

THE
KINGDOM
IS HERE

matthew

sermon series

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KINGDOM PRIORITIES: MATTHEW 19:13-20:16

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The main idea of today's sermon is that the kingdom's priorities are the opposite of this world. We'll learn today that children are more valuable than self-advancement, that heavenly treasure is infinitely more valuable than earthly treasure, and that grace is glorious, not despicable. This passage is important because although we are redeemed by Jesus, we still sin. We live as those who have won the spiritual war in Jesus and yet persist in the battle. One major aspect of this spiritual warfare is the attempt for us to replace kingdom priorities with the world's priorities. Thus, as we reflect on these priorities today, I hope that we would be equipped to prioritize the kingdom, not this world.

Let's now explore this passage together.

The Kingdom Prioritizes Children: Matthew 19:13-15

The first kingdom priority is children. This priority conflicts with the world's priority of comfort and self-advancement. In verses 13-15, children are brought to Jesus so that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them (13). The laying on of hands here is a sign of affection and blessing. Children come to Jesus for care.

The disciples, though, tragically fail to grasp the nature of the kingdom. Sadly, this misunderstanding is not new. They even rebuke

the people, perhaps even the children, for this act (13). We do not know exactly why the disciples disapproved of bringing children to Jesus, but we might get a hint when we compare this verse to verse 16. In these verses, two categories of people come to Jesus: little children and a rich young man. The disciples disapprove of the children but not the rich young man. The children were seen as a nuisance and a hindrance to the mission while the rich young man was not. How confused and tragic?

Jesus does not tolerate the disciples' gesture. He corrects them and commands that children come to him without hindrance (Matthew 19:14). Here, Jesus restates the theme of Matthew 18:1-4: true greatness is defined by childlike humility, and since Jesus' mission is to come for them, no one should hinder them. To hinder children is to hinder God's mission.

Church family, the disciples believed that they were living on mission for Jesus. They ate with him and followed him wherever he went. They even participated in his kingdom work of healing (Matthew 11). Despite all of this, they were still ignorant to the mission of healing the broken, caring for the spiritually impoverished, and calling those such as children to come into the kingdom. Instead of calling the children to the kingdom, the disciples were sending them away.

Church family, Jesus prioritized children so we must too. Imagine all the things Jesus could have done with his time. He could have prioritized his "fame" by performing miracles before the world elite of his day. He could have prioritized his "career" – he was a carpenter. He could have constructed yachts, cruise ships, and airplanes, and been known as the greatest carpenter in the world.



He could have prioritized his own “comfort.” Sometimes it is not comfortable being around children. They are needy and when they need or want something, they cry. Luke interestingly says in his account that the people even brought infants to Jesus (see Luke 18:15). That means there was crying happening. Perhaps the disciples rebuked them for coming for this reason! Jesus didn’t hear the crying and say, “Send them away.” You see, Jesus came to this earth for a mission, and that mission was not about his fame, career, or comfort. It was about rescuing the weak. Jesus prioritized children, church family.

Do we prioritize children? Let’s think about the children in our own life. Do we see them fundamentally as hindrances to our mission of pursuing comfort or our career? How do we think about the tens of thousands of Afgan refugees that right now live on military bases? Soon these children and their parents will be resettled in our communities. There are nine national resettlement agencies, and one has an office in Glendale. Glendale has welcomed almost 14,000 refugees in the last 20 years. Upland, remarkably, has welcomed more than any other city in the Inland Empire: almost 90. Only Pomona has welcomed more refugees in this area than Upland: about 110. Church family, in the coming months, tens of thousands of Afgan children will be resettled in our communities. Will we welcome them like Jesus or send them away like the disciples? In other words, in the face of tens of thousands of children who have fled for their lives in fear and been moved to a new country where they know nothing– language, freeways, grocery stores – will they be welcomed by Jesus’ people or sent away? Let’s prepare our hearts now to receive them, church family.

The Kingdom Prioritizes the Greatest Treasure:

Matthew 19:16-30

The kingdom prioritizes the greatest treasure. This point is illustrated in verses 16-22. Here, a rich young man comes to Jesus and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life (16). Let's notice the nature of this question. This man believes that he can "earn" eternal life with a good deed. However, he knows that he has not yet accomplished this "good deed." Therefore, he comes to Jesus. Thus, the question comes from a place of hope (he can achieve it) and desperation (he has not yet achieved it).

Now, let's notice Jesus' reply. First, he corrects the young man by redefining the concept of "good." Jesus says, "Why do you ask me about good? There is only one who is good" (17). Do you see what Jesus just did? This young man asked about "doing good" (16) and Jesus redirected this question to who "is good" (17). There is a major difference between doing "good" and being "good." Any person can do a "good" deed, but no one besides God is truly "good."

Second, Jesus tells him to keep the commandments in verses 17-20. In these verses, Jesus cites 5 of the 10 commandments and then summarizes them as "you shall love your neighbor as yourself (19). Notice how Jesus addresses man's question with the commandments that deal with how people relate to one another. Jesus does not mention the first four commandments about how we relate to God. In short, kingdom citizens are those who treat one another in truly human ways. To this answer, the young man replies that he has done this always. Yet, he knows that he still lacks something (20). This reality proves Jesus' point in verse 17: the pathway to eternal life is not paved with our good deeds for we are not good (17).

Third, Jesus explains that the true pathway to the kingdom is not about a “good” deed or about keeping the commandments but is about treasure (21-22). Jesus tells this young man 1) to go, sell everything, and give to the poor, 2) that he’ll have treasure in heaven, and 3) to follow me (21-22). Jesus’ reply is a call for this man to gain an eternal treasure. Thus, the pathway to eternal life is valuing heavenly treasure more than earthly treasure. Those who value Jesus more than this life pursues Jesus more than this life. The focus of these verses is not on what this man gives up, but on what this man gains. Sell everything and gain more than you ever had (22).

The issue with eternal life is fundamentally not a “good deed” of keeping commandments or even selling everything. The issue is our heart: what do you treasure. This rich young man, for example, is satisfied with far too small of a treasure. Jesus looks at his riches and says, “I have something better for you (21).” Jesus offers him a treasure he could never lose, an indestructible treasure that infinitely eclipses his current riches, and the rich young man says, “no.” There is something wrong with this man’s heart for him to reject the source of all things glorious and beautiful to keep a treasure that’s glory only dimly reflects the glory of Jesus. Something is wrong with this man.

After seeing Jesus’ interaction with this man, Jesus turns to his disciples and explains what just happened (23-30). Sinful hearts tend to be content with small things and this reality has deadly consequences. Jesus says in verse 26 that it is impossible, from the perspective of man, for a rich person to be saved. Look at verse 26: with man, this is impossible (26). What a word for us who have incredible riches. But let’s keep reading. “but with God all things

are possible” (26). We rejoice in the power of our God who has kept us from being content with little treasure. Everyone who has truly trusted in Jesus has done so because we believe that he offers us a better treasure than this world. Jesus is better than iPhones, nice houses, chipotle burritos, vacations at the beach.

Peter hears Jesus’ word and asks an insightful question in verse 27. “We left everything and followed you. What then shall we have? (27)” Peter understands Jesus’ point in verses 16-22 better than he understood his point about his suffering (Matthew 16:16-20) and his point about marriage (19:1-12). Peter understands Jesus to be saying that those who follow Jesus get a greater treasure. Peter wants to know the nature of this treasure so Jesus tells him. Its nature is magnificent. He describes it as better one hundredfold. The idea is that the treasure in heaven is far better, far more satisfying, and far more glorious than the treasure of this world. It involved eternal life and unspeakable joy (28-29).

Finally, Jesus states a kingdom principle: many who are first will be last and the last first (30). This saying summarizes Jesus’ teaching on children and riches. The kingdom’s approach to children and riches is the exact opposite of this world. In this world, children are largely understood to be a bother and a hindrance. This thought is not shared in the kingdom where everyone must possess childlike humility to even enter its doors. This world prioritizes riches, family, and home while the kingdom prioritizes the mission. Indeed, the last will be the first in the kingdom.

The Kingdom Prioritizes Grace: Matthew 20:1-16

The final kingdom priority that we will learn about today is grace.

In Matthew 20:1-16, Jesus speaks a parable about the kingdom. In this parable, a master of a house hires workers at various times of the day. For those hired at the beginning of the day, they agree on a denarius (3). For those hired later, the master agrees to pay them what is right (4, 5, 7). At evening, those hired in the eleventh hour receive a full denarius, the same pay as those working in the field all day (10). Those who work all day grumble because they worked harder and longer than the other laborers so they should get more than them (11-12). The master though reminds them of justice: he paid them what they agreed. Then, he reminds them that grace is his prerogative (13-15).

Those of God's kingdom love grace; they do not despise it. We love that we have received it and we love it when others receive it. Grace is a gift of favor that we do not deserve, and in this context, the workers who worked one hour did not "deserve" a full day's wage. In our situation, all of us deserved hell for we all sinned against God. Yet, we have received Jesus' righteousness as a gift of grace so that we will live forever with him. Thus, none of us are the workers who agreed on a wage with the master and fulfilled our duty. None of us are the workers who worked all-day. We are all in the category of workers who received a gracious gift instead of a wage earned. Because of this reality, we do not view our work as the workers who worked all day did in the vineyard. We do not say that since we have suffered for the name of Jesus, giving to the cause of Christ, or lived on mission for the glory of God – the equivalent of bearing the burden of the day and the scorching heat – we deserve eternal life as a wage. No, church family, we cannot be deceived. Life with Christ with abundant treasure is a gift, not a wage.

Again, Jesus states that the first will be last, and the last first to demonstrate that kingdom priorities are unlike the worlds. The world confuses grace with wages and thus replaces gratitude with grumbling. Let's not do the same.

Application

In this passage, Jesus has taught us about three dangers to the Christian life. There is a danger of viewing children like the world, earthly treasure like the world, and grace like the world. Church family, we have received the kingdom as children – simply believing that Jesus died for us. Therefore, we receive children and those such as children. Church family, we are marching toward an inheritance of treasure that eclipses the treasure of iPhones, Teslas, and a fridge full of steak. Earthly treasure does not keep us from Jesus for he is a far greater treasure. Church family, we have received the kingdom by grace, not work, as does the thief on the cross and the billionaire who lived for the world until the moment of their death. Therefore, we rejoice when any sinner comes to know Jesus for we all receive eternity as a gift.

Non-Christian today is the day of your salvation. I am asking you to trust in Jesus and to turn from your sins today.
Would you come to Jesus today?

Prayer

Help us God to prioritize the things of the kingdom and not the things of this world. As we do that, please spread your glorious grace to people in our community and among all people. We pray these things in Jesus' name,
amen.

