

Kingdom of Heaven – Part 17

Kingdom Life – Playing God

1. Review – *priorities vs. primacy; demons and the guy Jesus cared enough to cross a lake for*; and today, we will look at how we play god!
2. Jesus did a lot of teaching about what Kingdom living should look like. Many of us look at the Beatitudes and the teachings of Jesus and see them as a code of conduct for life, a new 10 commandments for the New Testament. You know by now that there is nothing you can do to work your way into God’s love and favor? You can’t make God love you an ounce more than He already does.
 - a. These teachings are so much more than a code for life, they express the very heart of the King for His Kingdom!
3. Today we will look at a very troubling passage, because it is often misinterpreted, misapplied and misused by both Christians and non-Christians. In fact, it is one of the most often quoted scriptures by people OUTSIDE the church:
 - a. Matthew 7:2-4 *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?”*
 - b. I read this week that a professor at Troy State University in Alabama said that “judge not lest you be judged” was one of the 10 commandments! In fact, if you are ever talking about “sin” or things that the bible speaks out *against* to a non-Christian, they will often accuse you of “judging” other people.
 - i. What do people *MEAN* when they quote this passage? What would happen if all forms of “judgments” were outlawed?
 1. You would have no judges, criminals would be free to roam the streets.
 2. Your children couldn’t be corrected for inappropriate behavior.
 3. You would have to do away with all grades in school, because you are judging performance of a child.
 4. You couldn’t do a background check on an employee or check his references.
 5. (funny, but some of these things are a problem now!).
4. This passage does deal with the attitude of judging. While we think Jesus is talking about judging other’s people’s motives and actions, He is actually addressing the attitude that detracts, or takes away the intrinsic worth of another human being.
 - a. This attitude found its origins in the garden of Eden, when the first couple ate of the tree of the “knowledge of good and evil” and decided for themselves what was right and what was best. Mankind has been addicted to that tree ever since.
 - b. Let me see if I can make this clearer:
 - c. *Have you ever sat in the mall, drinking a cup of coffee outside the food court and just simply watched people? I have. I actually have to admit I rather enjoy it. I watch the nose pierced teens go into Spencer’s Gifts and wonder what they are shopping for, or the couple that are shopping together - the woman looking in every clothing shop and the man peering at every electronic store. I watch with interest the woman with a cane who struggles to sit down on a bench and wonder where her family is. And I overhear the casual conversations of dozens of people and smile.*
 - d. Every act of observation is tied to a thought, and association in my mind – a kind of evaluation of the person, circumstance or situation. I see someone who is obviously gay – what does my

mind say to my heart? Another well dressed, successful person walks by – I evaluate. What am I doing? Every label I apply to a person is revealing my own heart to me...if I would only pay attention. But no, I am too busy “watching people.”

- e. Is what I am doing a violation of the Kingdom?
 - i. After all, don't we all do it? Don't we all categorize, label and privately judge people every day? Am I not to “know a tree by its fruit?”
 - ii. Doesn't that involve judgment or discernment?
 - f. The answer is no. The word for judgment that Jesus forbade us from conducting, is the Greek word “Krino” which is where we get the word “critic.”
 - i. It literally means to cut, divide or to separate things.
 - ii. So a movie critic is one who divides the good movies (in his opinion) from the lousy ones.
 - iii. Contrast this with the word “discerning” – which is where we make evaluations so that we can make decisions. Those look like the question, “Is this person a good fit for this job? Are we safe or in danger? Is this a good use of money or a bad investment?”
 - iv. We couldn't live without making discerning choices.
5. **The kind of judgment Jesus condemns is about separating ourselves from others or over others.** This is the behavior that is incompatible with Kingdom living.
- a. Whenever we separate ourselves from others, or place ourselves or our “group” above them, we have contrasted ourselves as being “favorable” over others who are “unfavorable.” We have implied one group as being of greater worth than another.
 - b. You might say, well, that isn't so bad. But it really is, when we understand the root of the attitude from which it springs!
 - c. Let me state that judgment is not only a form of idolatry, it is also the most fundamental form of idolatry that there is.
 - d. It is why the forbidden tree in the garden was named, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”
 - e. **By rejecting God as our sole source of Life, we seek to acquire Life by pretending we are god and judging others.**
 - f. It places us on the throne that belongs to God alone.
 - i. Only God is in a position to judge people with complete knowledge and objectivity. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*" (Heb. 9:27) Only God possesses all the facts.
 - ii. The Lord is the only one able to judge the secrets of every person. Paul wrote, "*This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ.*" Romans 2:16
6. Jesus warns us against judging others and condemning others because we rarely use the same standard of judgment for ourselves that we do for others. We think we do. But we don't.
- a. In fact, Jews of the day Jesus lived in categorized people according to purity and morality.
 - i. **Purity** - people were classified as clean or unclean. This referred specially to religious ceremony. Of course in the Jewish culture, this meant power and prestige. The priests and religious leaders needed to make sure that they kept themselves pure. Thus Jesus told the story of the man who was beaten almost to death and robbed. A priest and a Levite at different times came along recognizing the situation and instead of helping they passed by the other side. We like to judge them because we know better right. We know the story and the outcome. We know that an unclean Samaritan came along and saved the man. But we also need to remember that the priest and Levite were simply trying to be good, righteous Jews by observing what they believed to be crucial elements in obeying God. They felt that they needed to remain pure above all and that if they were pure then they would be morally right.
 - ii. **Morality** of course deals with right and wrong. One could be unclean or impure but still be morally right with God. For example, a woman who is in her menstruation period was

considered to be unclean but not necessary immoral. A prostitute would be immoral and unclean. Jesus seems to be undoing common belief that just because one was clean and pure then that automatically made one moral. For sometimes in our judgment to be right we are wrong. The priest and Levite may be obedient to the Law but they disobeyed Jesus' basic belief (his Shema) by not helping someone who desperately needed help. They were immoral because they were not loving others.

iii. And most striking of all, Jesus rescues an immoral woman from certain death. What was this about?

7. In a perverted sort of way, we actually ascribe value to ourselves by the way we judge (put down) others.
 - a. He/she is no good, he is a loser, she isn't going to get it together, she is just using us...etc.
 - b. When we put others below ourselves, we actually believe we are raising ourselves up...but we do so at their expense.
 - c. We actually are in disagreement with God as to the value and worth of the people that we judge.
 - d. We cannot eat from both trees – the knowledge of Good and evil, and the tree of life – at the same time. **We cannot love like God loves while trying to judge like only God can judge.**

8. We don't disappoint God...because He loves us unconditionally.
 - a. We are not judged on our performance, and neither is anyone else.
 - b. If you think God judges you on performance, you will judge others by the same standard! (same measure you use you will receive).
 - c. God's grace is the standard, based upon the unsurpassable worth we have in His eyes.
 - d. We are to see others as "worthy" of His love (even though all of us are unworthy) – and give that love away, displaying His grace.
 - e. Do not be bothered by other people's judgments - do not even come down too hard on yourself. Paul wrote, "*I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time: wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*" (I Cor. 4:3-5)
 - f. That is the dependence upon God's grace as the standard, the dependence on the tree of Life (Jesus) and not upon the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

9. Judgment is the foundational sin in the bible because it prevents us from obeying the most fundamental command in the bible...which is to love others the way God loves us.
 - a. Pervert the way God loves us...and we pervert the way we love others.
 - b. **Love is expressing the unsurpassable worth of another by being willing to sacrifice everything for their ultimate good.** That is what God did for you and I. He sacrificed the most valuable of all He had, His one and only Son, and allowed Him to be killed, destroyed and tortured by our sin. God ascribed worth, so much worth that despite our sin, failure, rejection of Him, He loved us in SPITE of how we behaved. In the same way, we must learn to do the same. Judgment comes against this behavior, love acts in accordance with it.
 - c. **Therefore, our role, as kingdom people, is to express to all people, our agreement with God, that they have unsurpassable worth.**
 - i. Insofar as we do this, and only as we do this, we look like Jesus and manifest the beauty of the domain, the kingdom over which God reigns.

10. Here is the action step: View your sin as immense and others' as trivial.
 - a. That will humble us before God and keep us from inflating ourselves over others.
 - b. I used to pray curses down on bars. Lord, close that wicked place down...before I realized I was judging my own temptation. Now I pray, Lord, have mercy on those people who have been so overcome by their sin. Why? Because God had mercy upon me!

- c. Practice self-evaluations to improve your awareness of God's standards of holiness and truth. Paul wrote, "*But if we judge ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When the Lord judges us, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.*" (I Cor. 11:31,32)
- d. Start thanking God for each person you see, praying blessing upon them in their broken lives, agree with God (by blessing) that they have unsurpassable worth. In so doing, we align our hearts and minds with that of God's.
- e. Every judgment we make is like a cork that blocks the flow of the Kingdom Life through us.
- f. Conversely, every blessing we give is like a shower of God's grace on that person!