

Who is the Kingdom For? Matthew 19:13-20:16

Introduction

Sometimes the Bible just speaks for itself and our sermonizing gets in the way.

I often quote the author Mark Twain, when he says,

" It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

I think Jesus' actions in these passages speak for themselves if we are willing to pay attention.

In fact, what the Holy Spirit says may actually bother us.

These accounts of Jesus, all of them amaze me.

So today I want you to take note of three from Matthew.

They all ask the same bothersome question: Who is the Kingdom for?

ACT 1: The Adult or the Child? (Matthew 19:13-15)

13 Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

Who do we feel does not deserve time with Jesus?

I don't trust people who don't like children.

In fact, I feel a bit bad for them.

Actually, I feel the same way probably about anyone doesn't like anyone of any sort.

People who don't like old people, Asian people, female people, muslim people,

Indian people, tall people, short people, rich people, poor people,

this is getting bit Dr. Seuss.

But Children?

In fact, this isn't about children.

This is about their parents.

It's the parents who want to bring their children to Jesus so he can lay hands on them and bless them.

Jesus, unlike all the other rabbis and teachers who saw children as more or less without worth,

somehow made them feel comfortable enough to come and talk to him,

to present their kids to him.

He seemed to be someone who loved their children and valued them the way only a parent could.

So in the end, it really isn't a choice between adults and children.

It is always both.

The kingdom of God belongs to those whose lives embraces the small people.

In a time when a child was not worth the time of day, Jesus says, the Kingdom belongs to them.

What the King is saying is, I belong to them and they belong to me.

Who do we feel Jesus doesn't want to spend time with?

In our church, all parents and all children are welcome, noises, poopy diapers, crying and all.

And even if you have no children of your own and struggle to find you place, you are welcome among our families.

And families, I know you are busy, open your hearts and your homes to those without.

We belong to the King.

ACT 2: The Rich or the Poor? (Matthew 19:16-30)

This is a famous passage and I don't want to bore you with it's retelling because you know what it says.

Or do we?

It changed the life and direction of people like the father of monasticism, St. Antony

as well as St. Francis of Assisi, after who the current Catholic pope is named.

These people and countless others, have read this passage and taken on vows of poverty.

Why?

Because often we discover that what we have keeps us and not the other way around.

My house, my car, my career can keep me from doing the things God asks me to.

Can keep me from being the person I am called to be.
For as much as I try to deny it.
I love my stuff.
It's not that I'm not going to share, or give and be generous, I can do all that.
I can give to the church and charity - it makes me feel righteous and good.
But I keep enough for me to feel safe.
My nest egg.
My investment.
For my children.
For my retirement.
For me to feel... safe.
Because I'm not sure I can really trust Jesus.
I do know I trust Mammon.

So let's not play games here.

How can what we have (or wish to have) keep us from Jesus?

God doesn't need your money.
God doesn't want your money.
God wants you - all of you.
Your future, your past, your trust, your love.
I teach you as the pastor of this church to tithe at least 10 percent of everything you get to the church
and give beyond that to charity. (If you must know, I live by example.)
Not to fill the coffers, but to begin to pry the claws of want for cash out of your soul.
Give to charity.
Think wisely how you give and why you give and plan to give.
If you give only for that tax break, keep your money.
I mean it.
Because that will destroy your soul and I don't want to be a part of that.
Unless you feel yourself letting go of yourself, it's not going to help.
And if you have never tithed, never given, why not?
Is it because there are enough other people to do it for you?
I'm not praying that you'll give.
I'm praying that you will become more trusting of God and more free.
Give because you are free from mammon.
Give because you want to be free.

I don't know why you give.
But you do and God does.
So maybe I'm preaching to the choir - I don't know.
By the way, you will get you tax receipts because it is right and just and legal.
Just don't let it eat your soul.

To whom does the Kingdom belong?
Neither to rich nor the poor.
But to the one for whom being rich or poor doesn't even register
because they are willing to give up everything.
Because the only treasure there is following Jesus.
This is God's riddle to bother you: The first shall be last, the last shall be first.

The Early or the Late? (Matthew 20:1-16)

Oh, this one's the kicker.
I hope you get it.
At 6 in the morning a bunch of labourers are standing on the corner waiting for work
and a landowner hires them, agreeing to pay a day's wage.
At 9 he sees people at the mall doing nothing so he hires them.

At noon and at three he does it again and keeps hiring.

At 5 he finds the real leftovers and losers no one has hired.

And guess what? He hires them.

At the end of the day, he pays everyone

whether they got hired on at 6, 9, 12, 3, or even 5 the same day's pay.

Guess what, the guys who were working from 6am start to say nasty things about the boss.

They say he's unfair to them.

From where he's standing though, he has honoured their agreement.

His generosity and mercy is more than fair.

How does it make you feel to know that the Kingdom of God is not "fair"?

If God were truly fair.

If God were truly just.

You and I would not be here today.

"If you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
you will surely die."

Yet here we are.

And I'll tell you who died.

This same King to who the Kingdom and all it's wealth, all it's fruit, and all it's children belong.

We can take our stupid pay, our crumbs and scraps, our petty self-aggrandizing dreams and walk away.

Or we can stay.

Stay to the very last.

For the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

The Kingdom belongs to these.