

8. The Upside Down Kingdom

Matthew 5:3-12, 38-48

I've heard Christianity described as "The Upside-Down kingdom," by which is meant that the Christian way is opposite to the way we would normally behave or react. It is exactly the opposite of our natural instincts for the preservation and love of self.

Matthew chapters 5-7, often known as the "Sermon on the Mount," is the longest discourse we have of Christ's words. And this shows us what His kingdom is like:

Matthew 5:3-12

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

[3] 虚心的人有福了！因为天国是他们的。

[4] 哀恸的人有福了！因为他们必得安慰。

[5] 温柔的人有福了！因为他们必承受地土。

Naturally, we believe we should be strong, happy and forceful. We should be somebody, we should assert ourselves. But Christ teaches exactly the opposite. Here He's saying the "poor in spirit," "they that mourn," and "the meek" will be the ones that inherit His kingdom. But these are the ones who are usually trodden on and passed over by society at large. We naturally think little of such people. But these are the ones Christ loves.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

[6] 饥渴慕义的人有福了！因为他们必得饱足。

Naturally, men always like to fiddle the system to their own advantage. They'll fiddle their taxes, they'll lie, they'll steal things, they'll even murder if they think they can get away with it. That's how bad we are. But here we're told, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.*" If you knew your work colleagues were stealing off the company, would you tell the manager? Or stick with the group and not tell anyone? Most people would do the latter, but Christ is telling us to love righteousness, which would probably mean going against our colleagues and losing their friendship.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

[7] 怜恤人的人有福了！因为他们必蒙怜恤。

[8] 清心的人有福了！因为他们必得见神。

[9] 使人和睦的人有福了！因为他们必称为神的儿子。

It's always seen as a sign of weakness to help others. We're told we ought to look after number one, and not be merciful to anyone. And purity of heart is laughed at. Naturally people like dirty things, telling rude jokes with each other. Sex and violence sells films. But no, we should be pure of heart. And we should want to be a peacemaker. Too many

people want to make war, they want a confrontation with everyone they just don't like. But again, Christ tells us we should be the opposite.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

[10] 为义受逼迫的人有福了！因为天国是他们的。[11] 人若因我辱骂你们，逼迫你们，捏造各样坏话毁谤你们，你们就有福了！[12] 应当欢喜快乐，因为你们在天上的赏赐是大的。在你们以前的先知，人也是这样逼迫他们。

So, the Christian will be persecuted for righteousness sake, reviled, and even spoken evil of falsely. And it will all be for Christ's sake, because naturally we wouldn't behave like this. But rather than giving up on Christ, we rejoice, because this is the Christian life, this is the way the prophets went. This is indeed the way Christ had to go, even unto death. And He is our example:

1 Peter 2:20-24

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

[20] 你们若因犯罪受责打，能忍耐，有甚麽可夸的呢？但你们若因行善受苦，能忍耐，这在神看是可喜爱的。[21] 你们蒙召原是为这；因基督也为你们受过苦，给你们留下榜样，叫你们跟随他的脚踪行。[22] 他并没有犯罪，口里也没有诡诈。[23] 他被骂不还口；受害不说威吓的话，只将自己交托那按公义审判人的主。[24] 他被挂在木头上，亲身担当了我们的罪，使我们既然在罪上死，就得以在义上活。因他受的鞭伤，你们便得了医治。

And later on in this "Sermon on the Mount," we also come across some odd behaviour:

Matthew 5:38-48

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil:

[38] 你们听见有话说：以眼还眼，以牙还牙。[39] 只是我告诉你们，不要与恶人作对。

We're told here to "resist not evil." But we hate evil, don't we? We hunger and thirst after righteousness, don't we? But at the same time, we're told to not resist it. And we're given some examples of how to do this:

39 but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

[39] 有人打你的右脸，连左脸也转过来由他打；

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

[40] 有人想要告你，要拿你的里衣，连外衣也由他拿去；

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

[41] 有人强逼你走一里路，你就同他走二里；

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

[42] 有求你的，就给他；有向你借贷的，不可推辞。

But if we really took this literally, wouldn't that make us a doormat? People would walk all over us, they'd take advantage of us all the time. They would say, "You're a Christian, you have to give me everything I want." So, how do we deal with this? We trust in the Lord.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

[43] 你们听见有话说：当爱你的邻舍，恨你的仇敌。[44] 只是我告诉你们，要爱你们的仇敌，为那逼迫你们的祷告。[45] 这样就可以作你们天父的儿子；因为他叫日头照好人，也照歹人；降雨给义人，也给不义的人。

We're not to behave in the same way back to them. If they curse us, we bless them. If they hate us, we do good to them. If they spitefully use us, we pray for them. That's the Christian way. We're not to just love those who love us, we're to do good to all men. And that's the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian:

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

[46] 你们若单爱那爱你们的人，有甚麽赏赐呢？就是税吏不也是这样行麽？[47] 你们若单请你们弟兄的安，比人有甚麽长处呢？就是外邦人不也是这样行麽？

We're told:

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

[48] 所以，你们要完全，像你们的天父完全一样。

Now, none of us can be perfect. We don't even come close. We need God to change us and help us. That's why we need to be born again and have the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Otherwise we couldn't even begin to live this way.

And what about righteousness? Why can't we avenge ourselves whenever someone wrongs us? Because we should leave vengeance and judgment to God:

Romans 12:19-21

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

[19] 亲爱的弟兄，不要自己伸冤，宁可让步，听凭主怒；因为经上记着：主说：伸冤在我；我必报应。[20] 所以，你的仇敌若饿了，就给他吃，若渴了，就给他喝；因为你这样行就是把炭火堆在他的头上。[21] 你不可为恶所胜，反要以善胜恶。