The Good News of the Kingdom (Part 1)

I. Introduction

A. The Good News of the Kingdom (Similar material found in Luke 6:20-49)

1. Jesus has announced his kingdom mission, called His disciples, and has been teaching, preaching, and healing...The coming of the kingdom was the great hope of Israel. Many questions would have crossed the audiences mind. Am I eligible to enter Messiah’s kingdom? Am I righteous enough? The only standard of righteousness the people knew was that laid down by the current religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. The sermon must be seen in through the lens of the kingdom—and how drastically Jesus’ teachings were from his contemporaries.

2. The kingdom of God is the dynamic reign of God, brought about through the presence of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is God’s rule, of God’s people, in God’s place. The kingdom is present wherever the Father is the ultimate reality, the Son is the true King, and the Spirit is regenerating.

3. The first of five major teaching sections in Matthew.

4. This particular teaching turns our understanding of God, ourselves, and other people upside down.

B. Common misinterpretations

1. The description of a social utopia.
   a) Old Liberal theology—promoting a social gospel.

2. Optional Elitism
   a) Traditional Catholic interpretation. Taught by Thomas Aquinas; an option for highly committed believers who desired to pursue a higher standard of ethical and moral life—particularly for clergy.

3. Entrance Requirements to the Kingdom
   a) This view sees these character traits as pre-requisites for entrance into the kingdom—they are necessary to obtain life in the kingdom.
b) “We must not conclude that Jesus is calling his listeners to a meritorious attempt at earning salvation by living out these character qualities in order to enter the kingdom.”

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c) The Christian is not a self made man or woman—they are a God made man or woman—one who is supernaturally born again by the Spirit of God…created not by man, but by God.

(1) John 1:12-13, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

4. An Impossible Ideal that drives us to Christ.

a) Martin Luther saw it as a law which drove the Christian to Jesus. But is the sermon addressed to those who desire to enter the kingdom, or those who have already expressed allegiance to Jesus, i.e. are his disciples (vs. 1-2). These are people who are already called ‘disciples.’ Much broader use in Matthew…the twelve are not named until chapter 10.

5. Our approach this morning—the norms of citizens of the Kingdom.

a) Jesus’ core message is the kingdom. This is the ethic of those already present in the Kingdom. “The teaching in this sermon certainly sets a high standard. If we take it seriously we realize that we cannot attain it and therefore cannot merit salvation. It is the end of the way of law and drives us to seek salvation in Christ. But when we have received this salvation as God’s free gift, the sermon shows us how we should live in the service of our gracious God. It shows us what life is like in the Kingdom of God.”


b) “This is not a ‘works-righteousness’ by which we become Christ’s disciples, but a ‘fruit-bearing repentance’ whereby we demonstrate our continuing allegiance to him.”

c) Five Questions we will ask of the Sermon
   1. What is the nature of a true kingdom citizen?
   2. What is the kingdom citizens relationship to the Law of God?
   3. How does the kingdom citizen relate to God?
   4. What and whom does the kingdom citizen trust?
   5. How does one become a kingdom citizen?

II. What the nature of a true kingdom citizen? (Beatitudes)

A. Summary
   1. These nine phrases should not be looked at apart from one another. Picture these blessings like a stained glass window; the collection of pieces make up a very specific picture…whose image are we to see?

B. Our Character
   1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit (But you belong to Jesus), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
      a) Blessed=makarios=more than happy…fundamentally means to be approved, to find approval…to know that God is with you and God is for you. The following description of those who are blessed by God is certainly a surprise.
      b) Economically poor? Spiritually poor? Luke emphasizes the social poverty. We need not make a strong distinction to the exclusion of either. Often times economic and social poverty are connected with a spiritual reality as well. Matthew tells us blessed are those who because of their sustained “economic privation and social distress have confidence only in God.”
   2. "Blessed are those who mourn (But you belong to Jesus), for they shall be comforted.

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4 Ibid., 249.
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Matthew 5:1-16

a) Validated grief, sadness, and depression—people facing hard times...theology of the Pharisees offered no hope because these were all signs that God had rejected you...they believed that you could tell that God loves you if you feel good...Jesus says this is not the case. Your life is not useless just because it is sore right now.

3. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
   a) The world believes that only the 'A-type personalities', 'leaders', get things done...doesn't mean weak, but rather a gentle attitude...being ok with being unimportant. Jesus actually describes himself this way.
   b) The world is being taken over by the rude people, this is not the case in the Kingdom of God...this is hope to the hopeless.

4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
   a) Many hunger happiness, a greater encounter with God, stronger gifting, etc...but what about righteousness (right relationship with God, self, others, creation).
   b) A feeling on the inside when you see things around you that ought not to be...'homesickness' for the Kingdom to which you belong...being hungry for rightness...in all of its various forms. Rightness with God and people...tired of wrongness. You notice something God notices.
   c) "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness desire to see justice executed on earth, they long to experience a deeper ethical righteousness in their own lives, and most of all they crave God's promised salvation come to earth."5

5. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
   a) The act of care and compassion toward the hurting...(Womb-mother love) something deep on the inside that you feel toward people...(showing forgiveness toward the guilty and kindness toward the hurting)...you are blessed if you have mercy toward undeserving people...Fear of being

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5 Wilkins, 207.
taken advantage of...evaluating life completely different than you’re used to.

6. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
   a) More than moral purity…this is what Jesus does for us in salvation…
      opposite of hypocrisy…it is an integrity of the heart so that whatever is
      coming out of your mouth is what is actually in your heart…making you
      this way on the inside, you don’t have to fake it anymore.

7. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
   a) Not peace-keeper, but peace-maker…Christians have an instinct for inter-
      personal peacefulness…He is the reconciler.

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

9. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds
    of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your
    reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were
    before you."
   a) Kingdom citizens often suffer because they are the pious poor. They are
      those who walk in humility with God, they are meek, mourning, and
      brokenhearted. They are those who are pure of heart, who pursue mercy,
      hunger for righteousness, and actively make peace.

C. Our Calling

1. Salt of the Earth
   a) When the previous character is displayed by kingdom citizens, we are salt
      and light. The Beatitudes are the expression of Christ in us. The norms of
      the disciples are meant to be public, not private.
   b) Jesus’ disciples are necessary for the welfare of the world. Their presence
      is God’s primary way of influencing the world for good.
   c) Thus, a disciple who rejects the values exemplified in the beatitudes is like
      tasteless salt—useless.

2. Light of the World
   a) Light in a world without electricity is a profound metaphor.
b) Thus, a disciple whose life reveals none of the Fathers's works is like invisible light for vision—useless.

c) “[These metaphors] inform us that our lives are important to this world. Regardless of our status or profession, the kingdom life that we possess is invaluable for the preserving/seasoning/fertilizing/ effects it will have in our daily realm.”

III. Closing Thoughts

A. The beatitudes are fully expressed by the person of Christ.

1. He is the picture in the stain glassed. We should see Christ when we read the beatitudes. Jesus is the hero of the kingdom.

B. The beatitudes not only a description of the King, but also the citizens of the kingdom.

1. The core of what it means to live as Jesus’ disciple…”The individual characteristics of the Beatitudes are not self-produced, nor can we simply learn or emulate them in an attempt to bring them about in our lives. They are products of a life energized by the Spirit of God…They are a holistic view of what the Spirit will produce in the life of a disciple of Jesus who is walking in his ways and is being transformed into his image” (Wilkins 223). We must keep in mind that the inner life will naturally transform the outer life.

C. The embodiment of the beatitudes is a major aspect of Christian witness in the world.

1. “The norms of the kingdom, worked out in the lives of the heirs of the kingdom, constitute the witness of the kingdom.”

6 Ibid., 224.

Bibliography

