

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 15

Three weeks ago we started on this section of the Sermon of the Mount.

Starting in Chapter 6, Jesus began to talk about the development of Kingdom life in the real world. He sets forth principles for Kingdom living in:

- religious life (6:1-18)
- everyday life (6:19-34) (Last Week)

Now this week He teaches us how to walk out our faith in:

- community relationships (7:1-12)

Matt 7:1-14

1. Judging Others (Matthew 7 :1-6)

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Jesus moves from personal temptations to interpersonal temptations. He warns against judging in an inappropriate way.

The context makes it clear that the thing here condemned is that inclination we all have to look unfavorably on the character and actions of others, which leads invariably to the pronouncing of rash, unjust, and unlovely judgments upon them. If we're honest, we all tend to make snap judgments of people. I teach a class called "Trauma Informed Care" that helps service providers understand that the behaviors that they might interpret as malicious, often are survival skills brought on by necessity. We all need to walk a mile in someone else's shoes before we can pass judgment.

Even then we need to examine ourselves. Who are we to be passing judgment on someone else?

Jesus was the son of a carpenter and as such was familiar with working with wood. The Greek "*karphos*" gets translated as mote in the KJV or speck in the ESV, but a better translation would be "splinter" as it fits better with the context. How can we begin to help someone remove a splinter when we have a 2X4 in our own eye.

Too many of us think that we have the gift of pointing out sin in other people's lives.

John 16:7-9

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will

send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin,

It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convict people of sin. It is our job to examine ourselves and deal with our sin before we go pointing out the sin in another person's life.

I do a lot of counseling and invariably the people I work with point at others as the cause of their problems. Now, while I'm not saying that other people may be the cause of pain and suffering, I need to guide people to take responsibility for their own sins. None of us is perfect and without sin. In all relationships it takes two to tango and we need to acknowledge our own part in the dysfunction of any relationship.

Wimber used to say, "don't trust any man who walks without a limp". He was referring to Jacob who wrestled with the angel of the Lord in order to get the blessing he thought he deserved. While he did get the blessing, the Lord dislocated his hip and thereafter he walked with a limp as a reminder that none of us can stand blameless before the Lord. People who haven't suffered. People who haven't stumbled and fallen have little compassion for those who have. Those of us who have failed in our walk with the Lord at some point or another, tend to take a beat before judging others and have a little more compassion.

That's why it's doubly remarkable that Jesus, who never sinned and never failed had such compassion.

John 8:3-11

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" 6 This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7 And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9 But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Do you want God to judge you?

Do you want God to treat you harshly?

Do you want God to disqualify you?

Then don't do that to others.

Now, we need to understand that there is a time to point out sin. The Gospel message begins with the fact that "all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God". It also points out that "the wages of sin is death". But this is not to pronounce a verdict of guilt and to disqualify them, this is meant to lead them to repentance. But to just point a finger at unbelievers to highlight their sin and pass judgment leads to defensiveness and an accusation against us of hypocrisy.

6 "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Like we talked about last week, we need to be aware of what a particular Scripture meant to the initial audience receiving it. While to us dogs are viewed as pets and man's best friend, in the ancient middle east dogs were scavengers and viewed as unclean. Pigs were viewed the same way.

On the other hand, pearls were extremely rare and were the most valued jewelry of the time.

Jesus is calling for discernment on our part as to whom we share the Gospel with. He knew that for the most part the Pharisees and the Sadducees would always reject His message outright, regardless of the logic, regardless of the witness of the Holy Spirit, and regardless of the signs and wonders that accompanied His teaching. For the most part, He did not bother trying to convince them because He knew that Satan had blinded them to the truth.

Even now there are those that call us haters, extremists and a danger to democracy.

He's telling us to be guided and obedient to the Holy Spirit, so we effectively share the Gospel with those who are in need of it and are open to receive it.

2. Ask, and It Will Be Given (Matt 7:7-11)

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

- Ask – Disciples should come in humility, obedience, and in recognition of their need. While we know that God knows our needs before we ever vocalize them, He wants us to ask and not take Him for granted. Just by asking, we are putting Him at a higher level than ourselves. We are acknowledging that we are dependent on Him. That is why we say, "come Holy Spirit". We know He is already here, what we are really saying is have your way us. We cede control to you.
- Seek – This goes beyond asking and connects it to responsible action in pursuing the will of God. We are actively going after Him, we are looking for Him, we are listening to Him. You have heard that we are to, "wait upon the Lord". This is not a passive sit back and do nothing waiting, it is an active waiting, like when waiters attend to a table. We are to get busy doing Kingdom work, while listening for His direction.

- Knock – This suggests perseverance. And it also suggests obedience. Pray without ceasing. Persist in asking and seeking. Last week we started praying for healing in our midst. We are going to continue to pray for healing until we start seeing that healing take place.

8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

There have been times when I waited until my kids asked me for something before I gave it to them. I didn't want them taking for granted that everything in life was going to be handed to them. I wanted to teach them how to say please and thank you. I also wanted to teach them the value of things. Even still, it gave me great joy to provide for them and to see the smile on their faces when they got a special treat.

Our Heavenly Daddy wants to lavish His love on us. But He does want us to understand that as much as He loves us, He is God, and we are not. He will provide, but we need to ask, seek and knock.

James 4:8

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

He expects us to take a step of faith. I'm not saying that we need to take the first step, because we can't in our own strength. He has already taken the first step by giving us His Son, His Word, and His Holy Spirit. But we need to take a step in response in order to activate His Grace. (Credit Cards)

3. The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

As we deal with each other day in and day out, we need to have some standard that governs the way we interact with each other. We can either have checklists and hundreds of rules and laws to govern our interaction, or we can live by the one standard that summarizes the Law and the Prophets.

12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is the Golden Rule as set by Jesus. You can never go wrong by treating others the way you want to be treated. All of us are self-centered to some degree or another. All of us want to be seen in a certain light and want to be treated in a certain way. If we put others before ourselves, if we serve others and minister to others, then no one will find fault with us and will likely treat in kind.

Now, we know that there are some people who are just takers and who will not respond in kind. But that is their problem not ours. Our responsibility is to treat others the way we would like to be treated. If we do that, then God will repay.

Conclusion

To be effective witnesses for His Kingdom, we need to act in a certain way in the community. If we're always judging non-Christians, they will judge us and accuse us of hypocrisy.

Trust in the Lord to provide for you. Remember that money is not the root of all evil; the love and pursuit of money is. As Dave Ramsey loves to say, "live like no one else, so that you can live and give like no one else".

We live in a dog-eat-dog world, but if we treat everyone the way we want to be treated, then our witness will be harder to challenge.

How then will you choose to live?