

The Kingdom part 3: The Manifesto of the Kingdom-

Recap:

We started a couple of weeks ago looking at the kingdom of God. We noted that intertwined throughout the entire New Testament and that to remove these reference would be to remove 226 very specific references.

These two words are-

Basilica, or Kingdom.
And Ecclesia or church.

We noticed how Jesus emphasized the Kingdom in the gospel and the Apostles emphasized the church.

Basilica or kingdom is a word more often used by Christ.
Ecclesia or church is a word of the apostolic era.

The Kingdom was established by Christ but was made manifest by the Apostles in the form of the Church.
The Kingdom or Basilica of Christianity is a spiritual organism,
the Ecclesia or the church of Christianity is an institutional organization.

The Basilica or Kingdom is divine;
The Ecclesia or church is human.

The Basilica, the Kingdom, is the goal of Christianity;
The Ecclesia or church, is the method of Christianity.

The Basilica is God's aim;
The Ecclesia is God's means.

Christ came to establish the Kingdom, then withdraw so the Apostles could establish the church.

The Apostles did not establish the kingdom.
We can not build the kingdom...it has already been established.

Our Lord said that :
the Kingdom is not something you observe!
Or my Kingdom is not of this world.

He said His kingdom was something far greater than something that
lines your stomach, far greater than something armies could fight for
far greater than a political position, a successful business or a
ministry.

The Kingdom of God is within you.

That is, inside of you.

The Kingdom of God is according to Our Lord's own definition :
God's rule and reign in man's heart through Jesus Christ.

Simply put, the Kingdom is God's redemptive action through the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

Every kingdom has its laws.
Every kingdom has its characteristics.

And the laws of God's Kingdom are derived from the very character of God Himself.

The character of the king always is reflected in the character of the kingdom.

Jesus said as much Himself when He said:

Matt 22:21

They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Give Caesar that which belongs to Caesar.
That which is important to Caesar, that which Caesar by his character demands, and give to God, that which is God's.

And as in any kingdom there are laws and principles that govern that kingdom.

George Boardman in his book 'The Kingdom' says:

'The Kingdom of God, is not the imperiousness of disposition; the Kingdom of God is the imperativeness of righteousness.'

So the laws that govern this divine Kingdom spring from the character of our King.

Principals of the Kingdom:

The principals that govern God's Kingdom are not like a city ordinance or laws but rather divine principles and examples by which we should live.

These principles are scattered throughout the New Testament.

When Jesus said that He only did what He saw His Father do. We can take that to mean that he repeated and said the things that were on the heart of God.
The things He heard His Father say.

Everything that He did and said was divine in origin.

These principles, as I have said, are scattered throughout the New Testament in various places and in various forms.
But there is a place where they are brought together into a Manifesto of the Kingdom.

Last week we mentioned that our Lord had been revealing the nature of this kingdom gradually over time to His disciples and followers. He had shown them the need for repentance. They understood the concept of regeneration. He then instructed them on being childlike in their faith. Now in the passages that we are now looking at, He talks about the nature of the people who are citizens of this Kingdom. We call this passage of scripture the beatitudes; George Boardman calls them the Manifesto of the Kingdom.

The Beatitudes:

Now the beatitudes, or the manifesto of the kingdom, are recorded in two places, Matthew 5 and Luke 6.

We will spend our time looking at the more extensive version of it in Matthew 5.

The beatitudes are nine, but they deal with eight areas of character.

Matt. 5:3-12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed...

Let's start by looking at this word blessed because it is the precursor to every one of these statements, these character traits that the citizens of God's Kingdom are to be known by.

When we think of the word 'blessed,' we think of it in a highly spiritual sense.

For example in:

Luke 1:68

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people..."

Where it means adorable, praised, it is something said of God.

Or the most famous turn of phrase.

Luke 1:42

and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

Or even in:

Matt 21:9

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Now each of these cases there is an overly spiritual and awe-filled aspect in the very use of the word.

A sense of Holy praise.

Exalted praise.

A pronouncement of God's blessing.

Now in turn when we use this word more often than not, we use it in the sense of invoking a blessing and the favor of God with a phrase like,

'I bless you.'

Or

Let us pray for God's blessing (that is favor and protection, over an endeavor).

So we take that sense of the word and we bring it over to Matthew 5 and the character traits, or the qualities that are mentioned become "other worldly" for us.

They are no longer the manifesto of the Kingdom.

They are no longer character traits of every member of the kingdom.

They have become attributes of the spiritual elite.

They have become qualities of people far more spiritual and holy than we are.

And it all starts with the weight we give this word 'Blessed.'

It is as if it is a Holy pronouncement that we can never obtain to.

The meaning of the word blessed:

The Greek word used here is an adjective.

It means, chance, good-luck, well off, it means happy.

Now the translators and commentators seem to have a real challenge with that.

They don't want to mess around with the 'Holy Feel' of the word blessed.

In fact Weymouth said in his commentary on these verses:

'Blessedness is, of course, an infinitely higher and better thing than mere happiness.'

As a result of sentiments like this, we have elevated the word blessing beyond its meaning.

But 'happy' is what Jesus said.

It is an old Greek word that talks largely of an outward manifestation, or outward prosperity.

This word 'happy' is about the outward manifestation that happens because of an inward revelation.

It is a very real, a very honest, a very human response and expression by those that have the Kingdom of God within them.

You see this word does not stand by itself, it stands upon the firm foundation and understanding that sin is the starting point and originator of all misery and being born again into this Kingdom is the effective end for all our woes.

Jesus uses this word 'happy' within this context and He uses it often.

John 13:17

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

'If you know these things (happy) are you if you do them'

John 20:29

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed (Happy) are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

'(Happy) are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Paul uses the word as well.

1 Tim 1:11

in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

'In accordance with the gospel of the glory of the (happy) God with which I have been entrusted.'

The Happy God...isn't that awesome!

One more:

Titus 2:13

waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

'Waiting for our (happy) hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.'

Calvin in his commentary says:

From this definition we may learn, that the person whom Christ terms happy is one who is not under the influence of fate or chance, but is governed by an all-wise providence, having every step directed to the attainment of immortal glory, being transformed by the power into the likeness of the ever-blessed God.

An Aside:

How we have messed up our filters when we see happiness as something that is derived from external circumstances and not an internal condition.

How messed up are our filters when we see blessing as a financial state instead of a spiritual state.

How messed up are our filters when we reduce the Kingdom to something as temporal as politics, the arts, or education.

And to remove something as divine as happiness from our every day Christian experience.

The Shorter Westminster Catechism says:

That the Chief end of man is to glorify God and Enjoy Him forever

These old Scottish divines had a revelation that we must glorify Him and enjoy Him.

To glorify....to exalt God.

To glorify....to praise God.

To glorify....to make God great and preeminent in your life.

To enjoy....to find something pleasing.

To enjoy.... to have a good experience.

To enjoy....to be in a beneficial circumstance.

What a wonderful way to live!

What a glorious faith to have!

What a divine relationship to be involved in!!!

Happy are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:

Before we start in proper with this first article in our manifesto, let's dispel something.

Luke quotes this as 'Happy are the poor,' but his quote is the incomplete of this fuller version in Matthew.

This verse does not talk about those people who divest themselves of all earthly goods in an attempt to gain spiritual insight.

Poverty is not a virtue.

Neither does this verse speak of those sorts of people who walk around masochistically putting themselves down, continually depreciating themselves.

That cannot be true simple because of our Lord's use of the word happy.

This phrase, "the kingdom of the Heaven," is found only in Matthew.

Matthew's gospel is aimed at the Jewish people, who as we discussed last week were firmly convinced that the Kingdom spoken of through the prophets and patriarchs was one of a socio-economic nature.

So Mathew is using this term "the Kingdom of heaven" in such a way as to help them see and realize that that is not the case.

This Kingdom they were promised was not an earthly kingdom, but a supernatural kingdom

So who are the poor in spirit?

They are those people who are conscious of their moral and spiritual poverty.

They are conscious of the fact that they are spiritually incomplete, that they do not have their 'stuff together' as it were.

True happiness, lasting eternal happiness cannot exist for a person if they do not know Christ.

I would go further and say that true happiness will not be known except by the person who is always aware of their sinful nature and the daily miracle and victory that Christ has purchased for them.

The person in whose heart, the Kingdom reigns, this person experiences true and lasting happiness.

This is not just a gospel that is heard, but a gospel that is received and believed and daily experienced.

When we lose sight of eternal things, we reduce happiness to an issue of finances or social standing

Friend, if you know that you need God.

If you know that your only answer is God.

Then the Kingdom of Heaven is yours.

Happy are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted:

To mourn means to lament, to have experienced loss.

Now this is capable of two meanings.

One, the grief and lament that is brought about by the loss of family, friends or possessions.

Or second, what starts off as a poor or broken spirit as we become aware of our sinful state ultimately manifests in a deep sense of mourning and lost and desire for reconciliation with God.

Personally I believe it covers both of these areas because our God is as immensely practical as He is spiritual.

(a) Human Loss

The truth of it is that only Christ can truly comfort.

Only the Word can bring lasting assurance and alleviate of our burdens or grief's.

I was listening to an interview with the parents of Madeline McCain, the little girl who was kidnapped in Portugal some three years ago.

My heart broke for them.

There is no earthly way they can ever find relief from their grief. It would have to be a supernatural encounter with God.

Now we may blunt our minds with everything from digital entertainment, to alcohol, drugs, domestic business or work but there comes a time when if we want the grief to stop, we need to apply the oil of joy, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

It is the God of mercy and peace who can reach out and repair the shattered parts of our soul.

Some may say, like an uncaring Pharisee, they just need to 'get over it.'

- Divorce will rip your soul apart.
- Death will scar you.
- Friend, abortion will stay with you forever.
- A child lost or molested will mark you for life
- Betrayal and abandonment will stain you.

All of these and others will cause us to lament.

And for all in these or similar situations there is only one true comfort the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, He who knows what it is to suffer and mourn has sent His spirit to comfort you.

(b) Spiritual Loss

Then there is the lamenting of a broken spirit.
The lamenting of a person who realizes they have broken the heart of God.

This isn't the quick fix of a token altar call because you were caught by the preacher, or caught by your spouse, or caught by your parents.

This is the mourning, the angst that comes from repentance.

It is the cry of Isaiah,

Isaiah 6:5

*And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost;
for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a
people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the
Lord of hosts!"*

Isaiah knew God.

He was a spiritual and political leader engaged in the work of God.
He was a prophet and prominent and prosperous leader in his nation.

But when he got a revelation of the greatness of God and the smallness of his own life, when he received a vision of who God truly was, he cried out for grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

So many people don't like the thought of repenting.

Don't like the thought of publically declaring their need of Christ.

So many people allow pride to stand between them and their God.

We are worried about our reputation.
Our good standing with the congregation, and in the community.

If you are not prepared to look honestly at your life in the context of how God is and what He is asking of you, then you will never know relief or release.

To be comforted means:

To be encouraged, strengthened, appeased, instructed.

It comes from the same word that is used of the person of the Holy Ghost, our comforter.

Wesley says in his commentary concerning the comfort of God we shall receive:
"More solidly and deeply even in this world, and eternally in heaven".

How can God wipe away tears if you're too proud to cry?
If there is no sowing of tears, there is no reaping of joy.

You cannot get to 'your forgiveness' unless you say you're sorry.

You don't need your behavior modified; you need a soft and broken heart.

If you have offended God your heart should break.

And if your heart does not, then it is not flesh but rock and you friend,
have more to be concerned about than public opinion.

Be quick to repent friend.
Be quick to say you're sorry to God and to each other.

Only once you have done that will you find peace.

These people who do cry out to God...
They will know peace.
They will know comfort.

Happy are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth:

Gentleness or meekness is the opposite of self interest or self assertiveness.

It grows from trust in God's goodness and control over each and every situation.

As being poor of spirit is humility looking God-ward.
Meekness is humility looking man-ward.

One is a grace before God.
The other is a grace before each other.

Meekness is not weakness.
Meekness is flexible, restraint, strength that can endure test and turmoil.

A meek person is not stiff with resistances to the ways of God, but yielding.
Like a great willow or elm, the ability to face the wind is based on the deepness of its roots and the flexibility of the trunk.
Because you are rooted in the Word that tells you, He knows the beginning from the end.
Because you know He has planned the path as well as the outcome you accept His ways.

'Not my will, but Yours be done,' and accept the cross laid before you.

If you resist Him you will break.

If in meekness you surrender to Him, then you withstand, indestructible in the face of any onslaught and any storm.

Meekness then is a willingness to give up our feeble, selfish agendas and put our life and life's journey completely in His hands.

George Matheson was a Scottish theologian who lived in the late 1800's. While studying for the ministry he started to go blind.

His fiancé declared that she could never marry such a man and left him to what she believed would be a failed life.

He resolved to stay in the ministry although blind, and gave himself to the study of theology and history at the University of Edinburgh.

He wrote many books and many hymns.
He pastored a church of 2000.

He penned these words:

'Make me a captive Lord, and then I shall be free.
Force me to render up my soul, and I shall a conquer be.
I sink in life's alarm, when by myself I stand;
Imprison me within thine arms, and strong shall be my hand.'

George Matheson bent with life.

Our Lord said that these people, these meek people, these people with this level of commitment, resolution and courage, shall inherit the earth.

Meekness is not lack of courage, it is not shrinking from life or the surrender of our rights, it is bending under the hand of God to meet the challenges that life throws at us.

Happy are the meek, they will inherit the earth.

Concerning the Earth:

Prosperity is the natural sequential ordered result of righteous living.

Ps 35:27

Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!"

Deut. 8:17-18

*Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' **18** You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*

The word earth here means 'land.'

The Jews saw land, the promise of land, as being a great and significant blessing.

The patriarchs longed for the promise of Canaan.
They longed for the promise of their own nation.

Those that are able to bend to the will of God and His sovereign purpose shall inherit the land, the Kingdom, shall come into possession of that which is rightfully theirs.

Now this is a promise to inherit the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom, but also the natural blessings of prosperity for the righteous.

When our Lord promised that we shall inherit the earth, He is saying that the meek will inherit the Kingdom eternal and be partakers of the earthly blessings as well.

This is not a doctrine for the western church, but the Christian Church.

I cannot find anywhere in the Old or New Testament where poverty or lack are associated with God's perfect will.

There are times when the Apostles abased and abounded but they never allowed that to dictate their spiritual mood or faith, or active service or love for God.

They just bent.

How could they bend in the face of so much persecution?

Because they realized that they were just passing through.

That regardless of the temporal blessing they had or had not, nothing compared to the eternal blessing and the promise that was there's to come.

It is often seen experientially in life that the meek, patient, mild person prospers.

The impatient, quarrelsome person makes enemies and often loses money through lawsuits and disputes and poor judgment.

Concerning others:

Meekness is the reception of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us.

Rom. 12:19

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

It is not our role to take His place and do what He desires to do and has promised to do.

Meekness produces peace.

It is proof of greatness of soul.
It comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults.

Meekness is not a synonym for doormat.

It is strength under control.
It is a tongue on a leash.
It is a hand that is stilled.
It is walking away instead of inflaming.

Meekness produces peace; it comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults.

Paul is a great example of a man who was a passionate, strong, determined, meek man who inherited... took possession of... all that was his to have.

'To live is Christ and to die is gain.'

He didn't know if he should stay and build the church or go and see the Lord.

He had walked in the fullness and blessings of both lands.
And found both a delight regardless of the obstacles and opposition they presented.