



The Upside-Down Nature of God's Kingdom (Again)

Intro/Setting - (v.1-3)

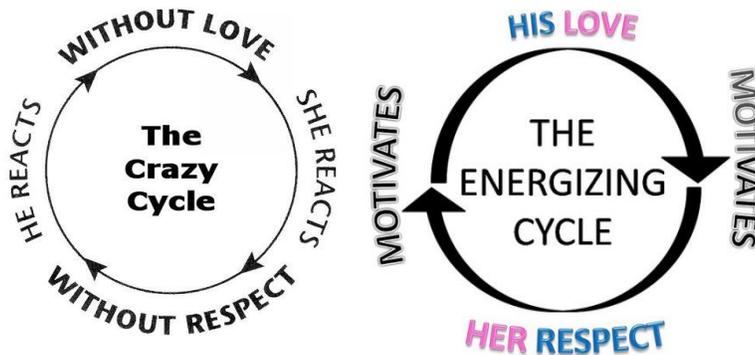
- "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." -this is the end of the 4th discourse out of 5.
- He left Galilee and went to the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan
- Large crowds followed Him, He healed them
- Pharisees came to "test Him"

I. The Question of Divorce - (v 4-12)

- A. For any and every reason?- The Pharisees are pitting Jesus against Moses in Deut 24:1. Is He more liberal or more conservative?
- B. "Haven't you read?"- He doesn't answer their question!
- C. God's intention: oneness
 - a. Gen 2:24, 1:27- the two become one
 - b. Eph. 5:31-32 a picture of Christ and the church
 - c. Jesus' commentary on Genesis. He has the authority to interpret the Torah

What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. To see divorce as man undoing the work of God puts the whole issue in a radically new perspective.
(France)
- d. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16) because it tears apart what He planned to be a permanent union.
- D. Moses allowed divorce, he didn't command it. Why did he allow it?
 - a. To protect the sanctity of marriage from something indecent defiling the relationship
 - b. To protect the woman from a husband who might simply send her away without any cause. An upside-down perspective on the value of women.
 - c. To document her status as a legitimately divorced woman, so that she would not be thought of as a harlot or a runaway adulteress (Wilkins)
- E. For what reason(s) did he allow it?
 - a. Porneia- translated "sexual immorality", not just adultery (that's a different word), could include incest, homosexuality, prostitution, molestation, or indecent exposure. Already mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount Mt 5:32-
Note: this is why Joseph was going to divorce Mary when she was found to be pregnant.
 - b. Desertion- I Corinthians 7 talks about the person who's non-believing spouse leaves them as an allowance for divorce
- F. Why did God through Moses make this concession?

- a. The hardness of men's hearts! Sad.
- b. How do our hearts become hard? Unforgiveness and bitterness
- c. Relates directly back to chapter 18 and the command to forgive, innumerable times
- d. Paul teaches in Ephesians 5 about the need to love and respect each other in Eph 5:33. A helpful tool for strengthening marriages (Eggerichs)



- e. Greg and Erin Smalley speak much on marriage and they propose that the key to maintaining a good relationship in the midst of difficulties is to keep your hearts soft toward one another. (Smalley)
- G. The disciples' response- It's better not to marry!
 - a. For some maybe it is better! It is an option. Paul in I Corinthians lists the benefits of those who would chose to remain single in order to be undistracted in serving Christ.
 - b. Culturally marriage and bearing children was highly valued and respected.
 - c. More upside-down thinking, as Jesus never married, and makes this a valid option.

II. The Value and Example of Children - (v13-15)

- A. How quickly the disciples forgot chapter 18! "Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes me." (18:5)
- B. The disciples have a worldly view of children as having little value
- C. Jesus reiterates the value of children and the kind of character they represent:
 - a. Humility- the great characteristic of God seen in Jesus (as opposed to pride)
 - b. Vulnerability, openness (as opposed to closed and protected from relationships)
 - c. Trust and dependence (as opposed to self-sufficiency and distrustfulness)
- D. More upside-down thinking for those who want to be a part of the kingdom of God

III. The Rich Man and His Treasure- (v 16-26)

- A. He genuinely comes to Jesus to inquire about how to get eternal life. In Mark 10 it says that Jesus looked at him and loved him.
- B. The rich man recognizes that he lacks something.
- C. Jesus refocuses on "who is good" rather than what good thing he can do
- D. If you want to be "perfect"= whole, complete, or mature, in contrast to what you lack
- E. Why does Jesus tell him to obey the commandments?

Obedience to the commands demonstrates a childlike humility and belief in God's goodness; not to earn eternal life (Wilkins)

- F. Why does he still sense his lack of something? He has obeyed the commands.
- G. Jesus challenges him to sell all he has, give to the poor and come follow Him.
 - a. Jesus calls him to more than charity, giving to the poor. He can do this out of his abundance.
 - b. Jesus calls him to sell ALL and follow Him. This is a call to discipleship, a new life
 - c. This harkens back to the Sermon on the Mount Mt 6:19-21,24 a call to store up treasures in heaven, and the admonition that you can't serve God and money
 - d. Also Matt 13:22- "The seed falling among thorns refers to people who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke out the word making it unfruitful"

Jesus takes the young man to the inner place where his values are formed (his heart) and challenges him to see what is his most cherished value- in essence, the ruling god of his life...His wealth has become his means to personal identity, power, purpose, and meaning in life. It has, in a real sense, become his god. Thus, Jesus calls him to exchange the god of wealth for following him as the one true God...the young man knows that Jesus has correctly pinpointed what is lacking in his life. He knows what issues are at stake. His many possessions have captivated his heart, and he cannot exchange this god for Jesus. (Wilkins)

- e. The disciples are astonished at Jesus' statement that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom.
 - i. Cultural perception that wealth = God's blessing
 - ii. Wealth= status
 - iii. More upside-down thinking is needed. Wealth can be a gift from God but even Proverbs warns against the snare of riches. Wealth can actually be a hindrance to entering the kingdom.
- f. Who then can be saved? Being saved is parallel with inheriting eternal life. Something that can't be done by works. It must be something supernatural. Only with God are these "impossible things" possible

IV. What About Us?- v. 27-30)

- a. The disciples, with Peter as their spokesman, are still preoccupied with status (ie, who is greatest! Mt 18:1)
- b. What can we expect to receive for our devotion and sacrifice to you?
- c. Jesus does promise rewards for those who have sacrificed to serve Him.
- d. The disciples have a special place of reward : "You who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
- e. Others who have served Him will be rewarded 100 times and will receive eternal life.
- f. A bit of a rebuke verse 30- "But many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first." Upside down thinking. Those who are more concerned about the reward as their motive for serving others are not in line with the kingdom mindset.
- g. Jesus' concern is for the low of status: women, children, the poor, the sick, the weak, and the powerless.

Principle: Kingdom thinking doesn't come naturally! I need to be in the Word of God to have my mind renewed in order to value the things Jesus values, and to be on alert to the constant message that culture brings to me to think the way the world does.

Reflect and Respond Questions:

1. Are there areas where my heart is becoming or has become hard in my marriage, or in other relationships due to bitterness or a lack of forgiveness? What step can I take this week to address or confess this?
2. How can I cultivate childlike characteristics-humility, trust, vulnerability, dependence, openness- in my personal life with the Lord?
3. Do I have issues of greed or covetousness regarding wealth and money? Am I willing to admit it to God and ask Him what he wants me to do about it? In what ways might He be asking me to come follow Him?

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