

The Kingdom Belongs To...: Part 6

We have learned that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who ***do the will of the Father***; to those who ***live by faith***; and to those who are ***poor in spirit***. The poor in spirit are those who are: 1) willing to be identified by their abject neediness; 2) have learned that this world has nothing to truly give; thus, they choose to give up their addiction to search for validation and the proof that they are wanted, in every relationship; and 3) they exchange it all for absolute vulnerability—i.e., living in the reality of their hole trusting Jesus to satisfy them. For the poor in spirit, satisfaction and contentment have now become an issue of faith. In fact, the poor in spirit have figured out that all the kingdom of this world can really offer is an endless craving for satisfaction and contentment—a craving which can never be satisfied. The kingdom of this world promises satisfaction, it promises contentment, but it never can deliver on its promises. Thus, it leaves you with a craving that becomes more and more desperate. Hence, people choose to either shut down more and more or indulge more and more. But the result is the same: despair, heaviness, addiction, brokenness, and isolation.

It seems that for so long we have been afraid to make this neediness, this hole in our soul that craves for validation, an issue of faith. We have followed those in the kingdom of the world and have tried to selfishly take our validation from others every chance we get; even though it has never satisfied. But now we know what it is; now it has been unmasked; now we see how this need drives us in every situation; therefore, now we are without excuse. This has been how we have lived, this has defined our life, and now we must give it up and stand in the absolute

vulnerability and nakedness of our neediness and wait on God to satisfy that need.

Remember, God will not give us a rock if we ask for bread (**Matthew 7:9**). In actuality, He will satisfy even our deepest hunger down to the depths of our bones, like this craving for knowing we are wanted and needed; for He knows exactly what we need even before we ask Him (**Matthew 6:8**). But He wants you to ask Him to guide you to that place where you experientially realize His satisfaction; ask Him to fill this hole. But ask Him in faith without doubting. According to **James 1:5-8**, if you ask, you better be willing to wait on Him convinced that He will satisfy. The one who doubts that He will satisfy and actually bring contentment in their now, and instead chooses to continue to take and reach for that validation—he who succumbs to the temptation to make rocks into bread (**Matthew 4:3**)—is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person ought not to expect to receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded, unstable in all his ways. For with doubt comes instability, and with instability comes worry, anxiety, fear and panic. All of these things most often result in self-reliance and the delusion that we can somehow control our lives, even for a moment in time.

But to those who ask in faith, and thereby choose to wait on the Lord, willing to bet their lives on the fact that He says He satisfies, will find that He will always do just as He promises, it is just a matter of time. He might make you wait and you might feel so uncomfortable, unsafe, vulnerable, and at risk, but this is exactly where He wants you to be. You are so addicted to avoiding this feeling that you always seem to jump first and take matters into your own hands whenever you feel the fear instead of waiting for God to prove Himself to you. You must learn to make this an issue of faith; you must wait patiently for the Lord to act, and He will lift you

up. It is a matter of His Word, which is backed by the character of His Name.

Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.

How many can really say they waited patiently for the Lord to help them? The one who is willing to do this must first choose to understand that the craving to take and take from others, as well as the vulnerability associated with not taking and taking from others, are both just emotions that are not embedded in the truth that Jesus is the Lord your God Almighty. In other words, you don't have to react to that feeling. Both the craving and the vulnerability are based on all sorts of wrong belief and unbelief that can be settled when you now and continually **behold** the Son for who He is (the Lord God Almighty) and **believe**—bet your life on His name. A choice made in faith is all about power—a supernatural power that can dominate and tame any feeling whatsoever; you just have to be willing to wait. Going back to ***Psalm 40***, The Lord will lift you out of the pit of despair, desperation, and yearning because He actually delights in you. He will set your feet on solid ground and steady you as you walk. After all, He has already set your feet in a broad place, on a huge rock (which is Christ Himself), and you are safe (***2 Samuel 22:20; Psalm 18:19;***

31:18; 40:2).

In *Psalm 37:7, 34* we are told to be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act. We are also told to put our hope in the Lord and to travel steadily along His path. If you do, He promises to honor you by giving you the land, or giving you this territory in your soul that is now ruled by the lie. In fact, He promises that you will see the wicked destroyed. And He always fulfills His promises, but as in this instance they come with a condition. You are to be still and wait; you are not to try and be your own savior, for only Jesus saves. You are to stand in your vulnerability, identified as one who is *poor in spirit*, and wait patiently. He wants you to just continue to travel steadily along His path and you will know victory; it will be yours because Christ in you will be your victory.

I want you to understand that whether you are dealing with this black flower—the deep craving to be validated and to find proof that you are loved and wanted—or any other deep dysfunction that dominates your life, the issues are the same. There is the truth and there is the lie. The truth is always based on some aspect of God's Name—His character. The lie is always based on a deep fear and the feeling that you are powerless, no one is there to truly help you much less understand you, and you are left to your own devices to figure out how to survive and make it through this world. The lie always grates against the true gospel of Jesus Christ: Only Jesus saves; and you have been given everything you need for life and Godliness and can actually partake of God's divine nature enabling you to be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens you, including overcoming those feelings of desperation and craving (*2 Peter 1:3-4; Philippians 4:13*). But the answer is always "through Christ." Hence, everything in your life must become an issue of

faith; nothing, simply nothing, is to be left to your reasoning or your emotions. Everything must be by faith!

By the way, if this is not the basis upon which you are dealing with one another you are not helping much less loving one another. In faith, we can help each other by giving no room for the emotional drama which come from the lie that says we are at risk. In order to truly love your friends, your roommates, or whoever, you must be uncompromising in your demand for the truth over the lie. You must not placate someone because you are afraid and do not want them to be mad at you or to leave you. That is not love. You must be willing to go to war against the lie, no matter what it costs you, believing that only Jesus saves and only Jesus can save. We must fight for one another in this regard and stop caressing the lie and all the emotions which empower the lie. We must know how dangerous it is for your friends, your roommates, or whoever, to live this lie and risk not being one who now and always enters through the narrow gate of faith. If you truly love them you will fight for them and you will keep fighting until they become one who chooses to truly trust themselves to Jesus their Lord God Almighty.

This next descriptor of to whom the Kingdom belongs really builds on this idea of being ***poor in Spirit*** –being personally identified in your neediness and inability to solve, well, anything really. The Kingdom of God belongs to those ***who are like children***.

Matthew 19:14

Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven

belongs to those who are like these children.

Mark 10:13-16

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. 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. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Matthew 18:1-6

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like children. If you don't receive the Kingdom of God like a child, you will never enter it. If you don't turn

from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. These passages are not unlike those scary scriptures we studied previously in this segment on the Kingdom of God belongs to.... I am sure you remember the harrowing words: “I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness;” “Many will seek to enter and will not be able;” and “The gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” These passages also put a monkey wrench into the modern methods by which we have become accustomed to making so called converts. Clearly, a mere prayer is not, in and of itself, enough. Anyone who does not, as a matter of lifestyle, receive the Kingdom like a child (it is rendered in the *aorist middle subjective*, so we know it is a choice they have to dig down deep in their souls and make) shall no way, no how, enter the Kingdom. The negation here is definitive.

Matthew 19:14, The Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children. Now that does not mean that you get to act like a brat, put that notion aside. I know some of you have been confused by this passage and have indulged yourself in childlike behavior, ha. Instead I want you to go back to the notion of abject vulnerability connected with being **poor in spirit**; a child is very much that way. The Greek term used here for children (“*Paidion*”) technically means little or young children, and can refer to anywhere from a new born to what we would call pre-school—a bit older than a toddler; a child who is completely dependent upon his parents. This word is distinguished from the Greek word “*Teknion*” which just means child. Jesus uses this word quite often when calling His followers children as a term of endearment.

So if we think of little children, we know that they are needy, and they know it.

They look to their parents or the adults in their life for everything. They fully expect their parents to take care of them and they cry out to be cared for; in fact, they have no actual ability to care for themselves; and even if they tried they would likely just get hurt. A child of this age also takes the provision from their parents. Even if they whine and cry about something they don't like, they have no ability to go and resource some other provision. They are so limited in their capability that they finally accept their parents' choice for their lives and receive it innately trusting their parents with their care.

Children of this age also explore the world and roam around touching and tasting everything, somewhat unaware of what their parents have to do to keep them safe while at the same time allowing them to develop and grow and experience their environment. And when their environment causes pain, little children run right to their parents for comfort and care. They also seek them out whenever they are afraid. These are the attributes of little children.

Wow, talk about a standard; unless one is like a little child and receives the Kingdom like a child, they **cannot** enter the Kingdom of God. Wow this is intense. However, when it says in **Matthew 18:3**, "I tell you the truth, unless you are converted and become like little children, you will never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," "converted" is in the *arist passive subjunctive* while "become" is in *arist middle subjunctive*. This means there are two aspects to being able to enter into the Kingdom of God. The first is what God does and the second is what you must choose to do. It is very similar to the notion that Jehovah Mekoddishkem (the Lord who sanctifies) sets you apart (many are called), but few are chosen—few are the **Beloved** who choose Him in return.

First, you must be converted or turned about and being in the *passive* voice it is clearly something which God does to you. He stops you from going one direction and sets you in another. Literally it means He first “twists” you and then He “turns” you or “steers” you. But then you must choose to become like a little child. Being rendered in the *middle* voice, you must dig down deep into your soul and make the choice to be totally, completely, and abjectly dependent upon God. Both of these things must take place for you to enter into the Kingdom of God; otherwise, you will not ever enter—never!

Not many of us, if any, first approach Jesus with the trust and dependence of a little child. In fact, every one of us was convinced that we were our own lord; at least we lived that way. But true children of the Kingdom—the **Beloved**—are turned around from this self-willed and independent direction and then they make the choice to always be dependent and live in a state of abject trust of their Father. They become like little children. Being in the *arist* tense, it means from beginning to end, **as a matter of lifestyle**, they choose to be that little child and trust their Father with their life. They are needy and they know it. They expect their Father in heaven to care for them and they cry out to be cared for; in fact, they know they have no true ability to care for themselves and that every time they try they just get hurt. So they gladly receive all that the Father provides, even when they don't like it; and they refuse to go and resource some other provision. They know they are limited in their capability so they accept, by faith, their Father's choice for their lives and trust how He wants to provide for them. They even run to Him for comfort and care and seek Him to be their covering, protection, and hiding place when they are afraid.

It kind of shocks me that this is never *really* taught out there in the realms of Christianity. You hear bits and pieces of it; but rarely is it taught that if you want to be a child of God, one who abides in the Kingdom of God, you must come and die so completely, surrendering your will to His will, such that you are willing to become like a little child. But this is the requirement, the standard, for entry into the Kingdom of God. It is a two part reality: God has His part and you have your part. God always does His part. But now it is up to you to choose to stand there in complete vulnerability, like a child, in poverty of spirit, and trust that: He is your Father; He knows what you need; He will always be there for you; He will provide exactly what you need; and He will like a loving parent guide your steps such that you grow up into a well-functioning (as opposed to a dysfunctional) adult who always lives dependent like a little child. It is a beautiful oxymoron. Let me explain further.

Matthew 18:4 says, "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Whoever makes the choice to become like a little child, he is the greatest. Now in the Greek this does not mean the greatest as in the top, number 1, end all be all (that would be the Greek word "*meigas*"). But here the word "*meizon*" is used to be a comparative form of greatness; and it is a play on words. It means they will be the elder, the mature one, as opposed to the child. I always have said the Kingdom is upside down, inside out, and backwards from how we would normally think. It is the same type of reasoning as when Jesus says in **Matthew 20:26** that if you want to be great in the kingdom of heaven, you must become a servant of all. Thus, by choosing to always live as a little child, you will be mature and well developed from the perspective of the Kingdom. In fact,

you will be the strong one. That is why Jesus said, “...power is perfected in weakness” (*2 Corinthians 12:9*).

Proverbs 3:5-8: If you trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding, and in all your ways acknowledge Him, He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. Relying on your own wisdom, your own understanding is evil; it is acting like an adult instead of a child. It is acting like one who is capable of deciding matters for their own life and not acting like one who is completely vulnerable and abjectly dependent upon the Lord. But when you fear the Lord, or when you choose to reject this evil of self-reliance and turn from it, God says that you will feel the benefits of this choice in your body, way down deep to your bones. He will bring healing and He will bring you sustenance or refreshment. Making the choice, as a matter of lifestyle, to be dependent upon God for all things (trusting the Lord with all your heart) is the proof that you belong to the Kingdom of God—that you are the **Beloved**. And you will know His satisfaction and contentment.

The Father takes your trust in Him seriously. If you choose to become like a little child, He will deal with anyone who messes with you and He will bless anyone who blesses you. He may allow them to hurt you for His purposes, to help you grow up and mature and learn even greater dependence, but you don't want to be on that side of things where you are the one who brings harm to His **Beloved**. Jesus says in **Matthew 18:5-6**, “And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be

drowned in the depth of the sea.”

First, He says anyone who receives the one who has made the choice to become a little child receives Him. Their choice to receive is rendered in the *aorist middle subjunctive*. So they have decided to receive you as part of their life regardless of the fact that you are a believer. I have some friends (non-believers) who have made the choice to always receive me; accordingly, the Lord says they now receive Him (*present middle indicative*). I believe this indicates that long as such a one receives you as a child of God, Jesus will care for them and they will not lose their reward (**Matthew 10:42**). It is all very personal. How they treat you is how they now treat Him; after all, He lives and abides in you. See also **Matthew 25:34-40**.

Second, He says there is serious judgment for the one that causes one of these little ones who believe—he who now and continually makes the choice to become like a child (it is in the *present active participle*)—offense or scandal. It would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” This is one of the reasons why you can rest and not freak out when people treat you poorly. The Lord has you covered. They will get their comeuppance, in one way or another, both in this life and in the life to come. See **Matthew 25: 41-46**. Again, it is all very personal. This is why you can rest and trust yourself to Him. Like any reasonable Father, He cares for His own.

I would like to quickly contrast this level of dependence to which God has called us and this decision we must make to be poor in spirit and become like a child with a story that indicates why trusting in yourself, your reasoning, your wisdom, and your ability to provide for yourself is never, ever a good thing.

Matthew 19:16-26

And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Then he said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

A rich man thinks they have what they need. A rich man is confident they can make it on their own. A man who is rich is not poor in spirit. And don't miss the point of this story. It is not about money or possessions per se; rather, it is about the person who is not willing to leave it all behind, especially their religious goodness and self-confidence, and become so completely dependent like a child

upon God to care for them in every way imaginable. Hence, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In fact, unless a rich man (one who is confident in themselves) becomes like a child, he will never ever enter. Clearly, no man can make that choice themselves; it is impossible. God has to twist them and then turn them—they have to be converted. And with God, that is never impossible for with God all things are possible. But then they still have to choose to become a child if they ever hope to enter into the Kingdom of God. They must trust in the Lord with all their heart and no longer lean on their own understanding. They must cast off the temptation to be wise in their own eyes. God will always do His part, but we must choose to do our part. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and no longer lean on your own understanding. Wow, that statement really captures it all. It is mind blowing how simple it all is.

Examine yourself. Be honest. How much confidence do you place in your own understanding of things? How rich are you? Some of you are filthy rich. Are you going to choose to cast it off and give your money to the poor, so to speak. If you want to enter the Kingdom of God, you must be poor in spirit; you must identify yourself by your neediness and abject dependency; you must reject all the lies and so called wisdom to which you have clung. You must trust Him with all things with no exception. You must do your part and choose Him in return. You are to lean only on His Word, which is backed by His name and His very character of holiness and righteousness. He is God, you are not. He is and wants to be your Father. Yes, it seems scary to be that vulnerable and dependent, but He has placed you in a broad place and in reality there is no risk at all. He will satisfy you and He will be your contentment. Choose to become like a little child and experience the healing in

your body and the refreshment or satisfaction way down deep in your bones.

And it all comes back to what you believe. Do you believe that Jesus is the Lord your God Almighty? Do you believe that Jesus is good? And do you believe that His agenda for your life is to make you like Him—an alien and stranger in this world? 3 simple things that we must believe in every area of our life, for if we do we will be strong, steadfast, indomitable, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. It is time for each of us to make all things an issue of faith. Live like the little child in complete dependence and you will be great in His Kingdom.

Let's Pray