**Matthew Sermon XII**

**Loving Relationships in the Kingdom of Heaven**

**Review:**

Matthew 16:13-15 Who do you say I am?

Isn’t that the ultimate question for all of us? Who do you say Jesus is?

And is your life consistent with that confession?

Peter: You are the Messiah/The Christ—the Son of the living God.

The apostles are finally getting it… Or are they?

Do you get it? Do you get who Jesus is—the one about whom and for whom the entire Old Testament was written.

Matthew 16:21 From that time on… From that time on, Jesus and the apostles made their way to Jerusalem. The die was cast. The plot was running its course.

And the course was leading to death.

v. 22 Peter: Never, Lord!!! I do not give you permission for my Christianity to include suffering! If you do not get that following Jesus involves suffering, they you do not get Jesus.

If you are following Jesus, you are going from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem—from the world to the cross, from the farthest point away from God to Jerusalem.

v. 24 If you are following me, then you are following me to a cross.

**Our Sermon today. Matthew 18 Loving Relationships in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

But first, an aside. The disciples (esp. Peter, James and John) need some encouragement on the way to Jerusalem).

Matthew 17:1-9 The disciples need a boost of faith here as they travel to Jerusalem—to suffering and death. God meets this need.

Jesus takes his inner circle—Peter, James and John.

Jesus is transfigured

Parallel to Moses, who also went up on a mountain and who, when he returned from the mountain, his face was glowing. (Exodus 34:29-35)

Again, the fact that Jesus is fulfilling the Law and the Prophets is in view here, with Moses representing the Law and Elijah representing the prophets.

Moses and Elijah, both of whom met with God on a mountain.

Jesus is the new Moses. He is greater than Moses.

Peter is always ready to make a fool of himself. Let’s make three booths (like the tabernacles in the Feast of Tabernacles)

God intervenes. Who is Jesus? “This is my Son.”

Question: Who is Jesus?

Answer: He is the Messiah. He is the second/new Moses, He is the one for whom the Elijah who was to come (Matthew 17:10-13). Jesus is the Son of God—God in the flesh.

Do you believe this?

So, will you follow him from Caesarea Phillippi to Jerusalem?

**Our Sermon today. Matthew 18 Loving Relationships in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Matthew 18:1-5 Greatness in the Kingdom of God.

Who here wants to be great? (personal coaches, self-help books….)

v. 3 “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

In this story I have always assumed that Jesus is talking about having a child-like heart. (teachable, willing to be led, trusting, etc.)

A bit of that there?

This is not the main thrust of what Jesus is saying.

He is saying that we, like Jesus, must be willing to take a **lowly position** (v. 4).

Whoever humbles himself like (take the lowly position of) a child is the greatest.

Whoever is willing to put him/herself in a position where they are not in control, they are not the decider, they are not the ones who have everything figured out…

It is more like him repeating blessed are the poor in spirit and blessed are the meek. Finding your importance in unimpressive things.

The greatest is not the one who preaches with the most eloquence.

The greatest in the kingdom is not the charismatic leader.

The greatest in the kingdom is not the star athlete or the top executive who brings in the big bucks.

Illustration (negative) Muhammad Ali or Ringo Starr claimed to be the greatest.

No, the greatest in the kingdom is the one who shuns attention, who downplays his or her accomplishments, who goes into humbling and even humiliating situations. The humble servant.

That is not me…

Who is that amongst us? Maybe it is Katie Trieweiler, who is an unassuming servant. Maybe it is Francisco, who is the first one to your home when you need something fixed the day before Thanksgiving.

What about you? Are you willing to become like a little child—to take a lowly position before people, to become poor in spirit.

If so, then you will be an honored citizen in God’s kingdom.

I covered Matthew 18:6-9 in Mark.

Matthew 18:10-14 Bringing in the wandering sheep.

v. 10 Are “these little ones” children with guardian angels? I think they are us.

v. 12 Jesus: “What do you think?” All of you know what a shepherd will do with one lost sheep, right?

Me: Well, no, not exactly, Jesus, tell me!

Be willing to stop what you are doing and go out and bring in the wanderer. The “little ones” are not children. They are believers who have the lowly heart of children. They are Jesus’ humble followers.

Sharing our faith, studying with people and baptizing them is awesome. It is glamorous work. But bringing back the strays is even more essential.

Christian math: 1 > 99

By the way: I have a better plan. Let’s prevent the sheep from wandering away in the first place. Let’s do the follow-up studies, let’s make those calls to the weaker sheep.

Why? v. 14 Because Jesus does not will that anyone would perish.

Q: Who can you think of, right now who has wandered? What are you going to do?

Ezekiel 34:11-19 I will take care of my sheep. I will search for the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. But how will Jesus do that? Through his child-like sheep—us, hopefully!

Matthew 18:10-14 wandering sheep. Matthew 18:15-20 Sinning sheep.

Jesus’ advice for such times is Matthew 18:15-20.

v. 15 If a disciple sins. Let’s say WHEN a disciple sins.

What should you do?

That is none of my business. It is between them and God. I will pray about it. I will tell their leader about it. I will gossip about it (well… no one says that…)

Honestly, a lot of times we can let it go. Not every sin needs to be confronted. But if your conscience does not allow you to let it go, and if you have prayed about it, here is what you need to do.

v. 15 “go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.

Don’t you hate it when people say to you, “Hey, can I talk to you in private.”

Guess who else hates it—the one calling you aside.

What if your brother or sister gets prideful and does not listen?

If your brother or sister sins, about 20% of the time, talk to them.

If they do not listen right away, about 20% of the time, bring in two or three witnesses.

If they still do not listen, about 20% of the time, bring it before the church.

If they do not listen, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Interpretation: Shun them and cut them off from fellowship altogether.

Q: How did Jesus treat “pagans and tax collectors”?

If they are no longer acting as disciples, treat them as people who are no longer disciples. Love them, reach out to them, but understand that they are no longer to be treated as disciples, because they appear not to be.

v. 18 repeats Matthew 16:19 Church leaders have delegated authority here. They are not judging, but making wise judgment (Matthew 7:1-6)

v. 19-20 One of the most taken-out-of-context scriptures in the Bible!!!

God is fully behind this process, properly done.

Matthew 18:21-35 Again, this is about how we treat one another!!

v. 21-22 Peter: That is pretty intense. How quick should I be to bring someone before the church?

Q: How forgiving should I be? What is the limit? A: As forgiving as God is.

1. After being told that we must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus to the Jerusalem—to the cross—we needed some encouragement. We needed a reminder about who Jesus is. So… we went up onto the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Then we needed some practical reminders about how we are to love one another.

2. Remember that the greatest in the Kingdom is the least—the one who willingly puts him or herself into subservient positions.

3. We are reminded to take the time and effort to bring in lost sheep, to bring back those who have strayed, and to help people to avoid straying in the first place.

4. Even if they are not lost, if they are still around, but they are caught up in some sort of sin, we need to take a risk, talk to them personally about it and, hopefully, win them back to repentance.

5. And will be reminded of perhaps the most important of all, but that is for next week.