

April 18, 2004

The Kingdom of God

Introduction (last week's lesson points)

For me (Believers) the question of Jesus being the only way to God is not an issue. The issue for me is:: how then, believing that Jesus is the only way, how do I then live in the world?

Our faith in God and the truth of Jesus Christ stand in direct opposition to our culture. Because of that reality much of what we are concerned about is how we can peacefully co-exist with the culture around us. Always hoping that somehow we can adapt our belief so that we will not be offensive to those around us.

It is my opinion that we naively believe that if we present logical, rational arguments unbelievers will be persuaded and Christianity will prevail as the cultural norm. Consider the reality of the opposition:

Charles Colson: "If there is no truth, then we cannot persuade one another by rational arguments. All that's left is sheer power - which opens the door to a new for fascism."

How are Christians responding to this cultural divide.?

1. **Assimilate.** Put simply, Christianity is stripped of its substance and reconstituted consistent with the cultural beliefs and expectations.
2. **Fight.** Believing power will ultimately prevail, we develop and rely upon power to defeat.
3. **Withdraw.** We rationalize our beliefs by thinking in terms of a dichotomy between culture and religion, allowing our belief system to be reduced to little more than private feelings and experiences completely divorced from objective facts.

... emphasis on a personal relationship can ... be evangelicalism's greatest weakness because it may prevent us from seeing God's plan for us beyond personal salvation. Genuine Christianity is more than a relationship with Jesus, as expressed in personal piety, church attendance, Bible study, and works of charity. It is more than discipleship, more than believing a system of doctrines about God. Genuine Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending **all** reality. It is a worldview. (C. Colson)

Worldview - An intensely practical concept. ... the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the "Big Picture" that directs our daily decisions and actions.

How should Christians respond to this cultural divide?

I am not exactly sure. What I believe is a starting point is an understanding that Christianity is a worldview and then hearing God's word through that lens. I have been challenged by thoughts on the Kingdom of God. In that vein, I would suggest that Christianity is more appropriately described as a "**kingdomview**" rather than a worldview.

GOOD NEWS

In my view, a realistic view of our culture presents a pretty dismal picture and even more so for Christians. We are in desperate need of some good news.

Definition of the Kingdom of God

Mostly we think of the Kingdom of God in terms of a land or territory, or as citizens of such.

The Greek word for kingdom is *basileia*. *basileia* means reign, that is the right to rule, the authority of a sovereign. Ref. Dan. 4:31

Kingdom of God in the NT

- Only twice in the gospels (Matt 16:18; Matt 18:17) does the word church appear. On the other hand “kingdom of God” appears more than 100 times.
- Jesus had more to say about the kingdom of God than any other subject.
- To preach like Jesus means to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Matt 4:17

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matt 4:23

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Luke 4:43

But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

Matt 9:35

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

Luke 9:1-2

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Matt 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Acts 1:3

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- The message of the church was the about the kingdom of God.

Acts 8:12

1But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 19:8

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

Acts 28:30-31

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Good News of the kingdom of God

Isa 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

(Note: Romans 10:14)

We are absent an understanding of the message of the gospel (good news) of the kingdom of God. When we think about Gospel/good news we most often confine it to the popular

contemporary gospel which offers Jesus as savior but not as sovereign. "A great retirement plan but we rarely speak of the reign of God. We preach about Jesus but not like him." Jesus is sovereign as well as savior. We say that we just need to accept Jesus but Jesus never said accept me, He said "Follow me, make me the teacher and master of your life." When we miss the good news of the kingdom of God message, Jesus becomes irrelevant to our lives. We see Jesus as very, very good at getting us into heaven, but today someone has to run my life and it might as well be me. When we truncate Jesus' gospel into being forgiven of sins and go to heaven we lose the good news of the Kingdom of God.

What is the good news of the kingdom (reign) of God?

- God is, has been, and always will reign. His kingdom is forever.
- In Jesus, the reign of God has come into the world and everyone has the opportunity to enter the kingdom of God... to be under the reign of God.
- When we are under the reign of God, we can be free from all the pseudo-kingdoms of this world.
- Under the reign of God, a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28-29) we can make a difference in the world.
- We become like Jesus. An absurdity in a world gone crazy.

Matt 11:12

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Matt 6:10

... your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Story of mission in Zambia.

May 9, 2004

The Kingdom of God

Introduction

Matt 6:9-10

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Restate the purpose of our study:

To understand how as Christians we should respond to the cultural divide that exists between us and the world.

How Christians are responding to this cultural divide:

1. Assimilate. Put simply, Christianity is stripped of its substance and reconstituted consistent with the cultural beliefs and expectations.
2. Fight. Believing power will ultimately prevail, we develop and rely upon power to defeat.
3. Withdraw. We rationalize our beliefs by thinking in terms of a dichotomy between culture and religion, allowing our belief system to be reduced to little more than private feelings and experiences completely divorced from objective facts.

Rev 12:10-12

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

- Worldview ... Kingdomview
- God Reigns!
- Sermon on the Mount - a manifesto for the Kingdom of God, explains and illustrates the requirements of the reign of God.
- Need to understand the Kingdom of God to understand and apply the Sermon on the Mount (preaching of Jesus)

Ask for feedback from past two weeks.

What do we believe about the Kingdom of God?

- The Kingdom of God is the church. We simply insert the word church whenever we read Kingdom of God/Heaven. I have always unquestioningly held the assumption that the Kingdom of God is the Church.
- The Kingdom of God is heaven.

These assumptions have their origin and are sustained by liberal protestant interpretations.
CHURCH

... a worldly, ethical kingdom, "a religious idea", a "moral idea", man's "chiefest good"

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... a universal moral community which can be achieved by men working together in neighborly love,, and was thus the final goal of the divine plan for the world and of man himself.

HEAVEN

Kingdom of God is essentially eschatological, other worldly and transcendental and is not to be achieved by the ethical actions of men, but as an act of God which is shortly to make its apocalyptic irruption into history and bring it to a close.

Another, oversimplified way of expressing the above beliefs is to say the kingdom of God is either earthy or other-worldly.

The Kingdom of God is not just some idea to be understood and appreciated. It is a reality. A reality inextricably connected to God himself. Infinite and mysterious, beyond our complete understanding, it has been revealed to us by God's revelation. The need to understand the Kingdom (Reign) of God cannot be minimized.

We will spend the next few weeks looking at the Kingdom of God so that we will have a proper context to begin our study of the Sermon on the Mount. For it is in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus explains and illustrates the requirements of those who are citizens in the Kingdom of God.

In our remaining time we will look at one mysterious aspect of the Kingdom of God... when will the Kingdom come?

GOD REIGNS ... THE KINGDOM HAS ALWAYS BEEN

Ps 47:6-9

Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.

1 Chr 16:30-31

Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!"

1 Chr 29:10-13

David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

Ps 93:1-5

The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.

Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.

The seas have lifted up, O LORD, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea-- the LORD on high is mighty.

Your statutes stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days, O LORD.

Ps 103:19

The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Dan 4:34-35

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

Isa 37:15-16

And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

"O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

GOD WILL REIGN - KINGDOM WILL COME

Isa 51:4-5

"Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.

Mark 15:43

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Isa 2:2-5

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Dan 2:44

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Dan 7:17-18

'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever-- yes, for ever and ever.'

Dan 7:26-27

"But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

Zech 14:5-9

You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime-- a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

GOD REIGNS NOW ... THE KINGDOM HAS COME

Matt 11:12

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Matt 3:1-2

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matt 4:17

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matt 13:33-43

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Matt 16:28

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Luke 11:19-20

Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Luke 16:16

"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

Luke 17:20-21

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

GOD WILL REIGN ...KINGDOM IS NOT YET COME

Luke 22:17-18

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Matt 6:9-10

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matt 25:31, 34

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

1 Cor 15:24-26

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Rev 11:15

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Rev 12:10-12

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

May 16, 2004

The Kingdom of God

Introduction

Review conclusions from last week's lesson:

The kingdom of God is more than the church or heaven:

The kingdom of God has always been.

The kingdom of God is to come.

The kingdom of God has come..

The kingdom of God is yet to come.

- **THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Luke 4:43

But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

Matt 4:23

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Matt 24:13-14

.... but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The GOOD NEWS is that GOD REIGNS and when GOD REIGNS:

First and foremost, the GOOD NEWS is a proclamation that the long anticipated rule and reign of God has now come into the midst of human history. The GOOD NEWS proclaims that we may participate in God's new creation if we will repent and accept the new reality.

- **THE KING (GOD) IS SOVEREIGN**

1 Tim 6:15-16

... God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Heb 12:25-29

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

1 Tim 1:17

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Rom 9:18-21

Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

Ps 22:27-28

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

Jer 18:6-10

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"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Matt 6:24

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

Matt 12:30

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

- **SALVATION COMES – A SAVING EVENT FOR SINNERS**

Isa 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Luke 3:4-6

As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"

Luke 18:29-30

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

Luke 1:68-71

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—

- **PEACE**

Isa 2:2-4

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Rom 12:17-21

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Eph 2:14-16

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

- **GOOD TIDINGS ARE SPOKEN**

Luke 4:17-19

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 17:20-21

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Col 1:12-14

... giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Isa 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

Matt 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Luke 6:20-23

Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."

- **REPENT**

Matt 4:17

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Mark 6:12

They went out and preached that people should repent.

Luke 13:3

I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Luke 5:31-32

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- **FOLLOW ME**

Matt 10:34-39

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take

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his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Luke 14:26-27

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters— yes, even his own life— he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 9:57-62

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Matt 19:29-30

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Matt 21:44

He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

June 6, 2004

Who Is Fit for the Kingdom of God?

Introduction

Important things to keep in mind as we look at “Who is fit for the Kingdom of God?”

- We don't decide who is in and who is out.. God decides.
- Everyone is invited to enter the kingdom of God. This is the good news.
- No one is forced to enter. Everyone must choose to enter.
- In the end, everyone will bow down. But not everyone will come into the kingdom for eternity.
- When the end comes, the invitation will no longer be open. The door will be closed.

Who is fit for the Kingdom of God?

- Matt 5:3-10
 - ... the poor in spirit,
 - ... those who mourn.
 - ... the meek, .
 - ... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
 - ... the merciful,
 - ... the pure in heart
 - ... the peacemakers.
 - ... those who are persecuted because of righteousness
- Matt 7:21
 - ... only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- Matt 8:8-12
 - **Those who trust the King.**
The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
1When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

- Matt 13:23
 - **Those who hear**
But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.
- Matt 18:3; Matt 19:14
 - **Those who are like little children**
And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
(NIV)
- Matt 20:16
 - **The last**
"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."
- Matt 20:26-27
 - **The servant, slave**
... whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—
- Matt 21:31-32
 - **Those who repent and believe the way of righteousness**
"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered.
Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.
- Mark 12:32-34
 - **Those who understand what is most important**
"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."
- Mark 10:28-31
 - **Those who leave everything**
Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

- Luke 7:28
 - **Those who are greater than John the Baptist**
I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."
- Luke 9:57-62
 - **Those who don't look back**
As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."
Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."
He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."
Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
- Luke 23:40-43
 - **Those who are nailed to a cross and hopeless**
But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."
Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
- Matt 22:10-14
 - **Those who wear wedding clothes**
So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.
"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'
"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

June 13, 2004

What Is the Nature and Character of the Reign of God?

Introduction

Monarchy - undivided rule or absolute sovereignty by a single person

Absolute Monarchy

The political theory which underlies absolute monarchy was that the monarch held their position by the grace of God and was therefore not answerable to mortals. Much of the attraction of the theory of absolute monarchy in the Middle Ages was that it promised an end to devastating civil wars and could put an end to corruption by the aristocracy, and restore attention to the Church's moral codes. Having nothing to gain but a soul to lose, the theory goes, the King was a far better figure to enforce an ethical code than social climbers or newly rich nobles.

Sovereignty - the ultimate authority in the decision-making process of the state and in the maintenance of order.

Theocracy - Government by divine guidance.

1 Sam 8:5-22

They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Isa 6:1-5

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Job 1-2

Ps 135:5-6

I know that the LORD is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods. The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Rom 9:20-21

But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

Isa 46:8-10

"Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Job 42:1-6

Then Job replied to the LORD:

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ['You said,] 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Matt 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

June 20, 2004

The Declaration of Dependence – Life Under the Reign of God

Introduction

Setting the scene for the Sermon on the Mount

John the Baptist-

Baptism of Jesus

The Temptation of Jesus

Jesus began to preach: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.”

Calls first disciples

Preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing ... news about him spread ... large crowds

The Inauguration of the Kingdom of God

The people came to learn more about the kingdom stuff. Jesus begins to explain what it means to live under the rule of God., the good news of the kingdom of God.

A Charter for the Kingdom.

Jesus did not establish the standards by which you get into the Kingdom of God but contrast the ethics of the culture with the values of those who have come under the rule of God.

He tells us what life is like when we live in the kingdom of God.

This is what life is like when you seek first his kingdom. And his righteousness.

Upside Down – Inside Out

Upside Down - The Pursuit of Happiness

The goal of life in the world is happiness. I'll be happy if ...

Life in the kingdom has a different agenda. The ultimate goal is not happiness; it is the pursuit of God's agenda.

Seek first his kingdom (reign)

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Inside Out - Righteousness

Matt 21:31-32

Seek God's righteous ways. Not surface righteousness. Not more righteousness but deeper righteousness. Righteousness that comes from the inside out.

Key Points on the Charter

- Jesus' teachings imply that the kingdom is full of grace. The rule of God cannot be achieved it must be received.
"Blessed are the poor in spirit..."
- What Jesus teaches applies to every member of the kingdom, These are not descriptions of the qualities of exceptional members. What is defined is discipleship.
- The sermon only provides direction if Jesus is king. It can only make sense if Jesus delivers what he promises. If the kingdom of God is not here and now, we would be fools to live by the charter that Jesus presents. The rule of God is a frontal assault on the world.

The Rule of God –

... DEPENDS on GRACE

... DEMANDS DISCIPLESHIP

... DEFINED BY GOD'S APPROVAL

July 4, 2004

Poor in Spirit

Introduction

Review key points of previous lesson

A Charter for the Kingdom.

Upside Down – Inside Out

Upside Down - The Pursuit of Happiness

Inside Out - Righteousness

Matt 21:31-32

Key Points on the Charter

- Jesus' teachings imply that the kingdom is full of grace. The rule of God cannot be achieved it must be received.
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- What Jesus teaches applies to every member of the kingdom, These are not descriptions of the qualities of exceptional members. What is defined is discipleship.
- The sermon only provides direction if Jesus is king. It can only make sense if Jesus delivers what he promises. If the kingdom of God is not here and now, we would be fools to live by the charter that Jesus presents. The rule of God is a frontal assault on the world.

Blessed are the poor in spirit ...

Expectations of the listeners – Looking for a kingdom

The first thing Jesus taught about the kingdom of God... The first and most important truth to face in the kingdom of God is that I am addicted to self. Every one in the kingdom of God is a recovering self-aholic.

In our culture, the most likely place to find people who admit their helplessness is in 12 step programs.

The ancient tradition of spirituality is a spirituality of imperfection ... that spirituality begins with the acceptance that we are fractured, imperfect beings. The book Alcoholics Anonymous suggests, "First of all, we had to quit playing God". According to the way of life that flows from this insight, it is only by ceasing to play God, by coming to terms with errors and shortcomings, and by accepting the inability to control every aspect of their lives that alcoholics (or any human beings) can find peace and serenity that alcohol (or other drugs, or sex, money, material possessions, power or privilege) promise but never deliver.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Gerald May (Addiction and Grace):

... addiction is the most powerful psychic enemy of humanity's desire for God.

... the psychological, neurological and spiritual dynamics of full-fledged addiction are actively at work within every human being. The same processes that are responsible for addiction to alcohol and narcotics are responsible for addiction to ideas, work, relationships, power, moods, fantasies, and an endless variety of other things. We are all addicts in every sense of the word. Moreover, our addictions are our worst enemies.

We are all about self-confidence, self-improvement, self-righteousness. The sermon on the mount exposes our addiction to self. i.e. giving, prayer, divorce, adultery etc.

The depth of our problem and the extent of the price we are willing to pay to exalt self is illustrated in the story of a group of athletes, ...sprinters, swimmers, power lifters, many Olympic competitors ... who, in 1995, were given a survey about performance enhancing drugs. 198 were asked: "If there was a banned performance enhancing drug made available to you with two guarantees 1) you would win and 2) you would not be caught. Would you take it?" 195 out of 198 said yes.

They were asked a second question: "If there was a banned performance enhancing drug made available to you with two guarantees 1) you would win and 2) you would not be caught., but in five years you would die. Would you take it?" More than 50% said they would take it.

Jesus says if we are to live under the reign of God we must lay our addiction to self on the altar. Those who are poor in spirit are those who admit their abject poverty of spirit. The Greek word for poor used by Jesus is the same word that describes the poor widow in Mark 12:41-44 and Lazarus in Luke 16.

We are always trying to find something that will make us deserving but the only way to receive the kingdom of God is by begging.

Luke 18:9-14

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' **"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

Can we believe this word enough to be intentional about addressing our addiction to self? Faith? (Luke 1:53 "He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.")

Those who exalt themselves do so by holding on to the spiritual equivalent of fool's gold. They believe their righteousness will buy them happiness. (Story of thieves in France who stole \$3 mil in coins)

It is very hard for rich young rulers to come to grips with their spiritual poverty.

They cannot believe that all they have acquired cannot buy what is most valuable. For rich young rulers as well as ourselves the only answer is to hit bottom. Paul ... Peter ... The hungry are welcomed the rich are asked to leave.

God responds with mercy to beggars. The poor have a head start in the Kingdom of God. God is looking for the poor in spirit.

Isa 57:15

For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isa 66:2

Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

Ps 51:16-17

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Matt 18:3

And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus only sees spiritual paupers, Only the poor in spirit see it too.

How do we deal with our addiction to self?

- 1) Compare our selves to God not others. Poverty of spirit only comes by comparing ourselves to God. Isaiah Isa 6:1; Peter Luke 5:8
- 2) Trust that God will fill and rule. Declare your bankruptcy and he will wipe away all our debts. (He went home justified) (Unmerciful servant Matt 18). God does not rule by force. He rules by our abdication of self every day.
- 3) We have to continually admit our addiction to self. "Poor in spirit is not an event, it is a life style."

Rev 3:17-18

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

July 25, 2004

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Introduction

Review the context of Jesus' sermon.
Briefly review last weeks' lesson.

TEARS – There is a place for tears in the kingdom of God. This not a depressing, debilitating grim dourness. He did not say "Blessed are those who MOAN."

The prevailing view of the Christian life is triumphal Christianity ... victory, celebration. For some Christianity is an escape from the realities of life.

Arab proverb: "All sunshine makes a desert."

JESUS a MAN of MOURNING

Isa 53:3

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Heb 5:7

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

JESUS WEPT

John 11:32-35

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

Jesus wept.

Luke 19:41-42

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace— but now it is hidden from your eyes.

The mourning that is blessed in the kingdom of God is the absence of the reign of God.

**To be under the reign of God means we will be increasingly filled
with a godly burden for a lost and dying world.**

If the highest calling in life is to be under the reign of God, then the absence of the reign of God is worthy of lament. We ready to condemn sin but we seldom weep for it. Do we have a right to preach at those we have never cried for? What is our first response to rebellion? Why are we not more grieved by the way things are?

Ps 119:136

Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jer 8:18-22

O my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me. Listen to the cry of my people from a land far away: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King no longer there?" "Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their worthless foreign idols?"

"The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved."

Since my people are crushed, I am crushed; I mourn, and horror grips me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

Phil 3:18

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

2 Cor 12:21

I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

God does not come with a great visitation without there first being remorse.. We will pray with tears when our hearts are broken by that which breaks the heart of God.

**To be under the reign of God means we will be increasingly filled
with a godly burden for the sin in our own lives..**

Is it possible to confess your sins and do so dry-eyed? The emotional compliment to being poor in spirit is mourning.

We suffer from a defective doctrine of sin. Drowning in a sea of cheap grace. Confession must be accompanied with contrition. 2 Cor 7:10

Sorrow without repentance. David and Bathsheba. Problem wasn't that he didn't know he had sinned, it was that he did not feel his sin. (Ps. 51)

Godly sorrow = Luke 7:37-38

How hard do you have to cry to have enough tears to wipe the feet of Jesus?

The tax collectors and prostitutes were mourning their sins and the Pharisees were not.

Example of George Wallace

The sin we take so lightly is the sin that put Jesus on the cross.

The kingdom of God is scandalous because it will receive anyone who has done anything and mourns their sin.

The promise is conditional... only those who mourn will receive comfort.

The blessing is not the mourning, it is comfort that God gives those who mourn.

The broken heart is a heart big enough for God to dwell in and God says I'm going to move into that heart and my reign is going to come into that life and I am going to comfort you.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

How God comforts us:

1. **Through the presence of the Spirit.**

God sends his "Comforter". Experienced but hard to explain.

PS. 119:76

May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

2. **Through the practice of biblical community.**

2 Cor. 7:6

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

Col. 4:10-11.

Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.

We are comforted not only because of shared beliefs but also because of shared experience.

2 Cor 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

3. **Through the promise of heaven.**

As long as sin is a part of our existence there will be mourning. When Jesus returns there will be no mourning.

Rev 21:4

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

August 8, 2004

Blessed Are the Meek

Matt 5:5

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Introduction

In our culture, meek is the most unacceptable of all the blessed assurances.

meek

1 : enduring injury with patience and without resentment : **MILD**

2 : deficient in spirit and courage : **SUBMISSIVE**

3 : not violent or strong : **MODERATE**

(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

Colloquially – timid, spineless, weak

Illustration of Charles Barkley commercial ... “The meek may inherit the earth, but they don’t get any rebounds.”

Not a quality found on resumes or in ads for women, i.e Meek, SWM seeking SWF.....

MEEKNESS

William Barclay:

The Greek word *praus* is the regular word for an animal which has been domesticated, which has been trained to obey the word of the command, has learned to answer the reins. It is the word for an animal that has learned to accept control. So the ... possible translation of this beatitude is:

Blessed is the man who has every instinct, every impulse, every passion under control. Blessed is the man who is entirely self-controlled.

The moment we have stated that, we see that it needs a change. It is not so much the blessing of the man who is self-controlled, for such complete self-control is beyond human capacity; rather it is the blessing of the man who is completely God-controlled, for only in His service do we find our perfect freedom, and in doing His will our peace.

... No man can lead others until he has mastered himself; no man can serve others until he has subjected himself; no man can be in control of others until he has learned to control himself. But the man who gives himself into the complete control of God will gain this meekness which will indeed enable him to inherit the earth.

Meekness defined is “strength under control” Your strength is now under someone else’s authority. It is letting God be in control.

As citizens of God’s kingdom, under his reign, I am spiritually bankrupt and I mourn my depravity therefore I’m asking you to take over my life. I want to be broken and trained by God.

Matt 11:28-30 (KJV)

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for **I am meek and lowly in heart**: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Call to discipleship is not to be a doormat or push over – Jesus was not – He is not looking for the mighty he is looking for the meek. He wants to train you to be meek. Let me teach you how to be in step with God.

The Biggest Pot-Hole in the Beatitudes

Meekness is the abdication of self-control. Meekness is letting God be in control. Unfortunately we more often obey God when and where we want to.

i.e. example of a dog. The dog is not meek.

Meekness may be the greatest stumbling block of all the beatitudes.

The Essentiality of Meekness

- A. Meekness is designed to implant God's word and is essential to learn God's truth through the word.

James 1:19-21

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness** the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

A spirit of self-rule will poison the soil where the seed of God's word needs to be planted.

Illustration – set radio and remove the knobs.

We are too often quick to anger and tell someone what we think. Most doctrinal issues are really control issues.

Is it truth that drives me, or the fear that I might wrong?

- B. Meekness is designed to impact the weak. It is essential for a healthy community.

Eph 4:1-2

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, **With all lowliness and meekness**, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (KJV)

Col 3:12-13

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, **meekness**, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (KJV)

Our relationships are to be characterized by forbearance and forgiveness. Spirit controlled strength is required to be patient with some people. (EGR)

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Gal 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (KJV)

2 Tim 2:24-26

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.(KJV)

Our goal is correction not condemnation.

Tolerance – the power that keeps lovers of competing faith from killing each other. It based on the principle that freedom is above forced conversion. It is rooted in the truth that coerced conviction is no conviction.

Meekness is the quality that makes true tolerance possible.

When I “let someone have it” it is not God’s spirit controlling. You can be absolutely right and still be wrong.

It takes strength to be tender without surrender.

God is meek ... Matt 11 & Eph 4

Our salvation is due to a “might meek” God.

- C. Meekness is designed to impart our witness. The message of grace must be communicated graciously.

1 Pet 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (KJV)

We are not judges or prosecuting attorneys, we are witnesses.

Character is as important as content when we are communicating our witness. Nothing testifies for the cross more powerfully than when we handle the unfairness of life with meekness.

Example of Moses - Numbers 12

1 Pet 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (KJV)

Only two people in the Bible are specifically called meek – Moses and Jesus.

Our struggle is to be formed by the will of God.

Meekness is a control issue and control is always a faith issue. ... Can I trust God to make things right if I walk in step with Him?

Does his yoke really come with an inheritance?

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Why the meek stay under control is because they have decided God is in control. Are you living out of control?

Do you have a front yard where you do what you want?

Commitment or surrender?

August 15, 2004

Blessed Are those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Matt 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness , for they will be filled.

Introduction

Meekness was described as the most unacceptable kingdom quality in our culture. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the most incomprehensible.

I have never nor I have I ever known any one who experienced starvation.. We often say, “I’m starving to death.” Or “I’m dying of thirst.” But I really have no comprehension of what it is really like.

William Barclay’s commentary is again helpful.

1 The fact is that very few of us in modern conditions of life know what it is to be really hungry or really thirsty. In the ancient world it was very different, A working man’s wage was the equivalent of eight pence a day, and, even making every allowance for the difference in the purchasing power of money, no man ever got fat on that wage. In the ancient world it was very different. A working man in Palestine ate meat only once a week, and in Palestine the working man and the day labourer were never far from the border—line of real hunger and actual starvation. It was still more so in the case of thirst. In the ancient world it was not possible for the vast majority of people to turn a tap and find the clear, cold water pouring into their house. A man might be on a journey, and to the midst of it the hot wind which brought the sand—storm might begin to blow, There was nothing for him to do but to wrap his head to his burnous and turn his back to the wind and wait while the swirling sand filled his nostrils and his throat until he was like to suffocate for breath, and until he was parched with an impervious thirst. In the conditions of modern western life there is no parallel to all that..

So, then, the hunger which this beatitude describes is no genteel hunger which could be satisfied with a mid-morning snack; the thirst of which it speaks is no thirst which could be slacked with a cup of coffee or an iced-drink. It is the hunger of a man starving for food, and of a man who will die unless he drinks.

Barclay calls it the bliss of the starving spirit..

The people of Palestine lived on the edge of starvation and for Jesus to promise that they would be filled is no small matter.

In the light of that, Jesus is presenting both a question and a challenge. How much do you want goodness? Do you want it as much as a starving man wants food or as much as a man dying of thirst wants a drink of water? How intense is your desire for goodness?

Jesus is teaching that we choose what we hunger for. In the spiritual dimension we get to decide what we hunger for.

Nebuchadnezzar hungered for praise

Rich fool was hungry for possessions..

Lucifer hungered for power.

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Disciples have a deliberate hunger for holiness. It is a choice to hungry for God's kingdom, to be hungry for God.

Matt 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

A kingdom centered person is so hungry for righteousness that you can not threaten him out of his craving.

Matt 5:10-11

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Some only want a side order of God. When opposition arises they will give up. You don't have to beg a hungry person to eat. Too many have to begged. We are always begging people to be righteousness. Guilt, shame, pleading never work.

Hunger for righteousness is a manifestation of our desire to be under the reign of God – a hunger for God and his rule.

How much do you want God?

I want God to be so totally in charge of my life that I only do what is right.

Ps 42:1-2

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Ps 63:1-5

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

I want God to consume me and I want to consume God.

Illustration of our passion to be with someone special. Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower

We are as close to God as we want to be. Problem is not distance but desire. A loss of appetite is usually a first sign of illness.

How do we lose our appetite for God.?

- Too busy. We get so busy that we don't think about eating We are consumed about running after other things and we lose our appetite.

Gen. 29 Jacob, Leah and Rachel

What was a passion became an obligation. We make God feel like Leah instead of Rachel.

The irony is that God is no Leah and the things we hunger for more than God are no Rachel.

The kingdom centered life is the only satisfaction guaranteed claim that will live up to its promise.

Everybody believes Jesus can save them. The problem is that we are not confident that he can satisfy. So we treat him like Leah. The call of the kingdom of God is a call to passion. To be in love with God.

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John 6:35

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."

How Do I Get My Appetite Back?

1. Refuse to fill your soul with junk food. We are what we eat.
Our souls have hunger pangs just like our body. We miss read the signals and go to the wrong buffet.

John 6:26-27

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

John 4:13-14

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Be careful of baptized junk food.

2. Refuse to fall for surface righteousness.
We just nibble on surface righteousness. It may be just our desire for self-righteousness.

A minimum daily dosage. i.e. Matt 5:20 ff

Matt 5:48

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- a. All beatitudes are perpetual attitudes. The more we are filled with God the more that we desire to be filled. Satisfied but want more.
- b. Satisfaction is guaranteed if you pursue righteousness.

Jer 23:5-6

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

1 Jn 2:1

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

If Jesus is our righteousness the pantry will never be empty.

Illustration from European orphanage after WW II.

August 22, 2004

Blessed Are the Merciful

Matt 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Introduction

The world we live is a “give them what they deserve” place. Rarely do we get help when we don’t deserve it.

Acts of grace should not be rare in the kingdom of God.

What does it mean to live under the reign of God?

In God’s kingdom people who don’t deserve help get it.

What does God Want?

We struggle to have mercy because of a wrong view of what God wants.

Parable of the Good Samaritan – Those who passed by were not cruel but deeply religious men. They failed to see mercy as an indispensable part of their relationship with God.

IRONY – The absence of mercy is often coupled with the presence of religious zeal.

Matt 9:9-13

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The way they practiced their religion determined mercy in their lives. Jesus saw behind their concern for purity a wrong view of what God wants.

Matt 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread— which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Jesus argues that the primacy of mercy is the lens through which we read and understand the Bible.

Matt 23:23

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices— mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important

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matters of the law— justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Micah 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

There are other lens through which we can seek to understand God's word ... tradition, sacrifice, rules, etc. We can be full of knowledge but miss the message. Same problem today. We don't understand what God wants.

We completely miss the message of God if we don't read it through the lens that "God wants mercy even more than sacrifice".

To seek the kingdom of God means to love mercy.

Mercy is not a luxury to be indulged in occasionally. It is something that we intentionally and continually seek to have and receive.

What is Mercy?

5 truths about mercy

1. Mercy is a need. We will never have mercy unless we need mercy. This is why religion can actually be a problem.

Luke 18:10-14

1"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men— robbers, evildoers, adulterers— or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- Story of woman who pled for mercy before Napoleon.

Only those who understand they deserve to be condemned ever understand or receive mercy. The reason we are separated from God is because he is just and we are saved because he is merciful.

Titus 3:4-5

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Eph 2:4-5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved.

We deserve justice we need mercy.

2. Mercy is a gift. It is not a wage. It is a present.

1 Pet 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Mercy comes as a surprise. It comes to people not expecting it.

- Story of Nixon and Carter at the White House.

Mercy is the only reason we can boldly approach God.

Heb 4:16

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We not only needed his mercy, we need God's mercy today and tomorrow. God's mercies are new every morning. He never gets tired of giving us completely undeserved gifts.

3. Mercy is a choice.

We didn't deserve but God chose to give us mercy. We do not earn his mercy, so no one should have to earn ours.

How long would long would want to live without the mercies of God? How long should someone live without our mercy?

Parable of Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18)

To pursue mercy is to deliberately choose to treat others as you want God to you. It is a deliberate choice to treat others as you want God to continue to treat you.

What right do we have to expect mercy if we do not reflect mercy?

James 2:12-13

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.

Mercy triumphs over judgment!

If we have been merciful then God's mercy toward us will win out over his justice to us.

Jesus is not saying if we are merciful we will purchase or obligate God to be merciful to us. Instead, having mercy demonstrates and affirms we understand the way God wants to deal with you and by showing mercy we say to God, I understand you want a grace relationship with me ... you want to give ... you want to erase.

When we refuse to act with mercy we burn the bridge we still need to walk on.

Question – Doesn't giving mercy rather than justice send the wrong message? We need to ask ourselves if when we received God's mercy does that prompt us to sin?

- Story of Pres. Regan's response to Iranian airline tragedy.

4. Mercy is a verb

Mercy doesn't happen by chance it happens by choice. It is a conscious intention. Pity is passive. Mercy is active. It supposes the ability to help, to get involved.

Good Samaritan parable

Action, not talk ... feeling.

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Luke 10:36-37

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

- Story of Pres. Calvin Coolidge and burglar.

When God had mercy on us he did not do it with words. He did with the incarnation.

5. Mercy is a risk

Mercy is costly, expensive.

Jesus is not saying that whatever you give you will get back. Mercy is not a human attribute. It is rarely experienced or appreciated in the kingdoms of men.

- Story of preacher helping stranded motorist.

Mercy is inconvenient, expensive and sometimes dangerous. We must be wise as serpents but we cannot follow Jesus and live totally protected lives.

We must not make the applause of men the motivation for mercy. It is lunacy to go around sharing mercy if there is no kingdom of God.

- Story of Mother Theresa

What does God really want?

There is a basin of water in everybody's life. The question is what are you going to do with it? Ultimately our lives will be defined by what we do with it.

We either see people as problems or we see people have problems and God has sent us to help.

August 29, 2004

Blessed Are the Pure In heart

Matt 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Things are not always what they seem to be.

Examples of duplicitous life.

The things that are most observable rarely indicate whether a life has been surrendered to the reign of God. Only the king knows for sure if they have surrendered to him.

1 Sam 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

The heart of Jesus kingdom teaching was about the matter of the heart.. The Lord looks at the heart to know who can look at him. The character of the kingdom people is pure in heart.

The Heart is Critical

Prov 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

The heart is the throne room. It is what controls the will. It is the totality of the complete person. It is where values are found. It is the you that is really you.

Any commitment we make to God that does not include our heart is not a real surrender. The heart is about our motives, why do we do what we do? We seldom escape mixed motives even when we do the most gracious things.. Even the preaching of the word is not exempt. John Bunyan was once told by someone he preached well that day, to which he responded, "The devil already told me that as I was on my way down the pulpit steps."

The main point of the sermon on the mount is about rules righteousness verses heart righteousness. i.e. murder, adultery, In the kingdom of God we are seeking heart righteousness not rules righteousness.

The problem is that can declare and even believe our hearts belong to Jesus when they really don't.

Jer 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

The heart is a hypocritical thing. The biblical assessment of the heart is a devastating thing, It is a deceptive thing.

Mark 7:6

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

People can become intentionally or unintentionally hypocritical because our hearts are deceitful.

In a culture that is increasingly dominated by a philosophy that calls us to "just follow our hearts", this truth that our hearts are deceitful is disturbing.

PURE HEARTS

Mark 7:14-23

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

Pure hearts is not just about the absence of immoral behavior. But it is about insincerity ... about being undivided, single-minded, being without pretense. Barclay says the word for pure means unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed.

Matt 5:8 (Phillips) Happy are the utterly sincere....

Who needs purity if we can practice rules righteousness? Rules righteousness is so much easier.

We are a society of mask wearers.

Reader's Digest story - Woman's daughter in army ... he has no idea what I really look like.

Religion can be a wonderful mask for an impure heart. Jesus talks about that later in his sermon... giving.. fasting ... praying. We learn to use religion to create an impression by people that can only look at the outside so we don't have to deal with the crud on the inside.

But who can stand before God?

Ps 15:1-2

LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart ...

Ps 24:3-4

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

By nature we are so arrogant that we sometimes think we can fool God. God always knows our hearts.

Duplicity is expensive. We forfeit the privilege of seeing God and we lose the presence of joy in our lives because phoniness never brings happiness.

David, after his sin of adultery and murder, was outwardly still the king, a man after God's on heart, but inwardly he was a miserable person.

Ps 51 NLT

... I recognize my shameful deeds – they haunt me day and night. Against you and you alone have I sinned; I have done evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what

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you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner – yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

But you desire honesty from the heart, so you can teach me to be wise in my inmost being. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me – now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a new heart, O God . Renew a right spirit within me.

Story of Karen – a model student who couldn't read. NHS, pres of Student Council etc. Couldn't read beyond a first grade level. She learned what people wanted and see gave it to them. She knew how to play the game. She did this for years living every day with dread that she would be found out.

GOOD NEWS

This beatitude implies that we can live lives without masks. We can be the same on the outside as we are on the inside, liberated from the burden of our duplicity. We can be like Adam and Eve before the fall. We can be released to be real and honest and authentic. Live that doesn't hide anything. It is freeing to live life without pretense.

Story of Stuart Briscoe and his boss "If I won't lie for you I won't lie to you."

The Nature and Character of a Pure Heart

- A recreated gift. It requires a divine invasion and curing.

Acts 15:8-9

God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

This gift is a miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit will change our hearts. It is a work of grace. And it occurs when we decide to believe in Jesus.

- A dedicated pursuit.

1 Pet 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

It is a gift and a choice. Authenticity will result when I decide I'm going to love you without pretense because God has purified my heart. There can only be one throne in our lives. The problem is that we have too many thrones. Duplicity enters our life and we cease to see God and lose our joy.

- It has anticipated reward.

When we get more real. When our walk is heart motivated not rule motivated will see God everywhere.

All kingdom citizens will see God on "that day".

1 Jn 3:2-5

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

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There is the opportunity for dread or for rejoicing as we anticipate that day. If we have lived with singleness of heart we will rejoice when we come before him.

Purity of heart requires self-examination and that is very hard. We are like men with chest pains who refuse to go to the doctor. It is a painful thing for God to expose our crud. But it is liberating to get real. One of the most joyous times in our lives is when we realize we are God's person even when no one is watching.

The more we seek the reign of God the more we will become the same on the outside as we are on the inside.

We need to continually pray the prayer of Ps 139:

Ps 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Sept. 5, 2004

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Matt 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called sons of God.

Introduction

- Making peace does not come as naturally as trouble making.
- Peacemaking is something we have to learn to do.
- We are all for the principle of peace. It is peace in practice that is so difficult.
- Peace is not found in the world.

Peace in the Kingdom of God

Peacemaking is a character quality of Kingdom citizens.

Those who embrace the reign of God always give peace a chance. If God reigns in our heart we will make making peace a priority.

“The RULE of The LAMB”

Isaiah 11:1-9;

Isa 53:7-8

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Rev 5:7-14

He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

8And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Rev 17:13-14

They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings— and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

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A God ruled heart grows in its desire to administer reconciliation. The world exalts the fighter, those who conquer and control through force and violence. The kingdom of God exalts fixers – those who take potential war and try to keep it from happening.

What makes people of the kingdom different from people of the world is that they do not see relationships as disposable and the world does. The heart ruled by God has a reflexive response to reconcile.

2 Cor 5:17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

We are not just peace lovers we are to be peacemakers. The blessing is for those who engage actively in bringing God's redemptive purpose into the world. (Men to God and men to men)

WHAT IS PEACE?

It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 5:22;

Rom 14:17-18

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Rom 8:6-7

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

It is not a truce.

Peacemaking restores relationship, creating a fellowship that was not possible before.

Jewish Rabbis held that the highest task which a man can perform is to establish right relationship between man and man.

Peacemaking begins in our own world.

Peacemaking is never unconditional.

We must not confuse peace with appeasement. Jesus did not advocate cheap peace ... peace at any price.

Matt 10:34-36

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

Peace is not just the absence of conflict it is the presence of righteousness.

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

In the Bible peace looks very different from the world, first purity then peace. As long as sin is not condemned there can be no peace. How do you know when you are making peace?

When righteousness prevails.

Heb 12:14

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

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Never sacrifice holiness to make peace. A God ruled heart never makes peace at the price of purity.

Examples: Angry husband/father in the home ... Episcopal church ordination of gay bishop.

Ps 85:10

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Peace is never unconditional.

Peace is always intentional.

In most cases we have not been willing to go far enough. We don't value peace enough.

Peace is always intentional.

Rom 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

There are always people that you will not be able to get along with. But as for us, we are to go far.

Matt 5:23-24

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

We are to take the initiative. Peace is never an accident. It is always the result of careful cultivation.

There is a growing trend in churches toward avoiding resolving personal disputes. We live with ruptured relationships and never do anything about it.

God made the first move to be reconciled to us. Can we do any less with those with who we need to be reconciled? If God had dealt with our relationship as we deal with our relationship with others where would we be?

Suggestions for peacemaking:

1. Schedule a peace conference.
2. Attack the problem not the person.
3. Emphasis reconciliation over vindication.

It is not about getting someone to admit I was right. Peacemakers want reconciliation more than vindication. They value peace more than the srgument. It is more important to protect peace than to win.

Cold war is not peace. Living in cold war is an affront to God. Peace is when the relationship is restored. Peace is the gift of the Holy Spirit granted to those who gather around the cross. We have no right to be hostile.

Eph 2:12-16

... remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Are we making every effort? Peace is intentional. (example of Lincoln at the end of the Civil War)

By RALPH PETERS

February 12, 2004 -- WHEN news of Robert E. Lee's surrender arrived in Washington, promising an end to our Civil War, the people of the city streamed to the White House. President Lincoln appeared on the porch to cheers and wild applause, and the leader of a military band asked the president to choose a song. Every man and woman in that crowd expected Lincoln to request "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," or "Rally 'Round the Flag," or, perhaps,

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"Marching Through Georgia."

But Abraham Lincoln asked the band to play "Dixie."

No other tale could better capture the man. Lincoln had led the nation through our grimmest war. Begun as a fight to preserve our Union, it became a struggle to preserve our nation's soul. ...

When Lincoln asked to hear "Dixie" played as the South's greatest army dissolved, it was a gesture of reconciliation, an outstretched hand and a reminder to that exuberant crowd that millions of their fellow Americans, the men and women of the broken South, had nothing about which to cheer on that same evening.

A God ruled heart makes every effort to make peace. Such a heart demonstrates the character of God when peace is given a chance.

Sons of God

Son of ... means to partake of the nature of, to partake of the inheritance and rights of the father. When we give peace a chance we will be fulfilling the character of God. We will be showing people what the character of God is. He is the ultimate peacemaker. Like father, like son.

What will be our legacy?

Story of two fences in Alberta, Canada.

Sept. 19, 2004

Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted

Matt 5:10-12

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Introduction

The good news of the kingdom of God is the privilege of living under the reign of God. Even though we seek to be peacemakers, some will not live at peace with us.

This is the only beatitude with a double blessing.

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.” (Matt. 5:10 MSG)

Persecution is a true indicator of kingdom citizenship. If we live by the first seven beatitudes we will live the eighth. It is the evitable clash with the world.

The reason persecution will always come is because righteous living accentuates the unrighteousness of the world. i.e. Eph 5:8-14

Do not fall prey to the idea that I must seek persecution so that I will be proven faithful. We are to “... seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”. The blessing comes to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, not rudeness, obnoxiousness or oddness. We do not have to be a geek or freak to be a disciple.

All kingdom righteousness will bring persecution. It is not a question of will we be persecuted but when we will be persecuted. *“Anyone who wants to live all out for Christ is in for a lot of trouble, there’s no getting around it.” (2 Tim 3:12 MSG)*

Rejoice and Be Glad

Three things to rejoice about when we are persecuted:

1. Persecution identifies we as a Christ follower.
Righteousness is more than clean moral living. People can live good moral lives and never be persecuted.
Kingdom righteousness is imitating Christ in such a way that our life announces his lordship and right to rule the earth. We will be hated because they hate Jesus.

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1 Pet 4:12-16 NIV

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Message

Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner.

If you are abused because of Christ, count yourself fortunate. It's the Spirit of God and his glory in you that brought you to the notice of others. If they are on you because you broke the law or disturbed the peace, that's a different matter. But if it's because you are a Christian, don't give it a second thought. Be proud of the distinguished status reflected in that name.

Acts 5:12-42

... the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."

At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

...they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

...When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

... They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

The apostles rejoiced that they had the opportunity to show the King that they trusted him. When people persecute us we pray for them and give constant verbal encouragement. What we receive from the world is temporary harassment.

Because we will be persecuted we can better understand why we need the blessed assurance of the seven previous beatitudes.

2. Persecution magnifies my focus on eternal realities.

When we know the outcome it changes the way we handle the unexpected.

Mark 10:29-30

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields— and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

Persecutors only have leverage on us if we are undone when they threaten our temporary stuff. That is all they can touch. No attachment = No leverage.

If we put our treasure in heaven what can they take from us?

William Booth, creator of the Salvation Army said "Fifty years from now it will matter little how people treated us but it will matter a lot how we did the work of God."

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When ever we consider those who suffered and/or died for the faith we are faced with the question of “Would I die for my faith?”. One person who visited the coliseum and mused about whether he would die like they did remarked “The early Christian lived within a heart beat of heaven.”

“... the secret of the martyrs in this book. These believers were absolutely sure of eternal life. They were convinced that they were not ending their lives but exchanging their lives on earth for a life with their Lord in heaven.” (Introduction – “Jesus Freaks”)

3. Persecution verifies that I belong to a righteous lineage.

A certificate of authenticity

This is especially true when it is an inside job. The prophets were killed by the people of God.

We may find that living kingdom righteousness offends Christians who want their faith to be on the sideline more than in the world.

Persecution is ultimately an illustration of the joy of the kingdom.

Acts 16:19-34

When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved— you and your household."

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God— he and his whole family.

How people will know that the reign of God is good news is when they see how we respond when the world gives us the worst news they could give us.

We are to be salt and light and take whatever comes.

What were they singing? “Tempted and Tried” or “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”?

If we live the beatitudes it will change us. What persecution will do is show the change is not skin deep. We will not only get a blessing we will be one.

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Sept. 26, 2004

SALT and LIGHT

Matt 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Introduction

The Kingdom on Earth

Some of the perpetual and pressing questions for citizens of the Kingdom of God:

How do we live in a world that is full of evil and ugliness.

How do we respond to evil and ugliness?

If the kingdom of God has come and God is sovereign, why does evil continue?

Jesus explains the status of the kingdom and its relationship to the world in a parable.

Matt 13:24-30

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared."

The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"An enemy did this," he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'"

'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'

The circumstances were familiar to Jesus' disciples. Tares were a common occurrence in wheat fields. Tares are a poisonous weed commonly called dandelion. It when it sprouts it is difficult to identify and hard to up root. In a wheat field it looks very much like wheat and its roots intertwine with the roots of the wheat making it impossible to pull up without destroying some of the wheat. The most effective way to deal with them is to wait until the wheat is harvested and then remove the tares.

This parable is not about dealing with judgmentalism in the church. The field is the world (vs.38).

The tares are not half-hearted wheat. In the parable Jesus describes the reality of our world. The strongest argument against the reign of God is history. Why, if is God is the king does evil still permeate our world?

The kingdom of God is here but evil still exists. Although Jesus does not explain fully the presence of evil he gives us the kingdom strategy for dealing with evil in the world.

God created a world with out evil. The world is not evil by design. God sows the seeds of truth. "An enemy did this". God has an enemy, Satan. The Evil one sows also – he sows the seeds of lies.

Jesus explains the parable meaning later:

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Matt 13:36-43

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels."

As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

From the parable we learn the reality of this world:

- ✓ The field is the world and it rightfully belongs to God.
- ✓ The enemy cannot touch the sons of God. However, Satan can make the conditions they live in tough to live in.
- ✓ There is nothing the enemy can do to upset God's kingdom or thwart his intentions.
- ✓ God's kingdom co-exists with the kingdom of darkness. We who are sons of God's kingdom must learn to thrive and survive in this world.
- ✓ We must bear fruit surrounded by weeds.

Why doesn't God just get rid of the enemy? God has promised the destruction of the enemy, why not now?

To destroy the enemy now would mean the destruction of some who in time would be proven to wheat. God will not bring destruction until he is satisfied that no more wheat is to be found.

How do we thrive and survive in this world?

We must remember:

- ✓ God's people must not respond to evil with more evil. Jesus forbids our well intentioned crusades against evil, declaring it is God's job not ours to destroy the enemy. History is filled with our efforts to defeat evil using the weapons of the evil one. The king is dishonored when we use the weapons of the enemy.

We are to resist evil with the same weapons as Jesus . ref. Sermon on Mount

Rom 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

2 Cor 10:4-5

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Martin Luther King sermon shortly after four young African-American girls were killed with a bomb at a church in Birmingham, Alabama.

"I've seen too much hate to want to hate myself. Every time I see it, I say to my self, hate is too great a burden to bear. Somehow we must be able to stand up to our bitterest opponents and say,

"We shall match you capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. Do to us what you will but we will still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children. As difficult as it is we will still love you. But be assured we will wear you down with our capacity to suffer. And one day, we will win our freedom. We will not only win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves, we will so appeal to your heart and conscience we will win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory."

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- ✓ We must never forget that what Satan has brought in God will cast out. Nothing will stop God from his appointed time of judgment.

2 Tim 4:1-2

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.

Salt and Light

Understanding the reality of the kingdom of God in the world today, we return to the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus continues his instruction on what it is like to live under the reign of God. He tells his followers that in the kingdom of God we are to be salt and light in the world.

The metaphor of salt and light stands for influence and demonstration.

○ SALT

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "

As we live in the world to be salt means our influence permeates the world as salt does. It exerts an influence on everything it touches.

Our Christian **influence** is like salt in that:

- It is pure.

Christians are examples of purity.

Col 3:5-10

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

- It preserves-

Christians are to have a certain antiseptic influence on life. Our presence in the world defeats corruption and makes it easier for others to be good.

i.e language at work.

- It lends flavor –

Christianity lends flavor to the world. In this world the Christian should be the one who remain serene, full of the joy of life. We should bring radiance to the world.

i.e. salt in home made ice cream.

When salt no longer has these qualities, it is of no value.

○ LIGHT

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

We **demonstrate** our Christianity as the light of the world.

No man is the source of his own light. Jesus calls us not to produce our light but to shine with the reflection of his light.

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John 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

To be the light of the world means:

- To be seen. We are visible
- To be a guide. We light the way. We are a "guiding light".
- To be a warning.
Light exposes reality. Eph. 5

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October 3, 2004

Kingdom Righteousness

Matt 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Introduction

(Salt and Light, Jesus' narrative describes what it means to be salt 5:21-48 and light 6:1-6:24)

In some ways this may be the most astonishing statement Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus did not formulate any new laws and did not lay down any new detailed principles.

Discuss how those listening to Jesus must have felt hearing Jesus say that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Scribes – men who studied and diligently worked out the details for all the rules and regulations. Mishnah and Talmud

Pharisees - the “separated” ones. They separated themselves from all the ordinary activities of life so that they could keep all the rules and regulations.

WHAT LAW?

Jesus challenged and broke the “law” on numerous occasions. I.e. Mark 3:1-6; Mark 7;

Rom 10:1-4

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Gal 3:23-24

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 2:21

What law did Jesus intend to fulfill?

Caution! Not about being better rule keepers.

Mark 12:28-31

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

There is one great principle that in all things a man must seek God's will, and that, when he knows it, he must dedicate his whole life to obeying it.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There are two kinds of religion: 1) Believes that God will love me if I change. 2) Believes God loves me so that I can change.

Metaphors that give insight into our relationship with God:

- Art
- Master/Apprentice
- Dance

Key Points about Kingdom righteousness:

- Jesus did not institute a new code/system of law. Not one jot or tittle! Problem was not the law but was the relationship.
- Practice and teaching of the commands is necessary to living in the kingdom of God. (Rom. 8:1-17)
- Kingdom righteousness is impossible for man. (righteousness from God – Rom 1:17; 3:21; 4:23-24; Phil 3:8-9)
- Kingdom righteousness is given to us by the reign of God. The kingdom always provides what it demands. We have surrendered to the king and his reign in our lives. (Wedding clothes Matt 22:10)
- Breaking the law in the kingdom of God is prima facie evidence that we have not surrendered to the reign of God in our lives. (Matt 7:21)

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 10, 2004

Kingdom Righteousness – Beyond Rules #1

Matt 5:21-26

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny

Introduction

Above and beyond duty...

It is possible to view the Jesus' teaching as more rules to make us more righteous.

If two or three of your friends take a day off from work – perhaps without pay – to help you move or to attend your mother's funeral, I can imagine you saying, "That was way beyond anything I could have asked or expected of you." Or you might put it this way: "You went beyond the call of duty here today." If somebody stays late at work and misses a basketball game he wanted to see in order to help you finish an important task, what do you say? If you see a policeman put a quarter into a parking meter rather than write a ticket for some little old lady's car, what comes to mind? Somebody went above and beyond duty to honor and help a person.

Jesus, above and beyond...

The Law and the Prophets had pointed for centuries to someone who would come in God's good time – greater than Moses (Deut. 18:15-18), writing the very words of God on human hearts rather than stone tablets (Jer. 31:31-34), and putting a new spirit within humans that would enable them to live out the decrees of God (Ezek. 36:25-27). This is not some simplistic prediction-to-achievement motif. This is not proof-texting from Scripture. It is something quite different. It is the divine longing for humankind "accomplished" in Christ Jesus. Jesus went above and beyond anything law could do or create and then invited us into a brand new kind of righteousness – one the scribes and Pharisees missed on account of their mechanical preoccupation with the minutiae of law. Their way of reading Scripture left them without God, angry, and judgmental. Christ came to bring something radically different.

Jesus comes as the one who embodies all that the Law and Prophets commanded with regard to love, mercy, and justice. He goes "above and beyond" the performance of a dutiful deed. He goes all the way to caring, valuing, affirming, and loving people – all kinds of people in all kinds of circumstances.

- Right answers are not as good as right relationships.
- Ritual is not as good as obedience from the depths of a transformed heart.
- Loving God and one another, giving one's life as a living sacrifice, living in the covenant-security of grace, moving ahead with life in the power of the Holy Spirit – these things "surpass" the transactional way of doing religion by checking off duties as the heavens are higher than the earth.

In the waiting room of the Arizona Burn Center in Phoenix Buddy and Tricia Norman lived surpassing righteousness. In the midst of their concern for a critically burned son, for example, I watched Buddy catch the eye of some sad or frightened person across that room and move to him, pray with him, and share the gospel with him. It was Henry Monday afternoon. Then it was Jason Tuesday morning. I eavesdropped as Tricia talked so naturally and easily about her faith with a lady named Mary. But the most amazing event must have been Thursday – when the man who was piloting the Cobra in which John almost died showed up in that waiting room. He was devastated. And he was having a difficult time coming to grips with what had happened less than a week earlier.

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As the Marine officer came into the room and saw Lt. John Norman's family, he began to walk toward them and say, "It's all my fault! It's all my fault!" But John's father interrupted him, sat him down, and looked him straight in the eye. "Major," Buddy began, "this family doesn't feel that way about you. What happened last Friday was an accident, pure and simple, and our task today is to release you from your guilt over this. The way for you to honor John is to 'get back on your horse,' to climb back into your helicopter as soon as you recover from your own injuries and continue giving the sort of outstanding training to pilots that you had been giving to our son. We release you from the heavy load of guilt you have been carrying for this past week."

You have heard it said ...

Jesus takes up a series of six statements or commandments from Torah and in order to explain them relationally. He takes up laws about murder, adultery, divorce, oath-taking, retaliation, and the treatment of one's neighbors. In none of these cases is he contrasting falsehood with truth or even Old Testament versus New Testament. Instead, he contrasts the interpretation commonly being taught in his day with what God was really trying to do in Scripture. He was setting "the system" and its take on things over against the heart of God for the people accountable to him. He was telling his apprentices the difference in law as law and law as applied with grace and truth.

You have heard it said ... do not murder.

Violence is prevalent but laws are not the answer. The laws are already there. The best-written laws and their most consistent and impartial enforcement don't get to the root problem of violence, mayhem, and murder.

Law can only mark the boundaries, warn us when we are stepping over the line, and judge us guilty among peers and before God.

What we really need is something that keeps us from wanting to go there. We need something that goes all the way to the depths of our motives as persons, our sensitivities to one another, and the transformation of our hearts. Law can't do that. And the law against murder is a clear case in point.

Here is what everybody already knew: The Law of Moses condemns murder and sets an extreme penalty or judgment in place for anyone who breaks the sixth commandment (cf. Ex. 21:12ff). By the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes, one was "in the clear" unless and until he crossed the line and brought himself under such severe penalties. By the righteousness of Christ, that sort of thinking was muddled and ungodly and hateful.

... but I tell you!

"You have had God's will on murder or oaths or adultery interpreted this way," he was saying, "but the 'fulfillment' of Scripture on that point is much deeper and fuller." And the ultimate mistake in our hearing or reading his commentary is to take it to be another layer of law on top of law already in place.

Jesus' new and deeper look at the sixth commandment is first negative, then positive, and finally reconciling. And the final step is the most important! Why? Because righteousness – for Jesus and his whole-life disciples – is ultimately about relationships.

Negatively, Jesus says that – while the Law does in fact forbid murder – the problem runs much deeper. It is getting angry with someone that makes us subject to judgment. Later copyists of the Gospel of Matthew added the prepositional phrase "without cause" to tone down the force of what Jesus taught. But that is creating a loophole. That is pharisaism. That is the method of reading Scripture we humans are best at generating. No, just leave it alone. Take it at face value. The slippery slope that leads to turmoil, violence, and murder begins with anger. Then your anger becomes name-calling – "Raca" or "Stupid" or "Knucklehead" – that makes you accountable to the Sanhedrin. Finally, the deadly insult "You fool!" may be the very words one utters as he lunges at, knives, or otherwise strikes down the object of his anger become hatred become murder.

This is the language of irony and caricature. The Sanhedrin wasn't going to hear cases of name-calling. No court in any culture is going to hang or electrocute someone for shouting, "You fool!" God certainly isn't going to cast someone into hell for those words. How can I be so sure? For one thing, Jesus himself used the term "fool" of some people at Matthew 23:17ff (cf. Prov. 14:16; 18:2; 26:11). For another, only the wooden legalism

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of the Pharisees and scribes hears the words of Jesus here and revises the rules about murder to set boundaries around the law against murder. **This is mocking irony designed to force us to think about a new way of hearing and reading the Word of God.**

The verses are fairly clear, except for the name-calling. What did it mean to say “harrka” [or, NIV, “Raca”] to someone, and what was so terrible about it? The word is an effort to give the sound of a person harking and clearing his throat to spit. When the Jew wanted to express his utter contempt for someone, he would spit on him, usually in his face. This was considered about the meanest thing you could do to a person, and we can certainly understand why. To call anyone an idiot [or, NIV, “You fool!”] was equally bad. And people took it more seriously than they do now. The term cast reflection upon the person about whom it was spoken; it indicated that the speaker didn’t have a very high estimate of that person. So both of these terms were expressions of a low evaluation of one’s fellow human being and a readiness to treat a person as less than human.

Where murder begins...

Jesus is saying, then, that murder really begins when one loses respect for human personality and the infinite worth of every individual. When a man spits in the face of another human being and looks with contempt upon that person because of race or some other fictitious difference, he has in his heart a spirit which may result in murder. The foundation of slavery in America was disrespect for the individual worth of Africans. The Nazi concentration camps and death chambers of World War II sprang from a contempt for the Jews. This basic contempt expresses itself today in race prejudice which cause [sic] segments of the population to be slowly murdered in body and soul by the slums. When one says “nigger,” or “wop,” or “chink,” one is more of a murderer than one realizes. If people convince themselves that the lives of others aren’t worth much, the inference is drawn that it does not matter particularly what happens to them. ... Thus “Harrka,” or contempt, leads to a justification of murder and this makes one a murderer at heart. **(EXAMPLE OF MY EMPLOYEE)**

The Kingdom of God isn’t about rules for progressively offensive and insulting language. It is about relationships! It is not about laws but love. It is not about the letter only but the spirit too. Jesus says that anyone with a heart filled with the Spirit of God will not create, foster, or tolerate alienation within the human family. We all have the same Creator!

Positively, then, a disciple to Jesus who is “at the altar” with his worship and there – in a state of heightened spiritual sensitivity – thinks of someone who “has something against” him must stop, go to that person, make things right, and then come to present his gift.

Literally? No! So don’t you refuse to eat the bread or drink the wine of the Lord’s Supper today because you know of someone from whom you are alienated. Instead, let the communion remind you that you have things to do later today or tomorrow or whenever the time is right to restore true “communion” (i.e., common union, fellowship) with that person.

That the point here really is reconciliation over seething anger is clear from the illustration of “cutting a deal” rather than fighting it out in court.

Again, though, Christians sometimes have to go to court – to get a divorce, to get child support, to collect a debt, to protect one’s livelihood, etc. But if conversation and negotiation can short-circuit the bitterness so often generated in adversarial court proceedings, go for minimal damage to relationships. Concede what you can. Be gracious in offering settlement terms. Protect yourself, your family, or your rights without being caustic or inflicting unnecessary harm.

This teaching even has application to religious disagreements. Have you ever known someone to be too pushy with her faith? Too brassy with his witness? How about the American Airlines pilot who had a captive audience on his flight between Los Angeles and New York? What about some of the debates we are convinced “we won” on baptism or premillennialism or church support for colleges? What about some of the arguments you “won” with family members or friends – family members or friends who haven’t spoken to you since? Have we been guilty of winning arguments and alienating people – not so much from us but from the kingdom! For the kingdom’s sake, it may be best in most cases just to say, “My best take on this is x or y, but you may be right. Perhaps we should both think and pray some more.” On many, many subjects these days, I simply refuse to get into a kingdom-compromising, soul-alienating wrangle and just dismiss the subject with something like this: “The only thing somebody can’t be wrong about and in right relationship with God is Jesus, my friend, so I’m not sure I can muster the energy to argue with you about some of the hair-splittings that once seemed so

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critical to me. I'm sure you are at least as smart as I am and as determined to have your heart open to God. May we both be open to his gentle guidance."

Is it possible to have a conversation about God? Or, is Christianity just an argument?

Conclusion

If I value a holy, healthy relationship with God, I must learn to value you.

You are made in his image and loved dearly by his great heart. So how dare I discount your worth? How dare I insult your person or intelligence or spiritual integrity? How dare I tolerate the social or racial or countless other animosities that have been put in place to keep us apart?

God has created one place where the ground is level for all. Where the worth and dignity of every person is preserved. Where the infinite worth of every soul is affirmed. I choose to stand at the foot of that cross with everyone else who confesses and loves the Christ. To be one body with them. To declare that there is finally a place hatred cannot claim.

Within the love of God, we are learning to love one another – not because of a rule that says we must but because of indwelling Spirit of God has made all things new.

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October 24, 2004

Kingdom Righteousness – Beyond Rules #2

Matt 5:38-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Introduction

You have heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Kingdom Righteousness

... Righteousness above and beyond the law. Righteousness that moves beyond rigid observance of rules and legal performances by means of a heart – an inner self – transformed by God. A life of integrity, a life of wholeness through which we see ourselves and others as bearers of the image of God.

Saul & David – 1 Sam 13; 21:1-6; 2 Sam 6:1-19

Perfect Performance

Be perfect ...as your heavenly Father is perfect!

How do we hear the words of Jesus? How we hear the words of Jesus depends upon our image of God. J.B. Phillips, in his book *Your God Is Too Small*, describes some of the more destructive images of God, one of which is "the god of absolute perfection" or "the god of 100%" that is: "since God is perfection and since he asks for the complete loyalty of His creatures, then the best way of serving, pleasing, and worshiping him is to set up absolute, 100% standards and see to it that we obey them."

Now, imagine the god of 100 percent sitting in the heavens awaiting our next decision. God sitting high in the sky angrily saying, "WRONG, YOU LOSE!" And at that point, all we'll be left with is a second-rate life because we just took one wrong turn. And after our next faulty decision, we'll be onto plan C ... then plan D ... then plan E ... and so on. Clearly, the god of 100 percent is interested in one thing: performance. And as long as we observe the will of God through the lens of treasure maps, formulas, equations, and blueprints, we will too. The focus of our attention will forever be set on execution, performance, and the final product or destination.

Kathleen Norris (Amazing Grace)

Perfectionism, one of the scariest words I know. It is a marked characteristic of contemporary American culture, a serious psychological affliction that makes people too

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timid to take necessary risks and causes them to suffer when, although they've done the best they can, their efforts fall short of some imaginary, and usually unattainable standard. The good news about the word "perfect" as used in the New Testament is that it is not a scary word, so much as a scary translation. The word that has been translated as "perfect" does not mean to set forth an impossible goal, or the perfectionism that would have me to strive for it at any cost. It is taken from a Latin word meaning complete, entire, full-grown. To those who originally heard it, the word would convey "mature" rather than what we mean today by "perfect".

To "be perfect" in the sense that Jesus means it, is to make room for growth, for the changes that bring us to maturity, to ripeness.

William Barclay

THE Greek word for perfect is teleios.

A victim which is fit for a sacrifice to God, that is a victim which is without blemish, is teleios. A man who has reached his full-grown stature is teleios in contradistinction to a half-grown lad. A student who has reached a mature knowledge of his subject is teleios as opposed to a learner who is just beginning, and who as yet has no grasp of things. To put it in another way, the Greek idea of perfection is functional. A thing is perfect if it fully realises the purpose for which it was planned, and designed, and made. In point of fact, that meaning is involved in the derivation of the word. Teleios is the adjective formed from the noun telos. Telos means an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal. A thing is teleios, if it realises the purpose for which it was planned; a man is perfect if he realises the purpose for which he was created and sent into the world.

Let us take a very simple analogy. Suppose in my house there is a screw loose, and I want to tighten and adjust this screw. I go out to the ironmongers and I buy a screw-driver. I find that the screw-driver exactly fits the grip of my hand; it is neither too large nor too small, too rough or too smooth. I lay the screw-driver on the slot of the screw, and I find that it exactly fits. I then turn the screw and the screw is fixed. In the Greek sense, and especially in the New Testament sense, that screw-driver is teleios, because it exactly fulfilled the purpose for which I desired and bought it.

So, then, a man will be teleios if he fulfils the purpose for which he was created, For what purpose was man created? The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to that. In the old creation story we find God saying, " Let us make man in our image and after our likeness " (Genesis 1: 26). Man was created to be like God. The characteristic of God is this universal benevolence, this unconquerable goodwill, this constant seeking of the highest good, of every man. The great characteristic of God is love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to Him, God seeks nothing but their highest good.

Fire Lighters (Larry Crabb)

Isa 50:10-11

Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant?

Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze.

This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.

There is an enormous difference between the joy of discovery and the need to explain. The former gives life a sense of adventure. The latter makes us hate mystery. God has created the world with an orderly structure that can be reasonably, investigated and profitably used. The job of science is to understand and orderly as fully as possible.

But behind the structure is a person, a free, unmanageable person who his bound to nothing outside himself. It is therefore impossible to reduce all mystery to understandable categories. Some level of confusion must remain. If we trust the person behind the structure, that confusion becomes a source of adventure. If we don't trust him, we hate the confusion and try to get rid of it.

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For those who enjoy discovery because they know a good God is moving through the chaos toward a wonderful conclusion, mystery poses no problem. It is welcomed. Explain what you can, and relax even when you can't. But for those ruled by a passion to explain, for those who insist on feeling confident in their own plans, mystery is offensive. They want to know exactly what they must do to provide for their economic future, to restore harmony in their relationships, to succeed in their career or ministry. Confusion is an enemy. Certainty is a challenge to overcome.

God's words through Isaiah tell us one way we can know if we are living in the flesh or in the Spirit. When we bump into something we can't explain, when we find ourselves in a dark tunnel and aren't sure how to get out, is our stronger impulse to trust God or figure out what to do? Do we quickly reach for a flashlight to help us see the road ahead? Or do we firmly grasp the hand of the only one who can see in the dark? Where is our confidence—in God or in our ability to come up with a good plan? If we walk confidently in the light of our own torches, Isaiah informs us that we are not relying on God. The demand to walk a path with a predictable outcome is an urge of the flesh. It needs to die.

Fire lighters love formulas. They live by them. When they can't devise their own, they turn to experts who confidently tell them what to do to achieve desired results. When tire lighters try to help people, they are more concerned with doing it right than touching others' souls. They trust their model for helping more than the voice of God, more than the Spirit speaking through his Word into their redeemed hearts. Connecting is replaced by control. Fire lighters work too hard. They follow theory too closely; they depend too much on approved technique.

When our sons were in their early teens, I remember spending several hours one evening writing out my analysis of where they were in their development, determining what they needed to successfully move through the sociopsychological demands of that stage, and planning how I could best help them.

A few years later, when Kep was in the middle of his rebellion, I screamed at God, literally: "Tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Just tell me what to do!" When he refused (I'm not sure what I thought he ought to have done), I consulted an adolescent specialist—actually two of them. "What should I do?" I demanded. "Do I ground him, sell his car, and require attendance at youth group? Or do I calmly discuss things with him, share my concerns, and reasonably explore options?" Since God didn't answer those questions in the book he wrote, I lost interest in reading my Bible. Interesting how we prefer to see the Bible as a rule book, a collection of principles to follow when life gets rough, rather than as a revelation of God's heart. We prefer instructions on what to do over all invitation to connect our hearts with his and to then do whatever he reveals.

Fire lighters hate uncertainty. They are terrified of confusion. Their nagging question is always: "Am I right?" Am I doing this properly? Am I making big mistakes? Is there a better way of handling this situation? Who would know that might tell me? Fire lighters demand clear answers, practical instructions, and doable solutions. Life is livable if they can feel confident in their plans. So they insist on good plans and often find throw in the Bible, not always because the plans are there, but because they want them to be there. Parents of young children are especially prone to fire lighting. When they get together for mutual support, open sharing, prayer, Bible study, and discussion of good books on parenting, it can be a wonderful thing. But sometimes they gather in groups to intensely discuss the latest Christian manual on raising kids. If someone questions the approved text too strongly, the group's welcome is withdrawn. The parents' terror of confusion is covered over with an almost slavish confidence in what the experts recommend.

To sustain then confidence, they stick together. They report successes, affirm each others' faith when things don't work as hoped, and chide one another for lapses in following the plan. With a common flashlight illuminating the way, these scared people connect, falsely. Cultlike elements develop in their community. Agreement and conformity are more valued than debate and diversity, and all happen in the name of biblical truth. The passion to be right and their consensus on what is right becomes the foundation of their closeness. But that passion and the question it inevitably spawns—Am I right?—come out of the flesh. The demand to be right, an insistence that we find confidence in a strategy because of its guaranteed outcome, is an urge to be killed. It must die because it replaces a final trust in God with confidence in a system we can follow.

God dealt with one expression of my fire-lighting passion the way he often does, by deepening the darkness. He allowed my confusion to get so thick that I was faced with only two options: Trust God or sink into despair. The darkness he permitted shattered my confidence in what I was doing and removed all hope of regaining confidence through a better plan.

During Kep's rebellion, not only did I write out a game plan for helping both Kep and Ken move through their developmental stages, but I also studied biblical stories to see what worked and what didn't (I spent hours in 1 Samuel 2 pondering Eli's failure with his two sons, Hophni and Phineas). I read books by the reigning experts, and I prayed and fasted.

Because my core agenda was to be right and know it, I could richly connect with no one. I was pouring very little into my wife, my sons, or my friends. I remained involved with them, often very kindly, but my core struggle was to be right, not to touch something good in another with whatever was spiritually alive in me.

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The darkness deepened. God gave little opportunity for me to be con-firmed that I was right. I became more confused. I fought the confusion; I hated it as all fire lighters do. Then I received word that Kep had been expelled from college. Something became clear. There were no formulas. There were no right strategies with guaranteed outcomes. There was only God. Would I trust him and rely on his name (snot as a new plan to get what I wanted)? Would I simply hold his hand, trust his heart, and move into the darkness with no purpose other than to reflect something of Christ? Only deep darkness helped me to tear God more than con fusion.

When the lights go out, when our dreams shatter and there's no way to piece them back together, that's when our questions are most likely to change. No longer do we ask, "Am I right?" We realize we can't be right enough to make things happen as we want. Instead we ask, "Whom do I trust?"

The passion to explain leads us along a path that ends badly. According to Isaiah, we end up lying down in torment, wracked by unanswerable questions: Why didn't. this work? What could I have done differently? Why am I so stupid? Why did I ever listen to that expert? How can I possibly climb out of this hole? It's so deep—and dark.

But when the passion to be right is mortified, a new one arises: a longing to trust God. And that urge takes us on a sometimes bumpy and steep path that winds through some very dark nights but eventually brings us to green pastures. There we lie down, and rest. And that's a guarantee.

The God of the Scriptures, is more interested in relationship than performance. Luke recounts an interesting interaction between Jesus and two of His good friends in chapter 10, verses 38-42:

As they continued their travel, Jesus entered a village. A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. "Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand." The Master said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and won't be taken from her." (Luke 10:38-42 The Message)

For Martha, her reality is her work. She can't see beyond the execution of her duties, and in a first century patriarchal Palestinian village as this, we can't really blame her. But the message Jesus has embodied is difficult to miss, and because it's so simply profound, it's also difficult to absorb: Jesus is deeply concerned with us. Jesus is concerned with us and our well-being.

APRIL 25, 2004

Life In the Kingdom of God

kingdom (NIV)

Matt 3:2

Matt 4:17

Matt 4:23

Matt 5:3

Matt 5:10

Matt 5:19-20

Matt 6:10

Matt 6:33

Matt 7:21

Matt 8:11-12

Matt 9:35

Matt 10:7

Matt 11:11-12

Matt 12:25-28

Matt 13:11

Matt 13:19

Matt 13:24

Matt 13:31-33

Matt 13:38

Matt 13:41

Matt 13:43

Matt 13:44

Matt 13:45

Matt 13:47

Matt 13:52

Matt 16:19

Matt 16:28

Matt 18:1

April 25, 2004

kingdom (NIV)

Matt 18:3

Matt 18:4

Matt 18:23

Matt 19:12

Matt 19:14

Matt 19:23

Matt 19:24

Matt 20:1

Matt 20:21

Matt 21:31

Matt 21:43

Matt 22:2

Matt 23:13

Matt 24:7

Matt 24:7

Matt 24:14

Matt 25:1

Matt 25:34

Matt 26:29

May 2, 2004

Life In the Kingdom of God

kingdom (NIV)

Mark 1:15

Mark 3:24

Mark 4:11

Mark 4:26

Mark 4:30

Mark 6:23

Mark 9:1

Mark 9:47

Mark 10:14-15

Mark 10:23-25

Mark 11:10

Mark 12:34

Mark 13:8

Mark 14:25

Mark 15:43

Luke 1:33

Luke 4:43

Luke 6:20

Luke 7:28

Luke 8:1

Luke 8:10

Luke 9:2

Luke 9:11

Luke 9:27

Luke 9:60-62

Luke 10:9-11

Luke 11:2

Luke 11:17-20

Luke 12:31-32

Luke 13:18

Luke 13:20

Luke 13:28-29

Luke 13:29

Luke 14:15

Luke 16:16

Luke 17:20

Luke 17:20

Luke 17:21

Luke 18:16-17

Luke 18:24-25

Luke 18:29

Luke 19:11

Luke 21:10

Luke 21:31

Luke 22:16-18

Luke 22:29-30

Luke 23:42

Luke 23:51

John 3:3-5

John 18:36