**Matthew Sermon XIV**

**Coming Into the Kingdom**

**Review:**

Matthew 20:1-16 The Parable of the Workers in the Field.

Those who work in the kingdom of God for many years receive the same reward as those who come to work at the last hour. God’s justice is surprising by human standards, but rather than complain that God is unfair, we should rejoice at his grace and generosity.

Matthew 21:1-11 Jesus enters Jerusalem as a king.

This is the fulfillment of so much prophecy. They left Caesarea Philippi. Now they have arrived in Jerusalem. The Messiah must die in Jerusalem. All of human history points to the events about to unfold in Jerusalem.

Jesus comes as king to Jerusalem but he does not ride in on a horse, he arrives, “gentle, and riding on a donkey.”

This is a deeply symbolic act. The kingdom of God has arrived and the Messiah is changing everything.

Matthew 21:12-13 Jesus is a lion (he overturns the tables) and a lamb (gentle and riding on a donkey).

*Matthew 21:18-22 Jesus curses a fig tree.*

*This act, as his entry on a donkey and as his clearing of the temple is deeply symbolic. Jesus is teaching about his coming as king to Jerusalem.*

*[side note: In Mark, this incident is divided into two parts. He sees the tree barren. Then, he clears the temple. Then, the next day they see the fig tree withered.]*

*The disciples were amazed at the miracle! They still do not get it. They definitely do not see the symbolism (though Matthew and Mark got it later).*

*This act is symbolic. The fig tree represents the Jewish people. Jesus came to them, expecting to yield a great crop. Jesus says to Israel: “May you never bear fruit again! Hebrews 8:13 The Jewish covenant is old, fading, outdated (by then) and will soon disappear. This happened in AD 70.*

*Micah 7:1-2 A fruitless tree.*

*Normally, figs do not bear fruit in April, but some fig types produce an early crop with the first leaves of the season.*

*Israel is a tree which promised fruit but delivered none.*

*Jesus comes to us, expecting to yield a crop. Hopefully, we will bear much fruit.*

*21:22 And by the way, if you believe you will receive whatever you ask.*

*(but you need to ask with non-selfish motives James 4:3 “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” And the promise is premised on the request being according to God’s will 1 John 5:14 “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we ask of him.”*

Matthew 22:1-14 and Luke 14:15-24 The parable of the wedding banquet.

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a banquet.

The king is God.

The banquet is the kingdom of God—whether it is the church or “heaven” is left unclear on purpose.

We will see that Jesus often did this in Matthew 25

v. 5 They paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business.

Luke 14:16-21 A parallel passage.

Q: Have you been making excuses for not taking part in the things of the kingdom?

v. 18 I just bought a field.

Q: What do you think about his excuse? Shouldn’t he have checked out the field before he bought it?

I just started a new program at the university.

Didn’t you consider whether this would interfere in your commitment to God before you signed up?

I just started a new job.

Didn’t you ask if you could have Sunday and Wednesday evening off before you took the job?

v. 19 I just bought five yoke of oxen. I have to make sure they are OK.

I already paid for my vacation. I did not know that the church was going to have a campaign.

I planned to move to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when I retired a long time ago. Sure, there is no church there, but, I planned this before I was baptized.

I know that we are going to plant a church in Merced, but that is not convenient to me right now.

v. 20 I just got married. Q: Why can’t a married person come? Hmmm.. [Note: The Jews had a custom that a newly wed man got one year off from military or other compulsory service]

We are in love. Sure, she is not a disciple, but this is love.

We are living together and already have a child together, what do you expect?

Example: Oscar Rodriguez in San Diego….

Note: The king does not beg them to come. He sends us out to find good-hearted people. Poor, lame, uneducated, illegal aliens, whoever…

v.

v. 6-7 A prophecy. The rest seized his servants. This is about the persecution of the Jews of the young church. He burned their city. This is about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

v. 8 God says, OK, the Jews are not interested, now let us go to the Gentiles.

v. 11 Who is this person who is not wearing correct wedding clothes?

Gal 3:26-27 It is people who have not been clothed with Christ! It is people who have not been baptized into Christ.

This man completely shocked!!!! He was totally convinced he belonged at the banquet.

Many will be surprised on that day!!! It is our job to teach them correctly and help them to put on Christ!!!

I sure hope this is not you!

Matthew 23:1-39 Seven Woes on the Pharisees.

Matthew 23:1-12 Jesus is speaking to “the crowds and to his disciples (ie. to us).

Matthew 23:13-39 Jesus is speaking to the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees.

v. 4 These religious people tie “heavy burdens” (as opposed to Jesus whose burden is easy and light Matthew 11:28-30).

What are these burdens? They are religious duties which are not tied to loving God.

Jesus had already summed up the law and the Prophets in Matt 22:35-40.

“All the law and Prophets hang on this.” In other words, everything God asks us to do he does so because he loves us and everything he asks us to do, he wants us to do, not so as to earn salvation, but because we love him. Without love binding things together, it is all a religious burden.

Gal 5:6 The only thing that matters is faith, expressing itself in love.

Wait: Doesn’t obedience matter? Yes, of course!!! But the kind of obedience God wants is obedience motivated by love, not by obligation.

So, if I am not into it, if it is not out of love, then I should not obey?

No! Do it anyway, but please move to the place where it comes from love.

As opposed to Colossians 2:20-23 They lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. That is why they are heavy burdens. Note the Pharisaic “appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body…”

v. 5 They are asking you to do this, not because they care about you and love you, but so that they can look good, religiously, in front of people. v. 5 “Everything they do is done for people to see.” It is about being religious, not about loving God.

Phylacteries wide (boxes on heads and straps on arms) (see picture)

v. 8-9 Do not call anyone “Teacher” or “Father.” Equivalent today: “Most Reverend” or “Pope” (which, by the way, means Father)

Funny example: Jeff Hungerford and I formed a threesome with a Catholic priest and Jeff pulled out Matthew 23:9.

(btw, calling your father “father” or even someone your spiritual “father in the faith” is OK!)

Jesus sums up his response to us concerning the Pharisees with this:

v. 11-12 The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

How many times has Jesus said this in Matthew?????

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

Whoever takes the lowly position of a child is the greatest in the kingdom. Matthew 18:4

Leave the 99 and go for the one who strays. Matthew 18:12

Matthew 20:25-28 Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Yesterday, a brother said to me about his difficulty: You are really busy with important things. You surely do not have time for me. May it never be!!!!!

It is not about status, but service.

Matthew 23:13-39 Now Jesus is talking directly to the Pharisees with seven “woes”. “You”

v. 13 “You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.”

Q: How do they do this? By making worship of God a matter of rules and regulations. By majoring in the minors. By not seeing the kingdom.

It is like Matthew 6:23 “If your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.” If you do not get what the kingdom of God is about, then you get nothing. It is about being the least of all. It is about being merciful, about being a peacemaker, about loving your enemies, about loving God. If you miss this, no amount of religion will move you one step closer to God. This is what the kingdom of God is about. It is about real love.

Ex: v. 16 “If anyone swears by the temple it means nothing, but if you swear by the gold in the temple you are bound by that oath.”

How about just loving people and, therefore, doing what you said you would do!!!

v. 23 you make sure that people give 10% on Sunday and that they have a quiet time every day, but you do not care about the people. What about mercy, what about loving the person?

You make sure that the sisters do not wear inappropriate clothing. You pull out a ruler, but you don’t notice that you said it in an unloving way.

You make sure that the brother does not spend time alone with the sister, but you don’t notice that he is really hurting inside and is feeling lonely.

A profane word slips out of a young disciple and you jump down their throat, but you fail to ask where that came from. “You must have really been hurt.”

v. 23-24 Weighing out a tenth of your spices. (note: Jesus is not condemning weighing out the tenth…) Are you straining out a gnat (impure) but swallowing a camel (the largest animal in the Middle East, also impure)?

The “camel” is justice, mercy and faithfulness. Are you showing mercy and are they being faithful to God—have a good heart? Without the inward righteousness, the outward observance is meaningless, so why focus on that?

Jesus is not saying it is unimportant to “clean the outside of the cup” (v. 25) or to “whitewash the tombs” (to prevent touching them, and therefore becoming ritually unclean, v. 27) or to get to church on time, or to stop using profane words in your conversation.

Q: What is more important to you: enforcing the rule or loving the person. It needs to come from love and concern, not from rules, even if the rules are good.

Whitewashed tombs. You look good. You clean up well for church, but your heart has grown cold toward God. You harbor deep-seated sin in your heart.

v. 29-36 Woe to you Pharisees.

v. 32 Wow! He says, “Go ahead kill me. You might as well…”

“From the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:4) to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berekiah (2 Chron 24:22 the last book of the Jewish Bible)

But notice v. 37

Is Jesus upset? Is Jesus angry?

Sure, but notice. Matthew 23:37-39 Jesus REALLY LOVES these Pharisees and teachers of the Law.

And notice this: Paul, a Pharisee became a Christian. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, he became a Christian. Acts 15:5 A number of the Pharisees believed.

Jesus desperately wants them to come to their senses. Sure, he is upset, but he feels for them. He loves them. He cares deeply about them. He longs to “gather them together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

The questions for you:

1. Will you accept the invitation to the banquet? Will you drop everything right now and come into the kingdom of God? Have you put on the proper clothes in Christian baptism?

2. Are you willing? Are you willing to be gathered under the wings of Jesus? Are you willing to accept the weightier matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness to God?