

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Longing For, Looking For, and Living Out The Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of them is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the ones having been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for of them is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:10

“Pray, then, in this way: ...Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Matthew 6:9,10

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 6:33

Last week we looked at an overview of the Sermon on the Mount. This week, I want to look a bit more closely at some of the statements regarding the kingdom of God that Jesus brought up in His message. The word “kingdom” occurs eight times in this message. What makes up the kingdom? What are kingdom people like? What is their focus in life? What are they living for? What are they looking for?

The first time that the word occurs is when Jesus said, “**Happy/fortunate/blessed are the beggarly in the Spirit, because of them is the kingdom of the heavens**” (Matt. 5:3). *These are people who have a profound sense of their spiritual inadequacy.* They feel poor, destitute, powerless, empty, lowly, lacking, helpless, poverty-stricken in the Spirit. They feel insufficient, disqualified, and even have a tendency to want to hold back in a feeling of unworthiness and inability in themselves. **But it means more than a cringing sense of need. The word literally means “beggarly”, meaning that they are crying out for mercy, provision, help, empowerment.** The deep sense of emptiness and need fuels a heart cry to God to be filled, supplied and enabled by Him. This verse is often translated as, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” as though the kingdom somehow belonged to them. **The original Greek is: “...of them is the kingdom...”** The “of” *could* refer to possession, as in the common translation, ...or it could mean that the kingdom *consists of* people like them. “*Of them* is the kingdom comprised”. **The kingdom of heaven is comprised of people who profoundly know and feel their inadequacy but are crying out for God to fill their lack and empower them.** If *you* feel unworthy or inadequate, think of Moses (Ex. 3,4) or Gideon (Judg. 6,7) who also felt the same way, and remember what Jesus said *here*, “Fortunate are those who know their need and cry out like beggars to be filled and empowered. The kingdom of God consists of such people.” Cry out, and expect God to fill your lack.

The second time the word “kingdom” occurs is in Matthew 5:10, “**Happy, fortunate/blessed are the ones having-been-persecuted on account of righteousness, because of them is the kingdom of the heavens.**” Note that it does not say that they are *currently being persecuted*, rather it says they *have been* at some time in the past. And it also does not say that they have been persecuted for being part of a group, or because of some identity. It specifically says that they have been persecuted *on account of righteousness*. In other words, they were living a life of righteous behavior or attitude that was different enough from those around them, that these other people were offended by them, and they mistreated them as a result. The apostle Paul later wrote: “Indeed all who desire to live good-devotedly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). **Here is the key: If they have already been persecuted, then they were already living a life of devotion and obedience. They were already choosing to live in ways beyond what others thought was normal and appropriate.** Their choice to live righteously was excessive in the minds of those around them, and shows that they had a *higher vision, a higher passion, a higher desire* for God. **The kingdom of God is comprised of people like that, ...people living for more than this life, ...people living unusual lives of justice or goodness.**

The third and fourth occurrences of the word, “kingdom”, have to do with faithfully obeying and teaching the OT commandments of God. Those who “annul the commandments” or teach others that it is ok to disregard them, will be considered least in the kingdom; while those who walk in and encourage others to obey them will be called great in the kingdom (Matt. 5:19). **Jesus expanded this further by a fifth usage of the word, “kingdom”.** “Unless your righteousness overflows more than the scribes and the Pharisees, not never will you enter into the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 5:20). **Those of the kingdom of God abound or overflow with a righteousness beyond what the scribes and Pharisees could produce for all their efforts. The kingdom is a higher level of righteousness, not a lesser level.**

The sixth occurrence of the word, “kingdom” is in the Lord’s prayer, the prayer that He taught as a model for all His disciples. “Pray, then, in this way: ...Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9,10). The word for “pray” is a form that is more intensive and directive than the normal word for “ask”. It literally would mean “ask toward”, implying more focused intercession. Out of the seven petitions of this prayer, the second is about the kingdom of God. We are to intercede, “ask toward”, “ask with purpose”. In Greek, these are indirect imperatives. We don’t have a good way to translate these in English. The best we can do is use the

words “let it...”, but that is pretty weak. It is not the same as a full-on demand, but it is stronger than a wish or a request. It is to be an *insistent petition*, ...almost demanding, but not quite that direct. If you think of the language used in the presence of a king of that time, it helps to understand the indirect language. You never told the king what to do, directly. Every request was prefaced with “if it please the king... let it...” The point of these comments is to see that ***we are to insistently petition God for His kingdom to come.*** – What does it mean? ***Why should we ask for His kingdom to come, if His kingdom is here?*** John the Baptist, and Jesus, were preaching that the kingdom of God was “at hand, on the verge, present, or impending”. John spoke of it as a future but impending reality. ***Jesus spoke of it as a present, impending reality, and demonstrated it*** by the miraculous works God gave Him to perform as “signs of the kingdom”. In other words, the insight and application of this is that ***the kingdom of God is presently available, but we have to bring it into our experience through petition and Spirit-prompted action.*** The same is true for the next petition, “Your will be done”. The Greek literally is saying, “Let Your will/desire *come to be*”. Can God’s desires *not* come to be? Or, can things *contrary to His desire* come to be? Yes, at least in the short term. People can reject the will or desire of God for their lives (Lk. 7:30; Matt. 21:28-32), ...and we can choose to seek, pursue and do the will or desire of God (Matt. 12:50). ***If the kingdom of God is the reign or rule of God, then whenever and wherever we seek and respond to the will of God, we bring our lives in line with His reign and rule, and the kingdom of God is established in or through our lives.***

The seventh occurrence of “kingdom” in the Sermon on the Mount is in Matthew 6:33. In this section of Jesus’ teaching, ***He warns against a divided heart.*** He tells us *not to* lay up treasures or “stores” on earth, but to store up treasures or “stores” in heaven. Why? Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. He specifically says that ***we cannot serve two masters. We will either disregard the one and love the other, or we will be devoted to one and despise the other.*** “You cannot serve God and wealth” (6:24). Interestingly, He goes on to say, “On account of *this* I say to you, do not be anxious (‘distracted’, or literally, ‘have a partial mind’) about your natural-life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on...” ***The issue is the distracted mind, the divided loyalty.*** “...your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek (look for, search for, try to obtain, desire to possess, strive for, aim toward) first the kingdom of God and the righteousness of Him, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:32,33). ***So, not only is the kingdom of God present and impending, ...and we are to be asking for it to come to be in our experience..., but we are also to be watching for it, seeking to discover and embrace it.*** We are to aim for it above all earthly distractions, striving to align with it and experience it through our response to what we can see of the leading and direction of the King in our lives.

The final occurrence of the word “kingdom” in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 7:21, “***Not everyone saying to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, ...rather the one doing the will of My Father in heaven.***” Again, think of the context. All throughout His description of His new kingdom, Jesus describes how radically different it is than what His listeners are currently understanding, or have come to expect. ***Jesus warns them to “take heed, pay attention” because not everyone who claims to represent God actually does.*** There are “pseudo-prophets”, fake, false or phony proclaimers of God’s word. These are people who are religious activists, people who are *claiming* to be led and empowered by God, ...but who, in actuality, were *not*. ***They will come outwardly appearing as sheep, but will actually be hungry wolves, wanting to fill themselves.*** “***You will recognize them***”, Jesus says, “***by their fruit.***” A good and healthy tree will produce good fruit, but a sick, unhealthy tree will only produce bad fruit. It cannot be otherwise. We will bear fruit according to our nature, our essence, our source. ***What is the outcome or result of their lives? Many can talk a good talk, but what is evident in their walk?*** Do they look like Jesus in their character? Are they feeding and filling *the flock*, or are they seeking to fill *themselves*? Not everyone *calling* Jesus Lord will enter or come to experience the reign or rule of God. Nor will they accurately portray or present what is truly God’s heart. ***The kingdom of God does not automatically follow religious talk, religious claims, or even religious activities.*** There can even be powerful proclamation *in Jesus’ name*, powerful expulsions of demons *in Jesus’ name*, and mighty acts of power or miracles *in Jesus’ name*, ...but *NOT* be from Jesus’ at all! Amazingly, even people who *seem* so active and powerful in certain aspects of their lives can be people who do not *know* Jesus, at all. Jesus will dismiss them as “ones working lawlessness”. In other words, ***they are doing what they want to do, ...not following the direction of God. The entrance into the kingdom of God is reserved for those who do the will of the Father, not their own will.*** Those who are wise will *listen* to what Jesus says and *do it*.

What do we learn about the kingdom, and people of the kingdom? ***The kingdom is comprised of those who know their emptiness and neediness, and cry out for God’s empowerment; ...those having experienced ridicule or opposition for their pursuit of what is right; ...those living to obey the whole counsel of God, not just the parts they like; ...those whose lives exude a righteousness far beyond what legalists can perform;...those who ask for and diligently seek God’s Kingdom as most important; ...and those who will do what God reveals to them.***