

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

Learning from the Parables & Practice of Jesus (Part 1)

Living Right-Side Up in an Upside-Down World

I. Where In the Air Are We?

"You have heard it said... but I say to you..." (Jesus of Nazareth)

"To become a disciple of Jesus is to accept now that inversion of human distinctions that will sooner or later be forced upon everyone by the irresistible reality of his kingdom." (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

II. The Compass of God

- A. The Wisdom of God is its arrow/needle
- B. The Spirit of God magnetizes it
- C. Its function is to point the way to life in God's kingdom
- D. Its shape is the circle of a story

III. Some Helpful Parable Principles

- A. Look for yourself not others in them
- B. Consider yourself being addressed by God
- C. Allow the parable to put you into concrete place with respect to God
- D. Look for the one main direction the needle is pointed at (compass not watch)

IV. At The Core of the Kingdom is a King with the Heart of a Loving Father

¹¹Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.

¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.'

So [the Father] divided his property between them.

¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would

gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!

¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' ²⁰So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:11-24)

V. Seven Kingdom Principles To Keep In Mind

1. God is at work all around me all the time.
2. God seeks to build a loving relationship with me like he has with his Son.
3. God invites me to join Him in His work.
4. God speaks to me by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
5. God's invitation leads me to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. I must make major changes/adjustments in my life to join God in His work.
7. I come to know God as I obediently do His will and experience Him accomplishing His work through me.

VI. Questions For Reflection

- A. Is there some part of you today that is still off "in a far country"?
- B. Have you fully taken in with what a great love you are loved?
- C. Is your church a "loving home" like the Father's? Are you a servant of the Father's love? Or, are you more like the Elder Brother?