in this rich young man's life, he knows that something is missing. He knows that something is a mess. And so he asks this question of Jesus, what must I do to get eternal life? He knows that he has to do something because something is missing. Now this is a very telling indicator of what we're like in our in our western world, in the UK, missing something. For decades, in this modern era, our and previous generations have been chasing something. It's a long time ago now, but when the Rolling Stones sang "I can't get no satisfaction," that was a kind of a yearning thing. When U2 sang, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for," that was another kind of 1980s version of that. Prior to all of that you had authors and dramatists like Samuel Beckett writing *Waiting for Godot*, which is basically a kind of a play about waiting for someone who isn't coming. And so there's this picture, this subconscious sense of something missing, something that you're longing for. If only you could scratch that itch. If only you could buy that thing or possess this thing or eat that meal or try that drink or have that experience. And yet time and again, for so many people, there is a sense that something is out of reach that is important. What about you? Are you aware of something missing? Are you aware that there is perhaps something from God that is calling you towards something that you haven't yet received or embraced yet? Are you beginning to feel during lockdown that your priorities are shifting? Are your priorities changing yet?

Think of this man, what is he asking? "What do I need to do to get eternal life?" In a, I suppose, simplistic sense, sometimes I think he's asking, "How can I get to heaven when I die?" He's not asking that. He's not asking, "How can I get to heaven when I die?" That's a superimposed idea that we're putting on the text. An Israelite would already have a set of beliefs about how things work out in this age and in the age to come. And what he's basically saying is, "How can I be part of the new age to come? How can I be guaranteed to be part of that, when it comes around? How can I be part of the new age to come when the Kingdom of God fully comes?" That's what all the Israelites were expecting. That's what he means. He wants to be assured of his place there. And so he tells Jesus, "Look, I keep the commandments. I keep the commandments that You've just told me." He's begging the question though, because he still knows it's like an itch that isn't satisfied. He's going, "Well, I do that stuff." Jesus has given him a handful of commandments that he needs to keep, something he needs to do. He wants to be more sure though. He's looking for certainty. We all look for certainty and we all look for guarantees. So the man's question goes on, "What do I need to do?"

Do you get a sense that you have a list of things that you're ticking off all the time? Are you ticking off a list of things that are affirming who you are, that are making you feel safe, that are making sure everything is in its place? This man knew, even though he could go, "Done that command, done that command, done that command," there was still something lacking. He seemed very confident in his religious duties. But there's something that isn't quite right.

A couple of Sundays ago, I was doing a Sunday roast. It was a pork joint and it had been in the oven for the allotted time, but the surface of the pork needed to be attended to, so I put it under the grill. Those of you who are cooks will understand this, you put it under the grill and you get the pork crackling just right, you put it under a more intense heat to get the outer side of the pork joint just perfect. This is what it is like to draw closer to Jesus Christ, you draw closer into the real heat of where Jesus is. Now, despite your own inclinations to perhaps order and control like this young man, perhaps your usual manner of skilled living *because this young man was pretty much in charge of his own destiny). Are you aware that something else might need to change? I just want to encourage you to bear the idea that God is saying, "Look in the mirror."

We're going to play the next video now from Jane. See if any of this rings true.

Contribution 3 – Jane Garsed

I think what's been really important for me at the moment is how I feel that God is speaking very much to the Church and to us, each of us as members of the body of Christ, and particularly the Church that we have here in the West, and that sense that we and I have been almost sort of lukewarm, really. And of course, that's what we hear in Revelation about the Church in Laodicea. And before lockdown, I don't think I would have considered myself lukewarm in my faith. But I have found this a real challenge, I have felt that God is saying that we're comfortable, that we're complacent because of that comfortable place. And we therefore trust in our own strength. Rather than fully in Him, we're resource-rich.

And one of the pictures I had was of this barn that was completely full to the top, of prepared and pre-prepared logs. And it was just as though God was saying, "Until you turn away from your resources, from your barns, and trust in Me fully, the Church will remain in that lukewarm place, that we're too trusting of our own resources, whatever those resources might be, be it money or possessions. And because of our reliance upon these things, our relationship with God is weakened and is half-hearted. And I thought it was really for me a time when I was being called to go much deeper, and to fall back in love with Jesus and reminding myself of that newness of when you fall in love: you want to be with that person all the time. And that's where I feel that Jesus is calling us to at the moment, to rekindle that passion and that love that we have for Him.

Continuation of exposition

[Andrew:]

Thank you, Jane. This all is very resonant: that rings true with this story of this young man. Jesus speaks to the young man in the story and gives him an answer that actually he didn't want to hear. Jesus says in verse 21, he says,

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

You might not have noticed it, but when Jesus had originally given the list of other commands, the one that he missed out is, "Do not covet your neighbour's goods." He listed a whole list of other things, but he's not said, "Do not covet your neighbour's goods," because Jesus knew this was the hot button for this rich man. If you want to be perfect, let go. "If you want to be perfect, put to one side those things, and I will give you treasure in heaven," Jesus says, "I want to give you treasure. But it's a different kind of treasure to the one that you're used to. And you get it by letting go and following me."

What kind of treasure is Jesus talking about? Just imagine, He was there

standing, talking to this young man surrounded by the twelve, surrounded by His immediate disciples. Who were they? These are people who presently have the treasure Jesus is offering to the rich young man. They have personal mentoring from the Son of God on Earth and forever. They have first-hand experience of God, through the presence of Jesus Christ right in front of them. They have complete and utter security, which will last them in the present and into the age to come, which was what the rich young ruler was after. They've already given up everything. Yes, all of these men, and some of the women as well, who travelled, had already been through this loop, they'd already let go of what they had. It's a bit like passing an exam, you know, like in grammar schools, where there's an entrance exam. This is a test. This is a test for the rich young ruler, and He knows, Jesus knows, that he's got a gang full of people who've already passed this test. That's why He talks about this later in this passage. He's testing the rich young ruler to see if he qualifies to join. But there is a problem. And the problem is money. The problem is money.

You seen money is very sticky. It is very hard to ignore or to control. In fact, in Luke 16 ¹, particularly in the Jerusalem Bible's version, it describes money as 'that tainted thing', or another translation, 'the Mammon of unrighteousness'. It's like it's dirty. No, it's not that all money is bad, because let's face it, we have to use it. And Jesus is realistic about that, but it's almost like it has a contaminating effect. Now, you know the age in which we live where we have to wear masks, and we even have to wear gloves sometimes so that we don't touch things: it just reminded me that from a spiritual point of view, possessions and money, they almost needed to be treated with gloves and masks, spiritually speaking, because they take a hold of you. They become the treasure that a person trusts in. Imagine for a moment that this is a conversation then that Jesus is having with you: that Jesus isn't just speaking to this guy, and it clearly doesn't apply to us. Imagine He's speaking it to you. And He says, "Give it all away. Give it all away." As soon as you hear that, your feelings will tell you how sticky money is in your life at this time.

Now we're going to listen to another word now from Heather.

Contribution 4 – Heather Homes

Okay, the other word that I had was – well it was a picture really of nakedness and I felt like God was taking all the things that we depend upon away from us. And it was causing us to be naked, and in that, He would actually re-clothe us. And it comes from a word that Jane Garsed brought from the church in Laodicea, Revelation 3:17-18 and it says,

¹⁷ You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see.

Conclusion of talk

[Andrew:]

Thank you, Heather. Thanks, Jane. These these are quite challenging words. I just need to acknowledge that it requires a fair amount of maturity to be able to hear this at all, but those words that Heather was quoting there are from Revelation 3. A bit like Jane was was hinting at before, and these are things to do with unexpected nakedness. Sometimes, when we've got a lot of stuff in our lives, we can think that we're covered. But perhaps at this time, God is beginning to say to some of us, to me too, "Perhaps you're more naked than you think."

1 Luke 16 verse 13

I was having a conversation with Lindsey the other day about where He's taking us and what kind of things He's been saying to us over the years, just as a couple. And I'll be honest with you, we don't we don't have an awful lot of resource behind us. We don't have tons of savings. And we don't have a house of our own. We don't have that. But on numerous occasions, over the years, I felt reassurance from God, that at the time when we need it God will give us somewhere to live. That may sound naïve, but I've heard it so many times, I believe it. But I was saying to Lindsey the other day, that I would get nervous if I got a house too soon. I would get nervous if I got a big possession too soon, because I think it would probably negatively affect me spiritually. Because by having less, I think I hear more and can do more for God. I think it keeps me more dependent on God by having less.

So a question I just want you to consider this morning is, what do you really want? What kind of treasure are you really after? And if we are pressing into depth with God and following Him into the future, not just treading water so we can go back to how things were, I just wonder how badly you want the treasure of heaven that Jesus offers us. Or are we like the camel that can't get through the eye of the needle? Have you reached the end of yourself yet? You see the rich young ruler hasn't. This is a sad story. This particular encounter with Jesus, and let's face it, Jesus didn't get anything wrong with how to communicate - He didn't mis-communicate, if only He said it in a different way. This is the rich young ruler hearing aright, and turning away and walking away. He still believed that independence, control and money was better than following Jesus. He still believed he could run his life better than Jesus could. Have you realised yet that Jesus can run your life better than you? I am so excited. This may sound negative, but I'm so excited that the Church in the West, that the Church in the UK, that possibly even people in St. John's, are beginning to get to the end of ourselves. You see, we need to give up. We need to give in. We need to recognise that we can't do life in our own strength. We can't do church or mission in our own strength. We need to stop the fight. We need to stop walking away and we need to give in. I'm going to finish my talk with not another prophecy but something that really resonated. Dot Powell is going to share some words that just help finish this message for today.

Contribution 5 – Dot Powell

Hello, everyone, I hope you're keeping safe and well.

Since lockdown began, I've been busier than probably ever before in my working life. I work at Warwick Business School, leading the teaching and learning team and we've been helping lecturers to put their modules online, when normally they would have taught them face-to-face. We've done that with 75 modules in the last three months and so it's all been immensely stressful. And family life is very different as well: instead of two people in the house, we've got five. And we're learning to live together, to cook together and to share the space. It's certainly not something that either Andy or I would have predicted would have been what would be happening this time this year.

Something that happened a little bit before lockdown, I think around about February time, was that one morning I suddenly felt the urge to get out of bed and kneel in front of Jesus: really to kneel at his feet, and to give everything to Him. And I can't remember what prompted it, I don't know why I did it. I must have been reading something, maybe in the Bible, but I just felt the urge. And once I'd started doing that, I found I wanted to do it every morning and I wanted to just make that part of my habit every day and if I forgot to do it, I'd even do it sort of just in the bathroom. And just before I got in the shower, I would find myself just on the floor, giving everything over to God, which sounds maybe a little bit odd. But as lockdown began, that became something really important to me. And in all the stress and strains of the new life that we're living every single day, I've been getting down on my knees and what I've been saying to God has been, "I can't do this without you. I can't manage to get through even this one single day, without you to take me through."

There's a Hillsong song which I've been playing on loop called *Awake my Soul*, and it's got a line in it that says, "And there's a sound that changes things. It's the sound of God's people on their knees." And I've really wondered and hoped that maybe God has called other people to kneel before Him and to pray, depending on Him, but also to pray for really big change in our nation and to pray for revival. And as I've become more dependent myself on Him, I've also found that my prayers have been getting bigger like that. My prayers have been that He will move in such a mighty and miraculous way. And I would really encourage you to depend on Him, but also to depend on Him for something big, and that will come out as a result of what we're going through now. And that this will just be a time when the people of God move in prayer. And then we will really see amazing things happening. So God bless you.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

[NIVUK] Extracts from the Holy Bible, New International Version Anglicised, copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 Biblica, formerly International Bible Society. [Used by permission](#) of Hodder & Stoughton Publishing, an Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790