

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The Kingdom of Heaven: An Inside out – Upside down lifestyle and church**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer – January 8, 2017**

**Matthew 5:10-20**

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Nothing is more important than the Kingdom of Heaven and nothing is more important than living it out rightly!**

In understanding Jesus' teaching and ministry, it is important to understand the kingdom of Heaven in the ministry of Jesus. The Jews of Jesus' day thought they were on the very brink of time, when God would step into history and bring an end to this age and usher in the age to come. The Greek word for the end they were looking for is 'eskaton.' Thus to be eschatological in one's thinking meant to be looking for the end. The earliest Christians well understood this way of looking at life. For them, the events of Jesus' coming, his death and resurrection, and the giving of the Spirit were all related in their expectations about the 'coming of the end.'

The most exhaustive description of God's kingdom, though, is given to us by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7), and that is why we have landed here today for this short two week series. Here Jesus shows the kingdom of God to be central to His teaching and to the mission of God. Throughout His mountain sermon, Jesus descriptively shows what **kingdom living in a fallen world looks like**, as the kingdom shapes our experience here and now. Therefore, according to Jesus, **it's impossible for Christians to properly understand the practical nature of the Christian life without properly understanding the nature of their citizenship in God's kingdom.** In fact, one of the primary biblical descriptions of Christians is that they're citizens in God's kingdom.

So, the kingdom of God is a kingdom where God's appointed King—Jesus—is presently reigning in and through the lives of His people, accomplishing His will “on earth as it is in heaven.”

It's helpful to think of the Kingdom of God in three stages: **inauguration, continuation, and consummation.**

**Inauguration (or Initiation)**  
**Continuation,**  
**Consummation.**

With the arrival of King Jesus to earth, God's kingdom was inaugurated or initiated “on earth” but not yet “as it is in heaven.” To be sure, Jesus had always been Lord over all creation. “For everything was

created by Him . . . He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17). Since the dawn of time, there has never been a moment when the Lord hasn’t reigned over all that He has made. But God’s reign and rule were demonstrated in new and dramatic ways when Jesus brought it from heaven to earth in a paradigm-shattering manner.

Jesus came and announced, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near” (Mk 1:15). The time had come; God’s kingdom was here with us. Here was God’s kingdom earthed. **Christ’s miracles were not the suspension of the natural order but the restoration of the natural order. The inauguration of God’s kingdom through Jesus began the “great reversal”—repealing the curse of sin and death, ensuring that God had begun the process of recreating all things.**

Skipping for a moment the stage we are in let’s kick forward to the Consummation Stage. The third stage, the kingdom’s consummation, will take place when Jesus comes back and the process of reversing the curse of sin and recreating all things is completed. We will read about this in the spring when we study 1 Corinthians 15. **When our King returns there’ll be no more sickness, death, tears, division, or tension. The “peace on earth” which the angels announced the night Christ was born will become a reality.** Fraying fabric of our fallen world will be fully and perfectly rewoven. Everything and everyone will live in perfect harmony. *Shalom* will rule. Isaiah 11:6-9 pictures it this way:

**Isaiah 11:6-9**

The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf, the young lion, and the fatling will be together, and a child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, their young ones will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

An infant will play beside the cobra’s pit, and a toddler will put his hand into a snake’s den. None will harm or destroy another on My entire holy mountain, for the land will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the sea is filled with water.

And now most important for us all in this room - is the middle stage we spoke of a moment ago – the **continuation stage** of the kingdom of God - the stage we are in now, living in between Christ’s first and second coming. It’s a stage marked by tension between present and future. The “already and not yet”: the kingdom is already here in true form, but not yet full form; it’s present in its beginnings, but still future in its fullness.

This is especially critical for us as 4Cers to come to terms with. We are at a crossroad in our church history and future just as the Kingdom is. We have in our sights the paring off of our loan on the land in Westminster. This symbolically closes out our own ‘inauguration’ season – our first 30 years. Our sights are set on the future and how we are to live as a significant Kingdom participant in Arvada, Denver, Colorado and the world. This new lease on life gives us an opportunity to participate in that brace almost reckless faith I spoke of last week.

Tim Keller wrote a brilliant sermon called the **Inside Out Kingdom** that I am borrowing from this morning so I want to give him proper credit. His observations on Matthew 5 I think will help us discover what the character of our church will be moving forward.

His main point is that there is a difference between **religion** and the **Gospel of the Kingdom**. Thinking back over the gospel narratives we remember that it’s religious people that were the most angry at what Jesus said. Over and over and over again the crowds, the common people of the world, they were fascinated with Jesus. Maybe they didn’t believe what he said, but the religious people were angry and one of the main points of the New Testament is that you’re never going to “get” Christianity unless you see that it is something utterly different than religion. Not only that, it’s not just the key to understanding Christianity, it’s the key to understanding the whole Sermon on the Mount.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus ends by saying now in summary, “I put before you these two ways; there’s **two paths**, one leads to life, one leads to destruction. There are **two trees**. One has good fruit but one has poison fruit. **There are two houses**. One is built on the rock and one is built on the sand. And what he is saying here is that you have two ways, two trees, two houses, two ways of life

and on the surface they look very much the same. But one of the ways is poison. It poisons its eaters, it destroys its travelers, it collapses in on its residents, see. Jesus says, "Choose."

Now, what are those two ways? Traditionally I have to admit I have done it too as a preacher, traditionally people will read that and say what Jesus is saying is you can either live according to the Sermon on the Mount, you can live according to the law of God, the commandments of God, or you can disobey God's laws. See, life/destruction, good fruit/bad fruit. You can either live obeying God's laws or you can disobey God's laws.

But Tim Keller helped my whole understanding of the Sermon on the Mount when he said, "does it make sense that Jesus Christ would say in summary that there are these two ways and they look extremely alike just that one of them has poison fruit." Two houses, two ways, two trees.

Notice, both of those groups of people in verse 19 are in the kingdom of heaven. Some are doing well, some are doing not so well but they're both "in" and then suddenly in verse 20, he says, "however, there's the religious people – their righteousness – they're not in the kingdom of heaven at all. He said your righteousness must surpass their righteousness. And what he's saying is not they're good and you're bad, or that you're good and they're bad, **but you're both trying to do the same thing and one is profitable and honorable and one is unprofitable and dishonoring.** Both are trying to obey God. However, this is what Jesus is saying. Christianity is vastly beyond religion. It's something utterly different than religion. That's what he's saying. Don't mistake Christianity for religion. Don't mistake Christianity for going to worship and praying and giving to the poor.

We at 4Cs long to live out a true religion from the heart. That is what separates religious performance from Gospel goodness. Religious duty knows you're a sinner it doesn't really know you're loved. And liberal religion knows you're loved but it doesn't cost God anything to love you. So our job as a church is to live it out and were going to live it out brighter and deeper and sweeter and higher!

### **Living it out: Brighter, deeper, sweeter, higher**

First we are brighter. 4Cs is committed to being light. (**Light, Love, Life**)

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Notice the difference isn't whether there is light or not. The Kingdom of God is not just whether you have chosen life or death – it is how you choose life. The Pharisees chose God, but they did it out of fear and pride and legalism. Jesus tells us a saving righteousness must be more than that! That false religion cannot save you. There is a difference between religious light and gospel light. Religious light cocoons and isolates. It separates itself from the world out of pride and fear. Gospel light gives and sacrifices and gives the Father glory. The Kingdom church burns bright for all to see. (*4Cs Cares Day*)

**And not only brighter but deeper.** Gospel goodness is deeper. And here we're not talking about the relationship with the world, we're talking about a relationship with God from deep within my heart.

When Jesus Christ said in verse 20, I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. When he said that, he knew that everybody must have been utterly and incredibly amazed because the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were basically full time – they did full time obedience. That was their job. They had divided (worked out the Bible) into something like 635 laws and they had their checklist, they had positive laws and they had negative laws – things you had to do, things you were supposed to avoid and they just spent all day working on it. And when Jesus Christ says your righteousness has to

surpass...right away people must have said, "how could that be?" Who in the world could be more righteous than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees?

Jesus is answering the questions that he knew would be right in people's minds. What does he mean when he says you have to surpass? Well, in verse 21 and 27, 31, 33, 34, over and over and over again he says, "you heard, but I say". And he goes through the 10 Commandments "you've heard thou shall not murder, you've heard thou shall not commit adultery, you've heard it said thou shall keep thy promise, not lie, he's going through the 10 Commandments, but what is he doing? In every case he says, "you religious people are concerned with the external, I'm concerned with the heart." You can have the external and the heart be just like everybody else in the world, but if your heart isn't different, isn't completely new, then you'll have the external too.

Thirdly...it's sweeter. Gospel goodness has a center of sweetness. There's something that has happened in the center. The good news about the Sermon on the Mount is this: **when you read through carefully you will see that Jesus Christ does not say try to live like this and then God will be your Father. Oh no. All the way through here he says, you can live like this if you already know God is your Father.** Look at verse 16, he says, why are you going to be able to let your light shine? Why are you going to have an attitude toward the world that's non-condescending? Why are you going to love people who disagree with you? Why are you going to be light? Why are you going to be bright? Because God's your Father.

How does a church manifest the Kingdom of Heaven? How will we? Two things:

**First we will continue to confront the lies of the world with the truth of the Gospel.** Speaking the truth in love is our habit and will continue to be our habit. Remember we live in a world of lies and we must be vigilant.

There are phone booths and bus stops all over New York where there's an ad showing a beautiful model in undergarments which says, "Inner beauty only goes so far." I'm going to say something to get your attention so you can say you heard a Presbyterian minister say it. "That's a damned lie." Damned? "Absolutely!"

It's making fun of the values of the kingdom of God. You will never have the upside-down kingdom—where instead of looking for power and success and approval, you live a life of sacrifice — unless you have the inside-out kingdom. The inside-out kingdom says that what really matters is who I am to Jesus and who I am in my heart, and not whether I look right. The wealth I need, the reputation I need is all wrapped up in Him. That makes Christians radically free." ~ *Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian*

Secondly we will **serve our King with joy, not out of duty, as a child lovingly serves his loving father.** We serve from the heart, not from prideful performance or out of fear and guilt and shame. Our people and our campus will be a place of acceptance and peace and purpose and community. It will shine like a light on a hill. Let's make our way to the table with this poem by 18<sup>th</sup> century friend of John Newton. He became a minister and shortly after became mad in the pursuit of that calling. Then in rehab so to speak he actually was converted to a living relationship with Christ and his entire outlook on life changed:

How long beneath the law I lay  
In bondage and distress!  
I toiled the precept to obey,  
But toiled without success.

Then to abstain from outward sin  
Was more than I could do;  
Now, if I feel its pow'r within,  
I feel I hate it too.

Then all my servile works were done  
A righteousness to raise;  
Now, freely chosen in the Son,  
I freely choose his ways.

To see the Law by CHRIST fulfilled,  
And hear his pard'ning voice;  
Changes a slave into a child,  
And duty into choice.

~ *William Cowper, Olney Hymns*