

What "Lost" Really Means to God

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Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0 : 00] Good morning. Let's start by reading the Bible. Not all of it, just a little section. Sounds quite ominous to say read the Bible, doesn't it? We're going to go to Ephesians 2. So if you can find yourself in Ephesians chapter 2, I'm going to read the few verses from the beginning of that chapter.

And verse 1.

Just last week, Joe and Jenny, as they led us in worship, borrowed much from the text that we'll delve into today.

And it was a real blessing to see those passages tie into the worship and the Word last week. And then Andy Bannister, this Thursday, also touched on some of the texts we're going to look at today when he spoke on Thursday.

Just a great example of how the Word and Spirit can really move and come together in all this. And so it's a real blessing to me. I've got three broad points.

[2 : 26] Consider as we look through this and the Lord teaches us through his Word today. More of a broad outline rather than traditional sermon points.

But you may use them to hang on the overarching message. And the three points are, I am poor. He is rich. So what? So just kind of consider that as we go.

So I'm just going to open in prayer. And we'll get into it. Thank you, Father, that you have much for us.

And we've already seen today that you are active, working amongst us. And we love hearing testimony of your goodness.

Just because it's good to be reminded that it's about you and not about us and what we have to say. However, who cannot hear your miraculous works and not immediately turn towards the creator of this universe and say, thank you for considering us?

[3 : 37] And so we pray that you can consider us during this time. And consider our hearts as we consider you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Right. So thanks for the opportunity to share today. My name is Joseph. I know most of you, if not all of you, by now.

So I just want to start off by just considering just a few things. So who doesn't like new things or getting new things? Everyone likes getting new things, right?

Well, was there ever a time when you bought something that you hoped would meet a particular need or expectation, only to find that although it did what it said on the tin, it failed to satisfy?

Well, when it comes to purchases, you might know this about me, but I'm a researcher. So especially since the creation of YouTube. Now, there was a time once that YouTube didn't exist.

[4 : 43] Some of you don't believe me, but that's shown your age. But before the creation of YouTube, you know, well, since the creation of YouTube, I will watch review after review after review of something before I buy it.

And some of you are laughing because, you know, that's also like yourself. It gets to a point, though, where my wife gets tired of me talking about all the pros and cons of buying this thing, that she practically makes me buy it or even purchases it for me, just so I'll shut up about it.

But despite this, there are still several times when I've kind of bought something and it failed to meet my hopes and expectations. We've all kind of got testimony of that fact. This feeling is sometimes referred to as buyer's remorse, where you kind of feel like your purchase was empty and unsatisfying, where the thing you bought was not worth what you paid for it.

Now, living according to sin, the rejection of God and what he says is best, always gives that sense of emptiness. It somehow tricks us to think that the only thing we need is more of the same thing and we will be satisfied.

We are deceived to believe that the problem isn't the substance of the thing we've replaced God with, but the quantity. If only we had more, then we'd be happy, fulfilled or have purpose.

[6 : 17] It's a cycle of increasing investment, but diminishing returns. A pattern of unfulfilling rejection of God. Today's passage refers to this cycle as being dead in our trespasses and sins.

In fact, the first three verses of today's passage in Ephesians 2 remind us of our first ancestors, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The woman, deceived by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, considers the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be good for food, a delight to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise.

God himself walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. They had a personal relationship with the Lord God, yet tragically, they thought it wasn't enough.

So they ate. They rejected God's clear commands, believing they lacked the knowledge that it would give, and by meeting their lack, they would be whole and fulfilled.

[7 : 30] Yet they had the ultimate buyer's remorse. The thing they valued more than knowing God and having an intimate relationship with him brought death and destruction into the world.

Not only that, it created a void, a chasm between them and the God who created them. Picture it as if they were now on one side of a valley and God on the other.

They're able to see what they had left, what they had lost, but not touch, not reach out to, and not embrace. And just like them, we traded in our relationship with God for death, seeking our own desires, a worthless vanity project of self-fulfillment, which is far from fulfilling, but is the truest sense of emptiness.

Like gambling at a poker table, we went all in for ourselves and not God. Each one of us had reordered our desires with the hope that we can get what we think we need, be filled with our passions and desires, without the need for God or the requirement to give credit to anyone else. Least of all, our Creator. But our lives were like bright latex balloons, filled to the brim with air.

[8 : 55] Sure, we looked full. We even made our lives look exciting. But when the truth of God's word pierced our outer facade, we saw our lives for what they truly were, empty and worthless.

Or as Jesus puts it in Revelation 3, verse 17, when talking to the false believers in Laodicea, For you say, do you believe this? If you believe that this accurately describes all those that are without Christ, including yourself, then the next two words in Ephesians 2, beginning of verse 4, will be the most glorious in the entire scriptures.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But God, or and God, depending on your translation, but the God is the most important word there, right?

It was God who did this. But what does it say? It says that the facade of a life, our facade of a life, is not the only thing that's been pierced.

[10 : 59] But Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was pierced after hanging on the cross for six hours, proving he did really die. Just like us, we were really dead because of the chasm that laid between us and God due to our rejection of him.

But when Jesus was pierced, we didn't find empty, void worthlessness that defined our lives. But we find true value, true riches.

Well, what happens when infinite worth and desperate poverty intersects? Well, that chasm, that valley that separated us from a loving relationship with God was filled with the blood of Jesus Christ.

By the blood of Jesus Christ, we can now cross, we can now gain access once again to a fulfilling, personal and purposeful relationship with the one and only true God.

We may know mercy and grace that never runs dry. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[12 : 18] Ephesians 1.3 Well, when Jesus was pierced, we didn't find emptiness, right? We found true value in his life and death.

And when he was raised on the third day, we found entry into the inheritance that he purchased for us. Verse 7. So that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Well, what is this truly worth? What is anything really worth? Well, this past year, a Pokemon card sold for approximately \$16.5 million.

Now, don't get me wrong. I grew up very emotionally invested in Pokemon. It was my era's cultural phenomenon. I played all the original games.

And to this day, I can still quote lyrics from the anime's theme song. I want to be the very best. Yes, exactly. So I'm not the only one, right?

[13:27] Okay? Now, we live in a world that values a tiny piece of printed card close to the GDP of a small country. Yeah?

Doesn't that blow your mind? Depending on your view on human depravity, maybe it doesn't. But people regularly spend astronomical amounts of money on things that most people, even those who don't know Christ, consider worthless.

Right? However, what's more dreadful is the insignificant price we put on things that are actually worthwhile. This is most clearly seen when we consider Judas Iscariot the betrayer.

30 pieces of silver. The God of all creation in human flesh sold for a few pieces of metal. But what's worse, to quote Josiah Queen's lyrics, For 30 pieces of silver, he ain't worse than me, because he betrayed you for money, and I did it for free.

What did you get when you lusted over that thing or person that's not rightly yours? What did you get when you hated that person for offending you? What did you get when you ignored God and went your own way?

[14:52] Even if you did get something, right? What was it? Fitting in with your work colleagues? Having access to a streaming service you didn't pay for?

Being seen as superior in an argument? What was it worth? What did it give? Nothing. Emptiness. No value.

It was truly worthless. But when Christ saved us by grace, through faith in him alone, he showed us the immeasurable riches of grace in kindness towards us.

And he still does. This is what this text says, right? So we are in the ages that came after Jesus' resurrection. And there are many more ages to come for God to display the immeasurable riches of his grace to us.

So let's pause here and think. Because if this is true, right? If everything is worthless apart from Christ, what are we doing with our lives?

[15:56] Now, who doesn't like a good walk along the beach?

I think there might be a few cursory looks towards our pastor Simon there, because I think he had a very long walk beside a beach yesterday. And so maybe he doesn't like it right now.

He's always been quite pro walks along the beach, but maybe after yesterday he's trying to ignore that it happened. Some of my fondest memories, and I'm sure some of yours, come from enjoying simple moments in God's vast creation and just enjoying its beauty.

Inevitably, on my beach visits, I and the kids end up skimming stones on the water. Well, my son, he usually tries to find the largest possible stone he can find and hauls it to the water's edge, not managing to lift it up and throw it in, because he's too weak.

I mean, though I enjoy skimming stones, I'm not the strongest man in the world. No, no, I mean...

[17:13] And the distance which I can throw the stones is somewhat limited, right? But imagine if you could throw the stones so far that it goes beyond the horizon, further than the eye can see.

Well, the Greek word for immeasurable in today's text is hyperbolon, from which we get the word hyperbole. And it literally means to throw beyond or to surpass.

The riches of God's grace throws beyond what we can see or even comprehend. It transcends human measurement. Now, Paul uses the same Greek word in his epistle multiple times, right?

Let's just go and look through a couple. Ephesians 1, verse 19. And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards those who believe, according to the working of his great might? Ephesians 3, verse 19. And to know the love of Christ, that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Well, what do these texts say?

[18:26] That God's grace, his greatness, and love throw beyond the horizon, throw beyond human comprehension. Though back in Ephesians 2, I specifically want to spend some time this morning considering the word riches.

As when I read this text, it fascinates me that even the word riches is there. We could happily read the text as, so that in the coming ages, he might show his immeasurable grace.

Right? It is true, God's grace is immeasurable. But this text refers to the immeasurable riches of his grace. God's grace is not only more than sufficient to save, but it has continued pursuing and indescribable blessings for the Christian, demonstrated in kindness towards us, found in the person of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever experienced the continued, pursuing, indescribable grace of God that this text refers to? And do you still experience it today?

Well, let's just take one step back in this epistle, one verse before the reading just a few seconds ago, in Ephesians 1, verse 18.

[19 : 54] It says, Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

The riches. The immeasurable riches of God's grace are a glorious inheritance. We didn't earn it. We couldn't earn it.

But it was given as a product of being adopted as his children. I'll say it again. What happens when infinite worth and desperate poverty intersects?

To get this, to begin to understand the riches of his grace, we must first understand God's budget or lack thereof. His riches aren't such that he needs to budget or set aside money for us or riches for us.

Neither is he like a billionaire who gives us a penny out of his vast wealth. Rather, he gives according to his riches.

[21 : 03] The supply is inexhaustible because the source is infinite. Philippians 4, verse 19 says, And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

So let's continue to study this infinite source and begin to comprehend these riches. In the Old Testament, God's worth is most declared referring to his glory, kavod.

The Hebrew word for God's glory carries the sense of weight or intrinsic value. In other words, he has value not because of anything he has done, but because of who he is.

Whereas the Greek word for worthy, axios, emphasizes God's comparative worth, meaning everything else's value is insignificant when comparing to him.

Though both God's intrinsic value and comparative value are clearly seen in both Testaments, it's fascinating that these widely used words in the Scriptures emphasize these two aspects of God's riches so clearly, yet so personally.

[22 : 23] Remembering what was said earlier about the value given to Pokemon cards? It's deeply ironic that the only God who was traded in for 30 pieces of silver is the only being in all existence who actually has intrinsic worth and is beyond comparison.

Now, to further explore this, this is what I said. Andy Bannister kind of mentioned the first few verses of this text on Thursday, which kind of like if you were there, it's a good starting point for us today.

And it says, so I want to stroll back to an event in the Gospels in Luke 18. So Luke 18, verse 18 to 25, when Jesus speaks to the rich ruler.

It says, a ruler asked him, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus said to him, why'd you call me good? No one's good except God alone. You know the commandments, right? Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour your father and mother.

[23 : 48] And he said, all these I've kept from my youth. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, one thing you still lack.

Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me. But when he heard these things, he became very sad for he was extremely rich.

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, that said, how difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

How sad this story is. Summed up in a short but terrible indictment, one thing you still lack.

He had the riches of this world, but not the riches of his grace. In fact, it clearly states that if anyone considers that they have sufficient wealth, they won't see the truth.

[24 : 58] They won't recognise that they're in poverty, that they are poor, blind and naked. They won't see their need for the riches of his grace. It is impossible for these proud and self-sufficient people to enter God's kingdom.

But God stepped in. We, who are like the rich man, convinced that we had everything we needed, can be saved.

To quote Paul from his lesson to the church in Philippi, chapter 3, verse 7 to 8. But whatever gain I had, I counted it as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Paul understood what the rich man didn't.

Worldly riches don't get you into God's kingdom, nor do they stop you. But without the throne beyond immeasurable, surpassing worth of riches of God's grace, we have nothing.

[26 : 09] All we have is rubbish. Now, the word kindness in today's passage also stands out to me. Kindness is shown within a relationship.

The relationship we now have with our God made that chasm crossable. By his blood, we are shown the ongoing and immeasurable riches of his grace.

And it's within a perpetual, loving relationship with our Savior. Brothers and sisters, listen.

Cling on to the Savior. Trust him. And he will by no means let you go. Verse 8 in today's text.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing. It's a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. God's immeasurable riches are not earned, but received as a gift for all those who have faith in him.

[27 : 28] The rich man had many good works. He had ticked lists off. He demonstrated obedience to God's laws. But he lacked one thing, a Savior.

The riches that he and all of us need are not riches we can earn because the riches we need are unattainable. They are thrown beyond what we can see or imagine.

The chasm too great, our sin too deep, our lives too empty. Salvation is received as a gift through a living faith in Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. Do you believe this?

Do you believe that the only God who created all things became a part of his creation, forsaking his equality with his Father to provide a way to know him and be saved?

If you don't, then there's no maybe about it. Today's the day. If you do, so what?

[28 : 34] What now? Well, verse 10 says, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now the Greek word workmanship in Ephesians 2 is where we get the word poem from. In other words, we are God's creative work. If you're in Christ, you are God's creative work.

Just think about that. How many brush strokes did it take to paint the Mona Lisa? Probably more than I would imagine. But what I do know is that Leonardo da Vinci's world-renowned creative work was not completed in one brushstroke.

Similarly, the immeasurable riches of his grace that forgives, shapes, and empowers us are like an uncountable number of brushstrokes, sanctifying us.

He is making us more into the image of Christ to be ready to walk in the good works which he has prepared for us to do. If this is true, are you yielding yourself to give time and opportunity for God to work within you?

[29 : 54] He is bringing you and I and all things to completion as we await his return. Simon, are we actively participating in the life that we have now and the works which he has prepared for us?

Now, when Simon, our pastor, who's got tired legs today, asked me to share today, I asked him if there was a specific passage that he wanted me to cover.

He replied, via WhatsApp, so I have evidence if you need. No, not really. I think it would be good for the church to see your personal vision. I thought, oh, so not too daunting then.

But I guess my heart, my vision, is for all of us at Calvary Chapel, Southampton, including myself, to see God's value. Not only for salvation, but for every day of our lives.

And Ephesians 2 seemed like a clear text that demonstrates this. Do we value God? I hope we can all say yes. But if his riches of grace are immeasurable, can we ever comprehend the throne beyond riches of his grace and love for us?

[31 : 17] Well, let's move forward a chapter still in Ephesians 3, sorry, in Ephesians, but in chapter 3, where Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spells it out much better than I ever could.

Verse 16 to 19. That according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being.

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and

depth.

And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. That was Paul's prayer that we do indeed start to get it.

So my heart, my vision is to in some way assist us to begin to comprehend the knowledge surpassing, thrown beyond, love of Christ so that we can depend on it, which in turn enables us to defend it as we live our lives that honor him.

[32 : 34] Comprehend, depend, defend. what happens when infinite worth and desperate poverty intersects.

We get to experience what's referred to as the chief end of man, to know God and to glorify him forever. These are the immeasurable riches of his grace, knowing him and living like we do.

We're all worshippers, Christian or non-Christian. We all love to worship, whether it's a new TV, job, car, clothes you've just bought. We love declaring how great the things are that we have purchased. And we're even happier if others agree with us. But all these things have no intrinsic value. They're only worth something because we've decided they are.

But God is the only thing, the only being who has true intrinsic value. So when we praise him, when we give glory to him, we can be truly satisfied.

[33 : 43] The good news is that God saw enough value in us to send his only son to die for us and rise again for our salvation. By grace, through faith, you are adopted as a child of God and will inherit his riches for this life and the life to come.

therefore, I implore you by the immeasurable riches of his grace, let's be ambassadors for Christ. Let's comprehend his love, depend on his grace and defend his truth.

And you'll continue to experience this immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus, just as you did when you first believed and thrown beyond that as you walk with him in the good works which he's prepared for you.

As you begin to comprehend his love, tomorrow, at work, you can depend on his grace. The Christian doesn't need to buy their worth from their colleagues because they already have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

You can then defend his truth by showing that our joy isn't tied to our bank account or success, but in the kindness that God demonstrates us in a loving relationship with him.

[35 : 07] Your life can and will have value if its source is never-ending and it's based in the throne beyond immeasurable riches of his grace.

Even better still, his mercies are new every morning. Just as the riches of his grace are immeasurable, so is his patience towards the believer.

He cares for us. He walks with us. He hears us when we call out to him. He speaks to us in his word and he does all these things and more time and time and time again colliding with our desperate poverty, not because we deserve it, not because we earned it, but because of the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father, that you came through your son.

we need you more than we knew, more than we can say, but your riches overcome and outmeasure our need.

[36 : 31] thank you that you continue to pursue us in love, that you can't demonstrate in kindness other than the fact that it is still happening today.

It's, it's, it's, you've defined kindness and love in a way that it doesn't leave us or let us go and we thank you that we can depend on that.

It says, forever, who would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses life for Jesus' sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Lord, we, we do not want to gain this world. We want to gain you. whatever cost it takes, because you are worth it.

However, thank you that it's not something we can buy or purchase, but it's received as a gift.

Thank you that you are able to do far more abundantly than we could ever hope or dream of and we pray that you can help us to trust in that and to live according to that.

[37 : 55] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.