

Let Him Be Better Than You

SPEAKER Matt Ryniker

DATE Sunday, December 28, 2025

PASSAGES 2 Kings 6; Matthew 20; Revelation 21; Psalm 16; Psalm 73

MESSAGE Begins at 0:49:42 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God is not stingier than advertised — he is more generous than we are comfortable with, and that is the part that trips us. The hardest thing he asks of us is not effort but reception: to let him be better than we are, to let the ledger stay lopsided, and to accept that the inheritance he is handing out is himself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Elisha's answer to a captured enemy army was a feast and a road home. The raids stopped after that — mercy did what a slaughter would not have.
- ◆ Jonah ran because he knew God would forgive Nineveh. Being inclined toward mercy is “such a God thing to do,” and it is exactly what offended his prophet.
- ◆ The laborers hired first were paid precisely what they agreed to. Their complaint was never about their own wage; it was about someone else's.
- ◆ Many people will receive far more than they deserve from Christ, and his long-serving workers are the ones most likely to resent it.
- ◆ “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?” could be the Lord's answer to you as easily as to them.
- ◆ Revelation does not offer us a job in the household. It offers marriage — the most intimate relationship we know, with the highest rights of co-ownership.
- ◆ For many Christians the biggest obstacle to faith is not that God seems harsh but that he is so generous it is hard to believe.

- ◆ He is pleased to do it. He is not short-staffed; if he needed servants he already has angels.

► 0:49:42

Matt has had generosity on his mind since he preached on glory two weeks ago and asked whether anyone could imagine outgiving God. The Sunday between Christmas and New Year's turned out to be the right morning to press it — starting, unexpectedly, with a military ambush.

1. The army that got fed instead of killed

► 0:50:15

The king of Syria kept raiding the northern tribes and kept finding Israel already moved. Convinced of a traitor in his cabinet, he learned the leak was a prophet — and then decided to ambush him. Matt enjoyed the absurdity: the plan was to sneak up on the man who always knew where you would be. They surrounded his city overnight, and in the morning Elisha's servant went out and panicked ([2 Kings 6:15–17](#)).

► 0:52:16

Elisha prayed the army blind, told them they had the wrong city, offered to take them where they wanted to go — and walked them straight into Israel's headquarters, where he prayed their eyes open again. The king of Israel asked the obvious question, twice, in Matt's telling: *they're in our paw now — can I kill them?*

“He answered, ‘You shall not strike them down... Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.’ So he prepared for them a great feast, and they ate and drank, and he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.”

2 KINGS 6:22–23 ↗

► 0:54:01

Matt worked both sides of it — the Israelite soldier watching the deer walk up to his blind, begging for one shot; the Syrian trying to explain his day to his wife. And the raids stopped. Whether they lost their nerve or were stunned by the generosity of God, they were done. This is the God, Matt noted, whom Jonah refused to preach for, because he already knew how it would end ([Jonah 4:2](#)).

“The truth is that God is more merciful than you or I would be,” he said. In our better moments we imagine we would make benevolent gods. In fact we are rather into crushing our enemies when the chance comes — and not fictitious enemies. People we actually dislike.

2. The parable Jesus told to prepare us for this

► 0:56:45

Because God’s generosity is a stumbling block, Jesus addressed it head-on (Matthew 20:1–7). A master hires at dawn for a denarius — a fair day’s wage — then keeps returning to the marketplace at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours. Matt tracked the men’s shrinking expectations: by the ninth hour they are well past loitering, the day already written off, and anything at all beats nothing. The eleventh-hour crew will manage one solid hour. “I don’t know how you compensate for that. Here’s a coupon for Burger King or something.”

► 0:59:01

Payment starts at the wrong end, and the one-hour men are handed a full day.

“Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.”

MATTHEW 20:10–12 ↗

► 1:02:47

Matt put the pressure exactly where the parable puts it. The master is not harsh and he is not stingy. The offense is that he gives too much money to people who do not deserve it — and the early workers had agreed to their wage, freely and in advance.

“Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?”

MATTHEW 20:14–16 ↗

3. Are you ready for a Jesus who is too generous?

► 1:03:26

“I think a lot of people are afraid that Jesus is going to be more harsh than advertised,” Matt said. “But are you mentally prepared for a Jesus that’s too generous? That’s a funny problem.” He drew the picture: you were out in the fields, you went door to door, you gave to missionaries — and now here is the deathbed convert, the lazy cousin, the IRS agent who audited you, being richly rewarded in front of you.

► 1:05:27

He flagged where this is headed when Hope returns to Romans. People approach Romans 9 braced for a God who is harsher than they feared; Matt reads it the other way. The mercy Paul is defending is the inclusion of Gentiles — Johnny-come-latelies, tax collectors, centurions, officers of an occupying empire — people who had not been keeping Torah their whole lives. Same sentence, opposite fear: *I can have mercy on whom I want.*

“He can include random scummy people that you think you’re slightly better than. It’s his stuff. It’s his reward. It’s his glory.”

4. The most shocking gift is himself

► 1:07:17

Matt listed the benefits without embarrassment: fullness of joy in God’s presence (Psalm 16:11), and the plainly material good of belonging to a body — meals when you are sick or have a new baby, help with your car, a place to stay when you travel, aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters added to you. Spiritual gifts exercised toward you. Peace that surpasses understanding. Healing and miracles. Then he went for the one that is hard to say out loud: God is generous with himself.

► 1:08:25

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”

REVELATION 21:2-4 ↗

Note which relationship gets used for the connection between Christ and the church. Not staff. Marriage — the most intimate bond we have, and the one carrying the highest rights of co-ownership, legal standing, and privilege.

► 1:09:39

Most of us, Matt suggested, would settle for far less and call it humility. The nosebleed section. A closet in the back, sleeping on the floor. A butler's role, so at least you get to see the palaces. Chauffeur for important saints. Cleaning up after the horses, close enough to catch the splash zone of a worship service from a distance. "Wouldn't you accept that? But that's not what the Bible says." And the dwelling is not a supervised tour of a fenced White House lawn. It is commitment, belonging, acceptance: we will be his people, and the inheritance is him.

► 1:12:33

"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

REVELATION 21:6-7 ↗

Without payment. The only qualification named is thirst — which is the whole point for anyone weighing themselves against the church planter or the Mother Teresa and coming up short. You do not deserve glory and honor and immortality. You can still say you are thirsty.

5. Letting the ledger stay lopsided

► 1:15:08

It is hard, Matt admitted, to say the psalmist's lines and mean them all the way down.

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

PSALM 73:25-26 ↗

Same claim in Psalm 16:5-6 — the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup, and I have a beautiful inheritance. It is a strain to believe he is willing to forgive you enough to make you a butler. It is a further strain to believe he wants to be your father.

► 1:16:42

So the question the message was named for: are you prepared to let him be better than you? Can you receive from someone who gives you more than you give back? Can you let him love you more than you can love in return, and let that imbalance stand — "I love you, and I feel like my love is imperfect" —

without trying to square it? Matt's suggestion is that the discomfort is something to repent of, not manage. Come like a beggar to a feast: no entry fee paid, not sure you dressed properly.

► 1:18:07

And then the hardest part — believing he is *pleased* to do it. This is not community service, and he is not trying to impress the angels. If he needed servants, he has angels. If he wanted music, they are already on key. He made a universe unassisted; he is not short of help. “He wants you, and he wants to be generous to you. And he wants to dwell with you.”

Matt closed by praying that the Spirit would enable hearts to accept that generosity — and, as with Elisha's servant, open our eyes to see what is actually real.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- 2 Kings 6:15–17
- 2 Kings 6:22–23
- Jonah 4:2
- Matthew 20:1–7
- Matthew 20:10–12
- Matthew 20:14–16
- Romans 9:15–16
- Psalm 16:11
- Revelation 21:2–4
- Revelation 21:6–7
- Psalm 73:25–26
- Psalm 16:5–6

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Elisha fed the army that came to capture him, and the raids stopped. Who is the person you would find hardest to set a table for, and what does your reluctance tell you?
2. In the vineyard parable, whose position do you instinctively take — the eleventh-hour worker or the one who bore the scorching heat? What does that reveal about how you think about your own standing?
3. Matt asked whether you are mentally prepared for a Jesus who is too generous. Who are you quietly expecting not to see in glory?
4. Most of us would settle for the butler's role and call it humility. Where are you accepting less from God than he has offered, and calling it modesty?
5. What would it look like this week to let the imbalance stand — to receive something from God, or from someone in this room, without trying to pay it back?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1PjwfvHH_E&t=2982s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.