The Culture of the Kingdom - Matt.5-7

1. Introduction

a. So far in our series on the Kingdom we have tried to define what the bible means by the Kingdom and Jesus' teaching on the growth of the Kingdom. We have established that the reason Jesus taught so much on the Kingdom was because the Jewish people's expectations of the Kingdom, based on the OT scriptures, was for one cataclysmic event when the Messiah would come and establish His rule over all the nations of the earth.

b. Jesus taught that there was a mystery around the coming Kingdom that was revealed when He came since He was the Kingdom. Within his very being the Kingdom came to earth contained within the King who had all authority and power given to Him by the Father. Both John and Jesus declared this at the very beginning of His ministry.

Mt. 3:1-2 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching…[2] saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

Mt. 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

c. When Jesus and John called them to repent, they were calling them to change their minds about what they had believed Jesus and His kingdom to be. Jesus was declaring, "The kingdom is right here with you and is going to manifest through Me. It is not going to be the way you thought it would be. It is going to be set up on a different value system than what you had in mind. You must change the way you think, or you will not be able to receive the kingdom. You must repent!"

d. In order for us to embrace the kingdom of God, we must be willing to change our minds as to what we believe the kingdom of God to be and build our lives on its value system. (Mission and values)

e. In Matthew 4 we see that Jesus, having made this declaration, calls His disciples and then, In order to validate Himself as God's chosen leader, begins to publicly manifest the supernatural power of His kingdom. Massive crowds begin following Him because they have never seen such power released. Just as the power that He was manifesting was unlike anything they had ever seen, so the fabric of His kingdom would be unlike anything they had ever experienced.

f. With perfect strategy, when the crowds had grown vast and the people's interest piqued, Jesus gathered the multitude on a mountain in order to proclaim to them, for the first time, the core values and mission of His kingdom.

Matt 4:23 – 5:2 *[23] And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. [24] So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. [25] And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. [1]Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. [2] And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:*

g. If we are going to pledge our allegiance to Jesus and be citizens of His Kingdom then we need to know the values of this Kingdom and allow them to become the values upon which we walk out our lives. Its not enough to know the Kingdom, or even to make the decision to step out of the kingdom of the world into the Kingdom of Heaven. We need to live by the values of that Kingdom if we want to see it established in our lives.

2. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount

a. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was establishing the value system for all who would be citizens of His kingdom. Some today believe the Sermon on the Mount is a "high bar" of Christianity not attainable in "real life". They believe it simply serves as a standard of conviction for us. Yet the truth is that it is intended to be the norm for Christian living.

b. The principles of the Sermon on the Mount are not simply good ideas or something to try for a season. They are the prescribed lifestyle for all who are subjects of the kingdom of God. Jesus' intent for expressing the values of his kingdom was to set in place the culture that all believers should not only embrace with their minds as truth, but also walk out in their daily lives.

c. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reinterprets wrong teachings that the people had heard from the rabbinical teachers of the law. Six times in the sermon He says, "You have heard it said, but I say unto you." By revealing new revelation Jesus gave a completely new perspective on familiar teachings. In so doing, He identified the errors in their paradigms and unveiled the true culture of His kingdom.

d. Jesus made it clear that His kingdom was not about advocating a rule system for others to live by but it was about having a heart alive and abandoned to God as He evidenced in His own life. **Only with the Holy Spirit's enablement and the believer's dependence on the Lord can we pursue obedience.**

3. The necessity of love

a. The main characteristics of the culture of the kingdom of God are explained in Matthew 6. There we find that Jesus calls us to the lifestyle of **giving and serving** (Mt. 6:1–4), **prayer** (Mt. 6:4–13), **forgiveness** (Mt. 6:14–15), **fasting** (Mt. 6:16–18), **simplicity** (Mt. 6:19–21) and **trust** (Mt. 6:25–34), all issuing from a heart of love.

b. It is important to understand that these are characteristics of someone who is a subject of the kingdom of God. They are not a "to-do list" of virtues that we check off. We must approach this lifestyle without the motive of receiving a religious badge or the praise of men. Instead, we must pursue this lifestyle from a heart of genuine love for God and the desire to generously and liberally bless others.

c. At a glance, the lifestyle of the Sermon on the Mount can seem overwhelming and impossible to attain. Yet, when we experience intimacy with the heart of the Father who extravagantly loves us, our motivations begin to change.

d. He is inviting us to know Him through the very characteristics He is calling us to live. Once we begin to understand and perceive His love for us we are to abide in His love and never leave it. The experience of His love impacting our hearts is not something we should ever graduate from.

e. At the Last Supper, Jesus shared with the disciples the revelations that were the most dear to His heart. As many men near death would do, He had saved the most important realities to emphasize until the very end.

f. In this one setting, He emphasized three different times His "new commandment"—"love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34, 15:12, 17). This commandment is the epicenter of His value

system. In order for anyone to actually live the culture of the kingdom, his heart must be motivated by love.

g. Essentially, Jesus was saying, "You may still think that My kingdom is about keeping a religious to-do list, but it's really about love. My commandment is that you know My love for you in such a deep way that it instructs and compels your heart to love one another, richly and lavishly, and to see one another through love."

h. We are to abide in the revelation of His desire for us all the days of our life. His love is the very foundation from which His entire kingdom emanates. The one who desires to live the values of His kingdom must be rooted and grounded in the revelation of God's lavish love for them.

4. Outline of the Sermon on the Mount

a. The Sermon on the Mount is like the constitution of God's kingdom. It is Jesus' most comprehensive statement on a believer's role in cooperating with the grace of God and is the "litmus test" to measure our spiritual development and ministry impact. In this sermon, Jesus calls His people to perfect obedience and to make this their **primary goal in life**. We do this by seeking to walk in all the light that the Spirit gives us. Pursuing obedience is not the same as attaining it.

Mt. 5:48 *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

b. The foundational call in the Sermon on the Mount is to live out the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) as we pursue 100-fold obedience (Mt. 5:48; 6:22). These statements are the core values of the Kingdom that govern what we, today, would call Christ's leadership style.

c. No one leads like the Man, Christ Jesus. His leadership is absolutely perfect. To understand His leadership, we must understand that 100 percent of the way He leads is based upon His **personal** value system: **spiritual poverty**, **mourning, meekness, spiritual hunger, mercy, purity in heart, peace, and persecution for righteousness.**

d. Once we appreciate that the core values set the foundation for the kingdom, it is vital that we rightly comprehend what these values actually are. For many, they have become religious clichés; yet they are neither clichés, nor trite. They are the prescribed culture for citizens of the kingdom of God. Therefore, they are supposed to make up our personal value system.

e. These core values are like ***8 beautiful flowers*** in the "garden in our heart" that God wants to fully blossom. These 8 flowers need to be carefully and continually cultivated as we "weed our garden" by ***resisting the 6 negative influences*** (toxins/poisons) related to our natural lusts (Mt. 5:21-48) and as we "water our garden" by ***pursuing the 5 positive nutrients*** (prayer, fasting, giving, serving and blessing enemies, Mt. 6:1-18) that position us to receive a greater impartation of grace

f. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls us to live out the **8 beatitudes** (5:3-12) as we pursue **100-fold obedience** (5:48), as we **resist 6 temptations** (5:21-48), and **pursue 5 kingdom activities** (6:1-18) that position our hearts to freely receive more grace. We do all this with confidence in His **rewards** (eternal/temporal 6:19-24) and His **provision** (6:24-33). We do this **without criticism** of others who pursue God with less intensity or who oppose us (7:1-6) while we **seek Jesus to intervene** in our relationships (7:7-12), yet without drawing back from our **wholehearted pursuit** of God (7:13-14) as we **discern** false grace messages (7:15-20). We do all of this knowing that our obedience will be **tested** (7:21-27). By walking in these truths, Jesus said that we will impact society

(5:13-16) and will be great in His eyes (5:19), receive treasures in heaven (6:19–20) and will live in this age with our hearts exhilarated in His grace (6:22-23).

g. Mt. 5-7 describes the process that allows the 8 core values to come to maturity. In this passage, Jesus is not rebuking His people but helping them by giving insight that leads to freedom for the heart. He did not intend to give comprehensive teaching on the path to freedom. Rather, He focused on the need to make quality decisions to resist lust and nurture our heart in grace.

5. Building on rock

a. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus encourages His disciples to build their lives on these teachings.

Mt. 7:24-27 *[24] "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

b. A wise man builds his personal life and ministry on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:24-27). Only by building our lives upon the foundation of this value system will we be able to withstand the winds that will blow.

c. There is a 3-fold application of the winds that shake and test.

   i First, the winds that everyone experiences periodically throughout a lifetime.

   ii Second, the eschatological winds at the end of the age (Heb. 12:26-28).

   iii Third, the evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11- 15).

d. We may feel that the values and life style that we see in the Sermon on the Mount are too challenging. Is this really the model for Christianity that Jesus wants us to live? How can we live this way when it seems so contrary to Western culture? Who is actually living out these values as the norm for their lives?

e. We have so few models of this lifestyle in the West. The general value system in the Western church is only slightly different from the world? We have allowed ourselves to become so similar to the world that there is no real difference between us. We have ended up building on the sand of the world's value system or at best we just put a few rocks in amongst the sand thinking that that will be enough to shore us up.

f. Much of what we have produced through the church in the West does not carry the value system of the kingdom. Despite the proliferation of ministries and media we still have very few people living according to the value system of the kingdom of God. Where is the Church that is living the life of meekness and mourning, serving and giving, fasting and praying?

g. We have taken the name of Jesus yet are we living the values that Jesus prescribed for those who would be citizens of His kingdom? If we are not living His value system, it begs the question: what value system have we embraced?

h. We must take a serious look at the value system that we embrace, for if it does not look like the Sermon on the Mount, it is not the value system of the kingdom of God. It was not only the disciples

listening to Jesus on a hillside in the first century who needed to repent and change, We too, as His disciples in the 21st century also need to repent and allow our lives to be conformed to His value system if His Kingdom is going to rule in our lives.

i. Some would say that we need to adapt to the culture in which we live in order to penetrate it with the gospel. However the bible is clear. We must come out from under the sway of the spirit of the age and be separated unto God in our values and lifestyles if we are going to have any authority to prepare our culture for the storms that are battering the world in our day. If we want to truly see His *Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven*.

Rom.12:1-2 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ***2*** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*