

Kingdom of God Part 15

“First Place or the Whole Place”

1. Review

- a. We have spent a lot of time talking about the Kingdom of God in our lives and our world. Last week we talked about the mystery of the Kingdom of God is about “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
- b. We reviewed the power of fear in eroding our faith...and I hope that you are joining us for our study on becoming “fearless” on Sunday evenings.

2. *“But seek first of all His kingdom and His righteousness and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.”* -- Matthew 6:33

- a. Most of us read this verse and consider that to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness means to simply put God at the top of our List.
 - i. We have practically translated this verse to say, “Look for God’s ways over the world’s ways, live with an attitude of hating sin, and all these things will be given you.” But is that what Jesus really meant?
- b. We have so weighted the word “first” that we have ignored the word “seek” which means to inquire into, crave, strive after or meditate upon”
 - i. God’s number one priority for us is to seek, understand, and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
 1. As I have preached now for almost 4 months on the Kingdom of God...has any of the mystery, promise, miraculous nature or present reality of the Kingdom of God created a deeper hunger or thirst in you to understand and experience the Kingdom gospel more intensely than you have before?
 - ii. I said earlier that most of us translate Matthew 6:3 to say for us “Seek Heavenly stuff first and put God at the top of our list, and then its okay to put everything else I value and treasure on that list, just as long as God is at the top of that list.
 1. But that isn’t true. God isn’t just first or primary. **God must be all, not just first, to the absolute and total exclusion of everything else.**
 - iii. Does that bother you to hear me say that?
 1. I can hear some folks saying, *“Geez, you are going overboard with this love God stuff. Can’t you keep some balance in your life? After all, other things are important too!”*
 - iv. When I started working at Nabisco in 1980, I was a brand new Christian. I was in love with Jesus! He had just radically revolutionized my life to the point that I dropped everything to pursue Him. I met a lot of other Christians there who were relatively vocal about their faith...but almost everyone, and I wondered why at the time, cautioned me not to be fanatical about my faith. Now I wondered what fanatical meant, because I didn’t think I was being fanatical. I lived, breathed, ate and drank Jesus Christ. I enjoyed Him so much that I preferred reading the bible to anything else. I preferred to talk and spend time with Jesus more than I did the television or the newspaper, or going to bars or anything else. I enjoyed Jesus so much I would talk to Him like He was walking right beside me.
 1. As the years passed, I began to understand what folks meant by being fanatical. I eventually found a wife, kids, cars, homes, a career, hobbies. And over time, I was becoming what the world would call, “well balanced.”
 2. But each of these things had filled something in my heart that been designed to be occupied by God alone.

3. I had slowly started to get my meaning, value and purpose from all of these “good things” (they weren’t evil, they weren’t sinful, they were God given and good). I got a sense of fulfillment, contentment and value from them.
 4. Why is that wrong?
 - a. Because God designed me to find my entire sense of value (Life) from Him. In fact, that is what the cross shows me. It shows me I have infinite value to God. That God did not “*spare His own Son, but deliver Him up for us all...*” Romans 8:32
3. The concept of the Kingdom of God means that I cease to build and own my own kingdom(s). I surrender all rule over my own life. I surrender control to God who loves me “This much!”
 - a. Personally, I find this very hard to do.
 - i. I got a place in my life where I let God rule and reign, and then I have the family place and God is a big part of that, and my ministry and God had got a good chunk of that one, and then the home/yard work and stuff, and I listen to God while I’m doing that, and the hobby section – and I talk to God a lot when I’m doing that. .
 - b. **What is wrong with this?** It’s a segmented pie, not an integrated life.
 - i. You see, I find a great deal of self-worth and value from each of those activities and relationships, instead of ALL of my self value, worth and meaning coming from the love and my relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Here is the inversion we all have. We have family, friends, home, hobbies, activities, church, etc...and we use them to GET our value and meaning and our “life”.
 - iii. But that is upside down. **We aren’t called to GET our value and meaning from those things, people or activities, we are called to BRING value to and enrich them as a result of the perfect wholeness we have found in Christ.**
 1. For example: A hobby shouldn’t give you meaning and purpose or such satisfaction that you live for it or think about it all hours of the day or night. The same thing goes for our profession, our families, our belongings, even our entertainment and the sports we enjoy playing or watching.
 2. Is this making sense?
 4. Have you ever read something, that you knew in your head and somehow this time, when you read it, it reaches your heart? I read something this week that shook me to my core, because it did exactly that. ‘
 - a. **“When our need for worth, significance and security isn’t met by our relationship with God, we end up using things and people to meet those needs.”** Gregory Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Religion*, p 187.
 - b. A year or so ago, we studied “Search for Significance” which profoundly affected the way that many of us looked at our value and significance. We realized from that study that we are loved irrespective of what we DO. God loves us because of what we are, His crowning creation, not because we do or don’t do things. **The only thing standing in the way of God loving us is Us.** We reject or refuse or can’t believe that we are worth His love! Our self led lives reject His love in favor of control or as a result of fear of losing control. (Can God screw up your life any worse than you already have?)
 - c. We often derive our sense of worth, value and meaning from what we do and from the people we do it with. There is importance to community, but as I said earlier, we aren’t to derive value FROM these things or relationships, we are to BRING VALUE TO them as a result of our wholeness in Christ.
 5. Do you believe God loves you? Do you really, really believe He loves you? Do you believe His promises that He will take care of you, forgive you, make you whole, provide for all of your needs? We say yes, but every time we “fear” we betray what we say with our actions. The more solidly you believe

that Father God loves you, the less you will fear for anything! You will also cling less to things and people for your value because your value comes from Him instead.

- a. The Kingdom is about God's rule and priority and absolute reign over all areas of life to the exclusion of everything else.
 - i. Luke 14:26 "*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.*"
 - ii. When Jesus said, "hate your mother and father..." we translate that as "love less," and feel better. But Jesus' sayings were never that easy. But the saying means that your level of love for your mother and father would look like hatred when it is compared to the love of God, it would be so infinitesimally small and insignificant in comparison.
 - iii. So many things can replace Jesus as our "first love" and top priority: family and friends that we love and want to please, career, material possessions such as houses and wealth to name only a few. We can not love anyone or anything more than we love and serve Jesus and be His disciple.
 - iv. Who is your king? Don't condemn yourself for not being there yet...lets look to God for our value and worth and meaning and nothing else!
 1. Too often we try to destroy our idols (which we should) but stop there. We feel guilty for not loving God as we ought, so we find all our idols and smash them to little bits. We get rid of our televisions, we change a habit or give up doing certain things. And we feel better for awhile and then we feel that empty spot gnawing at us again. So we go out and find something else to fill it up.
 2. We start our act of repentance well, but we rarely finish well. Repentance involves turning from something inferior TO something better.
 3. We cannot keep replacing our broken idols with new ones. We do this because we think other things can share the list with God.
 - v. But nothing else can be on the list. God is the ONLY source of true life. We must learn to come to him, enjoy Him and derive all of our meaning and value in life from Him! +
 - b. **God's love needs to be the place where we get every bit of our value, worth and importance.**
 - 1.
 - ii. **True surrender will always go beyond natural devotion. If we will only give up, God will surrender Himself to embrace all those around us and will meet their needs, which were created by our surrender. Beware of stopping anywhere short of total surrender to God. Most of us have only a vision of what this really means, but have never truly experienced it.** Oswald Chambers
6. He wants us to have a desire to know and have a passion to possess the Kingdom here on earth.
- a. What is the beauty of Christ's love for you? I want to invite all of us to close our eyes and go before the Father.
 - i. Imagine see and hear the Lord Jesus remind you that you were bought with an infinite price and that you were worth every bit of the blood he shed on your behalf.
 - ii. Imagine hearing Him tell you that you are of unsurpassable worth and that He took great JOY in going to the cross to suffer and die for you.
 - iii. Experience the Lord tenderly assuring you that you are completely forgiven and have been given all the goodness you will ever need to live and stand before God for eternity.
 - b. Is there a part of you that is resisting this voice of God that says you are beautiful, valuable and worth this display of His love?
 - c. Take an inventory of everything you love and enjoy: People, possessions, abilities, activities, etc. Imagine losing each one of them. And then ask yourself, "would my core sense of being and how I feel about myself be diminished by this loss?" If so you have an idolatrous relationship with that thing. As God shows you each idol, give it to God and ask Him to fill the hole that that idol has been plugging in your life. Ask Him to take away your love for anything but Him.

Lord God...