The Culture of the Kingdom – 8 flowers pt 1

1. THE VALUE SYSTEM OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS

a. The first ten verses of Matthew 5 contain what is commonly called "The Beatitudes". In these verses Jesus was not giving a list of dos and don'ts. He simply expressed His heart by revealing what was and is important to Him. These are **the core values of the Kingdom**.

b. The core values of the Kingdom actually make up Jesus' personal value system. The core values are a clear expression of His own personality and are also the attributes He desires to manifest in us. They are what He is like and what He likes. As we come to know and embrace the values of His kingdom, we actually come to know His heart and embrace Him.

c. As we look at these values it is evident that Jesus' understanding of the word "blessed" is very different from our Western understanding. Most of us think of being blessed as obvious and immediate personal benefit. However, Jesus talks about spiritual qualities that produce benefits like inheriting the earth, seeing God, obtaining mercy – not things that bring us temporal comfort but eternal pleasures.

d. If we truly desire to live authentic Christian lives, we must take a close look at Jesus' value system, ask God for revelation to pierce our hearts and allow Jesus' values to become our very own. Once we appreciate that these core values set the foundation for the kingdom, it is vital that we rightly comprehend what these values actually are.

e. The Beatitudes deal with our attitudes—toward ourselves (v. 3-6), toward God (vv. 7-9), and toward the world (v. 10, and vv. 11-16). They proceed from the inside out; they start with attitudes and move to actions.

2. POOR IN SPIRIT

Matt. 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

a. Being poor in spirit is the foundational beatitude from which the other seven beatitudes flow. Being poor in spirit is being aware of our spiritual need to experience more of God's presence and power in our life (our heart, family, ministry, city, nation, etc.). We see the gap between what God has freely made available to us in Christ and how much we are actually experiencing.

b. We see ourselves as spiritually poor in terms of our experience in light of the fullness of what God has made available to us in Christ. We need the Spirit's help to experience what is already ours. We see that we do not have the spiritual strength to establish godliness in our own hearts or to inspire it in others *without the Spirit's continual help* (Jn. 15:5). We have no confidence in our natural abilities to obey or serve God in the fullness of His grace without His constant help. We are not poor in spirit unless what we see moves us to seek Him more. That which Jesus' work on the cross freely ***worked for us*** is that which the Spirit progressively ***works in us*** as we seek Him.

c. The way that we become poor in spirit is by gaining understanding of God's highest purpose for His people. We see how much God desires to do in us and through us. We are called to walk in love for Jesus and people and then to inspire others to this lifestyle as defined in the Sermon on the Mount.

d. We are gripped by the reality that things are not good enough as they are, and that we do not have power in ourselves to correct things without a dramatic intervention of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we set our heart to reach for the fullness of His purposes for ourselves and others. We are to seek God earnestly that we might walk in the fullness of His grace in each season of our lives. It is by the Spirit's power that we are enabled to love God and people and to effectively inspire others to do the same. It takes more than a zealous personality, a strong mind, and a determined will to walk in fullness of grace. It requires the continual intervention of the Spirit empowering our heart, as we dialogue and engage with Him in prayer (Mt. 7:7; Jn. 15:5).

e. It includes having a vibrant spirit and being hungry for the Word, for a spirit of prayer, and for the release of the Holy Spirit's power through our words, hands (praying for the sick), and deeds.

Eph. 3:16-19 *I pray that out of His glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

f. Jesus addressed this as the root problem in the "successful" church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-21). We must not be content with the increase in finances, popularity, impact or favour with people. Jesus wants us to repent by zealously seeking Him.

Rev. 3:16-21*…you are <u>lukewarm</u>…neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.* [17]*Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and <u>have need of nothing</u>" and do not know that you are <u>wretched</u>, <u>miserable</u>, <u>poor</u>, <u>blind</u>, and <u>naked</u>… As many as I love, I rebuke…be zealous and repent…..*[1]*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.*

g. Because they believed they could graduate from spiritual poverty, they grew comfortable; and in their false sense of comfort, they grew lukewarm. They lived in delusion, believing they were well supplied; yet in reality, they were in desperate spiritual need. When Jesus inspected their lives, they were exposed as ones who were in danger of judgment and destruction. His firm but kind correction to them was to repent and zealously seek after God. He was calling them back to a lifestyle of spiritual poverty.

h. The amazing reward that Jesus promises to those who live poor in spirit is the possession of the kingdom of God. In other words, the blessing that they will receive is the kingdom itself. The entrance to the kingdom of God is only open to the one who embraces the reality of living poor in spirit.

i. Jesus promised that any who live poor in spirit would experience the kingdom realities. This includes having a vibrant spirit, feeling God's presence, and being a vehicle of His presence to others. Many feel a lack in these realities without ever connecting it to being poor in spirit. We can experience more of the kingdom in a personal way

j. Though God may give us many blessings in this life, we will never move past being poor in spirit. **Isaiah 66:2** promises us,

But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

k. The Lord sets His gaze on those who embrace spiritual poverty as a lifelong value. He is intently focussed on the one who is aware of His spiritual need. Living poor in spirit is the path for all those who will be true citizens of the kingdom of God.

3. MOURNING

Mt. 5: 4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

a. Being poor in spirit speaks of how we *see ourselves*; spiritual mourning refers to how *we feel about what we see*. When we see differently, then we feel differently. The result of seeing our great need is that we feel pain as we mourn for more experience of God's presence in our life. Mourning also includes the pain we feel over our sin and failure to follow through in obedience to Jesus. It does not mean mourning over difficult circumstances, but for a spiritual breakthrough.

b. Godly sorrow or mourning are a supernatural work of the Spirit that will lead us to salvation or deliverance from a dull spirit and a powerless ministry. This mourning is God's gift to us. Our desire for God is His gift to us. This gift of mourning is rare, precious, and powerful and it cannot be bought with gold. Therefore, we must refuse to be comforted by anything except the breakthrough of the fullness that the Lord promises us in His Word.

2 Cor. 7:10,11 *For* ***godly*** *grief produces a repentance (*wholeheartedness*) that leads to salvation (*breakthrough*)* ***11*** *For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation* (against compromise*), what fear* (fear of God*), what longing (*for Jesus*), what zeal, what punishment!*

c. We mourn because we see how much God longs to give to our life, ministry, church, and in the nations. It refers to the pain we feel in seeing the gap between what God has for us and what we are experiencing. Isaiah was undone because he saw the spiritual state of his life and nation.

Isa. 6:5 *5So I said: "Woe is me, for <u>I am undone</u>! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of <u>unclean lips</u>; for my eyes have seen the King…"*

d. We mourn over our double-mindedness, failures, and lack of follow-through in spiritual things.

Jas. 4:8-10 *8<u>Draw near to God</u> and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands…and purify your hearts, you <u>double-minded</u>. 9Lament and <u>mourn</u> and weep! Let your laughter be turned to <u>mourning</u> and your joy to <u>gloom</u>. 10Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord…*

e. We must continually be aware of who we are in Christ and what we are experiencing in God, while at the same time growing in our awareness of how much more there is to experience. We experience a measure of joy with gratitude for what He has given us while yet mourning to experience so much more. Mourning does not negate our confidence that God enjoys us and values our small efforts and ministry impact (Mt. 25:21). We are grateful for all that we experience in God's grace, but we are never content without pressing in for His fullness. We must never despise the measure of blessing that we experience, but must seek a greater measure.

f. Feeling the pain of this godly desperation and holy discontent causes us to be extreme in rearranging our life to spend our strength, time, and money to seek God for all that He will give. Our cry for more cannot be answered by a human solution. Our culture so values comfort that our tendency is to seek and give the wrong comfort. Refuse to be comforted by anything less than God's highest. Refuse false comforts that are rooted in human sentiment. Don't let a well-meaning believer give you false comfort that steals your vision to experience all that Jesus has provided for you. Believers who have never been pained by their spiritual lack will miss out on much of what God desires for them. They are stuck in barrenness without being aware of it.

g. Jesus explained in Matthew 9:15 that the days would come when His disciples would live lifestyles of fasting and mourning because He would no longer be with them in a physical way. Jesus was describing the ache in the heart of a person who is desperate for Him. The knowledge that we will be with Him for eternity does not ease our current pain because our desire to be with Him is more than our hearts can bear. Spiritual mourning is living all the days of our life in desire, refusing to be satisfies until we are with Him where He is.

h. Just as we are called to mourn with longing to be with Him so He longs to be with us. In John 17:24 Jesus prayed to His Father with great desire in His heart that we would be with Him where He is. Jesus is a Bridegroom with a lovesick heart, living in mourning until the day when He will finally be with us.

i. A life of longing is not spent in vain. There is a reward for those who spend their lives in spiritual mourning. Jesus promises that every longing, craving, desire, and ache of the mournful heart will be comforted. When your heart is reaching for God and you are mourning because you feel the veil between you and Jesus more than you feel Him, there is hope for you. You will be comforted.

j. Have you ever desired to be with Him so much that you literally felt pain emanating from your soul? If you have, you have touched the reality of spiritual mourning. He desires those of His kingdom to ache for Him more than anything else—the way He aches for us. He wants a Bride who desires Him with the same intensity that He desires her.

k. The consolation of our heart when we are in those seasons of mourning is knowing He is not going to leave us in pain. He is going to come to us and fulfil every craving for Him. There is a day coming when our desire will meet His desire and we will be fully satiated. When we see Him, we will never ache again. When we see Him, He will satisfy every longing and craving of our hearts. Oh, for the day when we finally meet the Lover of our souls, face to face!

l. There is real comfort awaiting those who will live their life not allowing their soul to be comforted by anything but God. Satisfaction for the soul is one of the great reaches of the human heart, and is found only by living the values of the kingdom. The pain of mourning is part of the pathway toward the heart's satisfaction. This is a core value of His kingdom—living life in a state of longing until we see Him and are satisfied.

4. MEEKNESS

Mt. 5:5 *[5]Blessed are the <u>meek</u>, for they shall inherit the earth.*

a. Poverty of spirit and meekness are related yet have important distinctions. Poverty of spirit starts with the awareness of our spiritual lack before God and our great need for His resources. Meekness involves the awareness of our lack before people and our indebtedness to God for the resources that He gives us and His ownership of them. This changes how we use what He gives us.

b. Meekness can be defined as faithfully cultivating a servant's heart in order to benefit others above ourselves in regard to honour, privilege, and position. Walking in meekness or humility is not the same as the personality temperament of timidity that is rooted in the fear of man and low self-esteem. Meekness is to have power over our selfishness

c. Our natural mindset is to see our resources (gifting, money, position of authority, etc.) as mostly belonging to us and being the fruit of our dedication and hard work.

d. Jesus calls us to take the low place, the low position. One who lives in meekness intentionally lowers himself in order to promote another. In the kingdom, the one who humbles himself will be exalted (Jas. 4:10). Meekness is always the fastest track to promotion in God's kingdom.

e. The word "meek" literally describes one who is humbled by means of affliction. Meekness, then, is recognizing our severe need for God, and our affliction of great lack and thus living humbly in light of our affliction.

f. Jesus desires for all the citizens of His kingdom to be connected to Him through meekness. In **Matthew 11:29**, Jesus says

, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly [meek] in heart."

g. Jesus came as a baby laid in a trough where animals eat. And even more humiliating than this, though He was God in the flesh, He allowed the very creation He loves to execute Him so that He could purchase them by His own blood. Jesus' admonition to us is to consider His humility and then embrace it in our own lives.

h. Jesus wants an entire kingdom of people who live lives of meekness. One of the ways that God works meekness into our hearts is by allowing us to experience problems and challenges with others. God is the One who sets up relational collisions. He will allow us to have relational problems that cause us to argue and assert ourselves in arrogance in order to expose the pride in our hearts.

i. To respond in meekness is to exercise self-control over asserting our own rights, power or opinion and choosing to respond with love and understanding valuing the other person more highly than ourselves. Meekness is exercising self-control over our own power for the sake of others. Every time we have an interpersonal conflict with someone, we have the opportunity to oppose pride and prefer the other person above ourselves.

j. The essence of meekness is rooted in who we are preoccupied with. The meek are preoccupied with Jesus as their source and owner of everything they possess. Therefore, they are grateful for it and they use it with a servant spirit and with generosity. If we see that everything we have received is a gift of grace, then we will not view it with a boastful or proud attitude.

k. The meek know that they deserve God's discipline much more than any measure of (small or large) blessing that He has given them before people.The meek refuse to manipulate or exert pressure on people to promote themselves.

Lk. 17:7-10 *[7] "Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? [8] Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterwards you will eat and drink'? [9] Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? [10] So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"*

l. The promise of inheriting the earth speaks of having influence and impact. It is partially fulfilled in this life and completely fulfilled in the age to come (Mt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

Matt.7:24 *[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.*