

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Vol. 2 No. 23 Nov. 21, 2008



Matt. 5:6 – “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*”

TEACHING THE RADICALS

There were radicals among the followers of Jesus; those who would not be satisfied until they had all that God wanted them to have. Oh, yes, they were like us at first. They wondered about many of the things that Jesus taught, but when the nominal followers began to fall away, the radicals stayed on. “To whom shall we go?” Peter asked, “Only you have the words of eternal life.”

The radicals were there at the beginning and they were still there when Jesus died. The radicals were all in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came and it was the radicals who formed the foundation of the early Church. **What did Jesus teach these radical disciples that gave them such impetus; such staying power?**

The first teachings that are recorded in the Book of Matthew are known as the Beatitudes. Jesus left the crowds, went up onto a mountainside, and His radical disciples came to Him. If you were among those radical disciples, what would you have heard? How would Jesus have explained these

deep teachings that would be the foundation upon which these disciples would take the gospel message to the world?

Matt. 5:3-Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It is only when you recognize your own nothingness that you can truly belong to God. If you think you are wise spiritually, you are, in fact, very unwise. Compared to all that God is and wants you to be, you are no more than a spiritual baby, still wrapped in a large cloth for protection. Only when you recognize this about yourself, can you begin to see God. When it comes to the things of God, you are the least among men. Are you really? Yes, you are. If you compared a large boulder to a jar filled with pebbles, the pebbles would be nothing in comparison. And you wouldn't waste your time comparing the pebbles one to another – they are all about the same size. Likewise, you, and all men, are nothing compared to God. **So, don't consider comparing yourselves to others. Simply recognize that, spiritually, you are poor.** You are among the poorest of men. There is so much more for

you to learn, so much more to be healed in you, so much more for you to know. And it is only the grace of God that allows you to know anything. You, indeed, are spiritually poor. **When this becomes truth in your life and part of your very being, and when you are ready to stand before the holiness of God in that poor condition and ask Him, in His mercy, to change you, then the kingdom of Heaven is truly yours.**

Matt. 5:4-Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The Son of Man came to redeem men for the Father. All mankind has gone astray. It is the Father's will that all men would be saved, though it is also His foreknowledge that all men will not. But you do not have this foreknowledge. **Yet, you have been chosen by God to be sent into the world as His emissary with the good news of Jesus Christ.** What must you have to perform this all-important calling? You must have the heart of God toward man. Only God has pure love for man, for though sin separates them at this time, God sees man as he will be once he is saved and

completely restored. He longs to fellowship with man. It is that love for man that God wants you to emulate. You cannot do this of yourself. You must be fervent in prayer and yielded to God. **God will give you a heart for the lost. He will grant you the same compassion that Jesus had. He will grant you the same perfect, unfailing love that Jesus had.** Then, you, too, as does He, will mourn for those who have lost their way. You will be blessed because, with that Godly mourning, eventually comes Godly comfort.

Matt. 5:5-Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

The earth is full of sinful men. Sin runs amok, unchained, loosed upon the earth to wreak havoc and destruction. Who can stand against such ungodliness? Only those who have yielded their own strength to God. In your own strength, you are useless against the devil and the spirit of this world. You must operate in God's strength. **But, only in your weakness can His strength be found.** When you have no strength of your own; when you have no alternative but to trust God to see you through; and when you are totally yielded to Him to do with you what He chooses, then God, in His grace, will infuse you with His strength and you will rise above the stench of sin in the world. **Man's**

spiritual weakness combined with God's spiritual strength is called meekness.

In this meekness, you will boldly take back the dominion of the earth that God gave to Adam. It is your inheritance – you who are meek.

Matt. 5:6-Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

In the modern Church, the phrase “hunger and thirst for righteousness” has been so overly-used that it no longer carries the impact that it did when Jesus spoke those words to His radical disciples. Christians everywhere assume that they hunger and thirst for righteousness just because they'd like to have more of God. How much more? At what cost? Do they even ask those questions?

Think for a moment what those words mean – hunger and thirst. Since we live in America and religious persecution has not touched us as it has so many of our spiritual brothers and sisters elsewhere, it is difficult for us to understand true hunger and thirsting. **If you knew someone who was a Prisoner of War, they would have some valuable insight into hungering and thirsting.**

There are many nations in the world today, because of drought, famine, or war, in which multitudes are starving. Children go days

without any food at all; and too many die of malnutrition. This is true hunger; this is true thirst.

To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to want more of God so badly that you can't stand it; and every day that you think you haven't been fed by God is like going all day with no food or water. It is not just wanting to be a better Christian. All Christians want that. **It is wanting more of God regardless of the cost, regardless of the pain, regardless of the demands.** The starving man will do anything for food. Anything! The spiritually-starved Christian will be no different. Nothing else matters except having more of God. When a man has gone a long period without food or water, nothing else matters to him except getting something to drink and something to eat. It is that kind of hungering and thirsting about which Jesus is speaking. And those who truly hunger and thirst for righteousness in that way, will be filled.

Matt. 5:7-Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

It is only when you put aside all thoughts of yourself and concentrate and meditate on the Lord that you will fully recognize what He has done for you. His forgiveness of your sins is unprecedented and impossible to consider outside of

faith. But it is His mercy that feeds that forgiveness that is so overwhelming. Having been forgiven and having been healed, you recognize how terrible you were and still are. To attempt to imagine God having enough mercy to look beyond that and to see you as a finished product – which is still in the future – is beyond comprehension. You accept it and realize, in doing so, that God is bigger than you will ever know. And yes, He tells you that you must be merciful to others, as well – or you will not continue to obtain His mercy. “Oh, no, Lord,” you scream. “Don’t remove Your mercy from me or I shall surely die.”

And won’t the person who is next to you die, too? Won’t he die unless he is shown the same mercy, by you?

You have no alternative then but to, by the grace of God, impart mercy to others. You cannot do this in your own strength. Only God can do it through you. So, you must yield to Him, trusting Him to grant you not only mercy for yourself, but mercy for you to impart to others, as well. **The more mercy you impart, the more mercy you will be shown and the more you will be given to impart.**

Matt. 5:8-Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Oh, to be able to see God! To get a glimpse of His

majesty, His sovereignty, and His glory! And to your cry of impending delight, Jesus reminds you that God always sees the heart. So, what is in your heart? What comes out of your mouth? Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Have you surrendered your self to the cross? Have you yielded that enemy of God, your self, to God for final annihilation? Your heart was still full of the spirit of the world when you had your ultra-important collision with the cross, the day you received the salvation of Jesus Christ. At that time, and thereafter, your heart was divided, and it will stay divided until you recognize the need to yield all to God. When you become sick of all the garbage that is in your heart and totally yield it to God for healing, only then can that healing process begin. The goal – for your heart to become pure. Can it? Yes, it can. Nothing is impossible with God. **Purity of heart comes from a willingness to be exposed, excavated and exhumed.** The Holy Spirit does the work but only if we allow Him to. And we must, like the man who purchased the field to get the treasures therein, give up everything if we want purity. Yield your heart to Him; allow Him to put to death all that is at enmity with Him; and He will make your heart pure. Do you still want a greater glimpse of the Almighty?

The pure in heart will see God.

Matt: 5-9-Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

We live in a world full of turmoil. Terrorism is rampant; greed and corruption pervade every segment of society, including our government and our institutions of learning; the economy is failing fast. Sin reigns. It was little different when Jesus walked the earth. Their towns and cities were under foreign rule. The Romans owned them. The religious leaders were corrupt. Life was not fun for Jesus’ radical disciples. Though they were hoping that He came to put an end to Roman rule, they quickly found out differently. How, then, were they to survive in such a sinful, militarily-controlled environment, full of constant uprisings? Jesus taught them to first have peace. “My peace I give to you,” He told them. They could have peace regardless of their circumstances, because of God. The key, then, to changing the environment, was to take that peace to others. **Every true Christian, by the grace of God, has the ability to bring peace to a situation that is tragic, in turmoil, full of grief, or out of control.** Mother Teresa made a life-long habit of it. And Heidi Baker, in Mozambique, is doing the same thing today,

as are many others. And those who bring that peace will be called the sons of God.

Matt: 5-10-Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The radical disciples needed to hear this because they would experience it soon after Jesus went to sit at the right hand of the Father. And today, Christians in many parts of the world are also experiencing severe persecution because of righteousness, because of the name of Jesus. **And each of us, as Christians, need to be sold out to the Lord to the extent that when persecution comes to us, we, too, will, by the grace of God, be sustained and able to endure it.** Those who are persecuted for the name of Jesus have received the kingdom of Heaven. There is no higher calling.

If you live in the West where there is very little persecution, hold on. The devil will see to it that you get your share. And when you are willing to serve God on His terms, it may find you even sooner that it will find others. Jesus said that if they persecuted Him, they will persecute you, too. Can you embrace that promise? The kingdom belongs to those who are persecuted for Christ's sake.

Jesus went on to talk about salt and light and many other very important things, but it was these initial teachings that created a foundation in the hearts of His radical disciples on which could be built a relationship with God that would not falter. It will be no different for us. Are you a radical disciple, Christian friend? Are you radical enough? Are you willing to allow God to do the things in you so that the foundational teachings of the Beatitudes can become experiential in your life? When you say "yes", He, too, will say "yes".

The early "rads" set the tone for us. They allowed the Lord to do with them that which pleased Him; and they, as a result, became the progenitors of the early Church. Will we carry on that great spiritual tradition?

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