

Talk Notes

Title: The Kingdom of God 4 – Attitudes in the Kingdom

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date: 02/04/2017

Introduction

Now we are up to talk 4 about the Kingdom of God. The first was addressing what the Kingdom of God is – can someone remind us? Yes, **the Kingdom of God is the realm where He reigns** – in the hearts of those who follow the King and in all areas where His will is seen – whether in family, community, politics, religion, commerce, news and entertainment.

My second talk emphasised the timing of the Kingdom – can someone remind me about that – **It has come and indeed was built into the very fabric of creation, it is here but needs to be reached for but it is still to come in it's completeness**

My 3rd talk was explaining the difference between entering the Kingdom of God and becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God – can someone tell me the difference? - **We enter the Kingdom of God when we do things that are in accordance with God's will – but we become citizens when we are born again through faith in Jesus and we receive a brand new passport.**

My talk this morning focusses upon our attitudes and motivations. How many of us realise that sometimes our attitude or motives in what we do are more important than what we actually do. **Sometimes a wrong action with a right attitude or motive can be better than a right action with a wrong attitude or motive.**

I want to talk about the **centrality of love**, and I want us to explore together what Jesus meant when He said **our approach to the Kingdom of God should be like little children.**

Above all love

In the midst of a chapter which sees Jesus debating with the religious leaders and challenging their long held beliefs and attitudes, there is an encounter with a teacher of the religious law which is really significant, let's read together.

Mark 12:28-34

Now this level of understanding was all the more profound because it came from the mouth of a teacher of the religious law. So many of Jesus encounters with the religious leaders of the day were negative. He confronted their hypocrisy, their pride, their distortion of God's word and His laws, overall you might say their attitude stank.

Then here was a religious teacher who stood out from his colleagues, **what He gleaned from his extensive study of the law was that love was central**, love for God and love for others. He even went so far as to say that this was more important than offering all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law. For the Jews who this leader taught, the right thing to do was to offer all of the offerings and sacrifices required, but if they did not have love for God and others it was useless. However if you had love for God and others then even though you may fall short on other things you had got the main thing right – your heart and attitude. Remember that the wrong thing with the right heart and attitude is better than the right thing with a wrong heart or attitude. Of course both is best!

This passage reminds me of two others – one from the Old testament book of Isaiah – this reading from the Amplified bible puts it well:-

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me [unless they are the offering of the heart]? says the Lord. I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts [without obedience]; and I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of he-goats [without righteousness].

12 When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you that your [unholy feet] trample My courts?

13 Bring no more offerings of vanity (emptiness, falsity, vainglory, and futility); [your hollow offering of] incense is an abomination to Me; the New Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure–[it is] iniquity and profanation, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your New Moon festivals and your [hypocritical] appointed feasts My soul hates. They are an oppressive burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them.

15 And when you spread forth your hands [in prayer, imploring help], I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood!

16 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes! Cease to do evil,

17 Learn to do right! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, and correct the oppressor. Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isa 1:11-18)

You can just feel the disgust of God towards those who make a show of religion but whose hearts are far from Him.

Then from Paul's letter to the Corinthians probably the most famous passage on love ever written, let's read **1 Cor 13** together.

Looking at **verses 4-7** in particular, this is not just a wishy washy warm feeling – this is a concrete, practical way to live – it is an attitude which forms the very foundation of the Kingdom of God – why – because as **1 John 4:7** puts it – **God is love!**

Receiving the Kingdom of God like a child.

So love is the dominant attitude and motivation in the Kingdom of God, but now I want to turn our attention to a number of passages where Jesus was talking about us receiving the Kingdom of God like little children.

Let's get into groups to explore what you think these passages mean and then we will get some feedback.

Matt 18:1-4

18 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" 2 Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. 3 Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mark 10:13-16

13 One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

14 When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." 16 Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

What was it about children that Jesus was wanting us to 'be like' and why?

- Trust
- Innocence
- Humility
- Fun
- Uncomplicated

If this is what Jesus meant by being childlike, what is the difference between this and being childish?

- Being childish is to do with immaturity and having not developed the knowledge and experience necessary to respond in an appropriate way to the situations and relationships we face.

Conclusion/Reflection time

Let's spend a little bit of time acknowledging afresh God's love for us. Bearing in mind what we have considered this morning we want to recognise the centrality of love in God's Kingdom and we want to receive the truth of the Father's love for us with childlike simplicity and trust. In **Revelation 2:4-6** Jesus states His 'complaint' against the church in Ephesus **'But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first. Look how far you have fallen. Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches'**.

If you identify with this in any way, if you feel that your love has cooled for God for God or for others, if love is no longer central to your life, then just in the quite repent now.

Now let's ask Him in our own way to stir within us afresh the fire of first love, for Him and others.

As we listen to or read [The Fathers Love Letter](#) let's allow these words of scripture declaring God's attitude towards us to stir in us a response of thankfulness and love.

Now let's make a response to God's love in our own way. Here are some suggestions but feel free to respond in any way that is appropriate for you:-

- Say a simple prayer including thanks and a declaration of our love for Him.
- Write a letter to the Father or Jesus declaring our love for Him
- Write a Psalm or a song expressing our love of Him
- Commit yourself to exploring ways of expressing your love for God in the coming weeks
- Commit yourself to exploring ways of expressing love to others over the coming weeks.