The Culture of the Kingdom – 8 flowers pt 2

1. THE VALUE SYSTEM OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS

a. The first ten verses of Matthew 5 contain what is commonly called "The Beatitudes". These verses are an expression of Jesus' 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. 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.

d. 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. We have already considered the first 2 – being poor in spirit and mourning in our last session.

2. MEEKNESS

Mt. 5:5 *[5]Blessed are the meek, 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). God will give authority and power to those who have shown they can administer it in meekness.

3. HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Mt. 5:6[6]*Blessed are those who <u>hunger and thirst for righteousness</u>, for they shall be filled.*

a. We have many appetites and desires, but who lives life truly hungering for righteousness?

b. Hungering for righteousness is not about desiring dull religion. It is about loving what Jesus loves and hating what Jesus hates. It is not about desiring a "touch" from God, either. Instead, it is desiring to live in complete congruity with all that He is and all that is important to His heart.

c. When we hunger for righteousness, we hunger for Him. True hunger for righteousness is not satisfied by going a little deeper theologically or slightly cleaning up one's character. Hungering for righteousness is desiring to be possessed with holiness.

Holiness is beautiful. It is the fire of God burning within the human soul. Living in holiness is a result of being alive and abandoned to the love of God. The manifestation of holiness is beauty upon you and pleasure within you. This manifestation is also known as righteousness. ***Billy Humphrey, Culture of the Kingdom***

Is.61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Anyone who has ever worn a beautiful, expensive piece of jewelry can attest to the fact that, somehow, the piece makes them feel more beautiful. They are not actually any different. It is the jewelry that has "beautified" them. Imagine such a piece of jewelry is a gift to you from your parents or spouse. You'd carry a sense of beauty upon you and within you when you were wearing it. Inside, your heart would be warmed with pleasure because of the extravagant gift and it would cause you to be drawn to the giver. You are beautified on the outside and filled with pleasure on the inside. This is what righteousness does in your life. ***Billy Humphrey. The Culture of the Kingdom***

d. Hungering for righteousness is God's prescription for being filled with the pleasures of God. It is righteous living that brings us in contact with God's beauty imparted to our lives. Living righteously is about experiencing the pleasure of living cleanly.

e. Jesus taught on the necessity, glory, and liberty of hungering for more in the grace of God. Jesus called us to press into God for the release of righteousness in our personal lives, for others, and in society. To hunger for righteousness is to press into God to experience more with Him. We refuse to be denied in our pursuit of the fullness of His promises. Some define grace as the absence of pressing into God, but this is a distorted message of grace, which is common today.

f. Seeing our great need (v. 3) causes us to mourn (v. 4) for a breakthrough. We are so desperate that we use all our resources or strengths to seek God and serve His purpose (v. 5). Our hunger increases by the grace of sustained zeal that seeks Him long-term, not just for a season (v. 6).

g. Paul pressed in hard for the prize of walking in the fullness of His destiny in the grace of God.

Phil. 3:12-14[12]*Not that I have already attained…<u>I press on</u>, that I may <u>lay hold of</u> that for which Christ Jesus has also <u>laid hold of me</u> [fullness of Paul's destiny]…*[14]*<u>I press toward the goal</u> for the prize of the upward call [fullness of Paul's destiny] of God in Christ Jesus.*

h. As we hunger and thirst, we will embrace whatever it takes to experience more of God. Part of hungering and thirsting for more includes the grace of fasting. We are pursuing a Person who releases righteousness in us and through us. Jesus is worthy of our efforts to press into God.

i. We care about righteousness in the small issues of our heart and speech. Immediately after this, Jesus spoke of righteousness in 6 areas—resisting anger, immorality, disloyalty in relationships, swearing falsely, retaliating, and passivity that does not walk in love (Mt. 5:21-48).

j. Hunger is one of the most important signs of life. When there is no hunger for a sustained period, then there is no life. Many live in a "spiritual intensive care unit" without any hunger for prayer or the Word. This is abnormal Christianity. Hungerless and passionless Christianity is not normal from God's point of view. Lack of hunger is a serious sign of sickness in the spirit.

k. Gaining new ground in the grace of God—growing in our hunger and pursuit of God—is the only way to keep the ground we have today. There is no static position. Our heart is either growing colder or hotter. It is not staying the same. The Spirit is willing to make anyone spiritually hungry, if they will begin to seek Him for it.

l. Hunger and thirst for righteousness comes as a result of having revelation of the pleasure of God. Hungering for righteousness is God's prescription for being filled with the pleasures of God. It is righteous living that brings us in contact with God's beauty imparted to our lives.

m. When we experience the pleasure of living righteously it will transform the way we perceive righteousness and holiness. Most would think living a life of holiness to be the epitome of boredom and dullness. But living righteously enables us to encounter spiritual pleasures that are far more exhilarating than any of the pleasures the world can offer. There is no pleasure as deep and sweet as the pleasure of experiencing the beauty of righteousness.

n. The counterfeit of righteousness is self-righteousness. It is identifying the dos and don'ts of Christianity and becoming self-confident in religious works. The Bible is clear that all of our righteous acts are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

o. There is a dramatic difference between pompous, self-righteous arrogance and experiencing the pleasures of God by abandoning yourself to Him. One may be able to manufacture a list of religious things to do in order to look righteous compared to everyone else. He may even give himself to faithfully keeping everything on his list. He may look like the most spiritual person, yet his heart will be void of the pleasures of God.

p. Hungering for righteousness is not about trying to look righteous. It is about longing to be filled with the pleasure of God.

q. **We shall be filled:** We will progressively experience more grace for righteousness in our lives and experience more and more of the pleasures of loving God. Like tasting a beautiful meal, the more we taste the more we hunger for another taste.

r. This is a lifelong journey of tasting and seeing that the Lord is good and then longing to taste again. As we feed on His righteousness and allow it to become ours so we walk in greater pleasure and revelation of His holiness and long to display even more in our lives. As we press in for more, including fasting, so we will be filled.

"If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great."
— John Piper, A Hunger For God

s. Deep and lasting satisfaction for our souls comes not from the delights of the world nor from a merely religious or vertical relationship with God. Satisfaction comes from God to those whose passion in life is to know him in the struggle to be like him in the world

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