

3The Ethics of Jesus Kingdom Part 3: A Greater Community

I watched a touching You Tube video clip the other day of two preschoolers. They started to argue about which of their mothers was right. The little girl's mother said it wasn't going to rain and the little boy held fast with his mother's weather report that it would. The disagreement escalated and their voices kept getting louder until the girl drove her point home by poking the boy in the chest announcing her mother was right. The boy put his hand to his chest and cried out, "You poked me in the heart."

Unfortunately, we live by comparisons and are certain that we are right to the point of hurting one another. In Matthew 7 Jesus challenges us to live by another standard – the standard of God's judgment instead of judging ourselves and others. He wants us to trust the judgment that God has already given on our behalf – we are blessed in Him. He wants us to live out of Jesus beatitude and ask what can we do for others instead of what we expect from them. When we accept God's account of us we will stop our comparisons and live among others as equally blessed people - instead of our spiritually impoverished lives. This will enable us to bless instead of curse. As we live from above and before God, this is how God would have us live among others.

Journey Together:

- 1). Who do you tend to compare yourself with?
- 2). When was the last time you were completely wrong about someone?
- 3). Who are the most encouraging people in your life?

Road Map: Matthew 7

- 4). Matthew 7 is about the judgments we make about others and about ourselves. Have you ever been misunderstood or falsely accused? Describe how it felt.
- 5). Jesus says to judge others with the same standard of judgment we would want for ourselves. If God is the judge of all, how has he judged us and how should that influence our judgment of others?

6). What does Jesus mean by "giving to dogs what belongs to God" and "throwing our pearls before swine?" What does this have to do with our "good advise" for others?

7). What does living by the golden rule – giving to others have to do with a life of blessing?

8). Jesus says not to judge others, but then tells us to pay attention to people's actions. Isn't this a form of judging and what is the difference between the two?

9). Why is calling Jesus Lord, Lord, casting out demons and performing healings in His name not a sure sign of knowing Him? How is it possible to engage in such important spiritual practices and not connect with Him? What have we learned about life in the kingdom so far in Jesus sermon in contrast with these dramatic practices?

10). Jesus says that the "wise man" not only learns the spiritual life lessons of His kingdom, but puts them into practice. In other words, he builds his life on them. How are we to go about putting the ethics of kingdom life into practice?

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us in our relationships. This week we want to practice speaking to God about others instead of speaking to others about God.

10). How can this group pray for you right now?

My Journey:

- 1). How has God been using journey in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How has God been guiding in your relationships this week?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?

Backstory:

If the life of the kingdom is a gift and meant to glorify God instead of ourselves, then we have no right to pass judgment on others since we did nothing to possess it. Each new life from above belongs to God who alone has the right to acquit or condemn. Comparing ourselves to others implies we have accomplished something on our own and deserve recognition. God is generous and has opened wide the door for whoever knocks. All we have to do is ask! When we live as though kingdom life is something we have done we are quick to pass judgment on others not living up to our standards.

The message here is to treat everyone as people who have been brought to new life in Christ and to trust our life to God. Each life belongs to Him, and no one else. We have no right to claim privilege from our achievements and no right to condemn others when they fail to measure up. Romans 14 stresses this same message:

“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”

Romans 14:4

The golden rule is our best guide in how we are to relate and get along with others. But even here Jesus introduces a kingdom perspective. The rabbi’s had their own version of the golden rule. The common Jewish expression was stated in the negative – “Don’t do unto others what you don’t want done to you.” But Jesus turned this axiom on its head by emphasizing doing good for others instead of simply not doing harm.

Kingdom life is more than not judging others. It’s about treating others the way we want to be treated. Jesus says “give others the break that you want for yourself.” We are to put ourselves into the shoes of the other person and give them what we would want if it were us in their place.

Prophets are a different story. Prophets are supposed to speak for God. When someone claims to have a word from God and to speak for God we can tell if they are true to that word by the way they live. We can expect that their life to match up with their teaching. It’s simple. Apple trees produce apples and those who teach will produce the fruit of their teaching. The life from above comes out in our behavior.

Those who claim to know God and even brag about doing miraculous events in His name may be imposters unless their words are backed up by a kingdom life. Again, it’s not the things we do or say or even the miraculous signs we produce that verify who we are. It is the clear and indisputable knowledge that all of our actions and behavior come from a life outside us - in and through Jesus Christ. When we get this, our life will be built on rock instead of sand – the rock of Jesus words in the Sermon on the Mount. The rock of His very life from above which He has come to give!

This then is the second discipleship competency of Matthew – ***a greater life***. Life from above, lived before God and no longer compares itself with others. Discipleship with Jesus is impossible without this greater new life in Him!