



Kingdom Living in the Congregation

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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PM Assembly



Introduction:

Though we live on earth, our citizenship is in a greater kingdom. We have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Having gone through that transition, we have banded together with other kingdom citizens to glorify God and help each other. You would think when people like this band together it would always be wonderful. Certainly, in many ways and at many times that is exactly how it is. However, we are all growing. None of us are perfect. Therefore, toes get stepped on, feelings get hurt, sins get committed, nerves get rubbed raw. As we examine the gospel of the kingdom, we could spend week after week and lesson after lesson examining all the principles about good Christian living. But as we consider kingdom living in the congregation, think specifically about how to live these principles during the hiccups, the troubles, and struggles. After all, that is when kingdom living is the hardest. Anyone can live these principles when everything is turning up roses, but when the people we expect to do everything right mess up, how do we live like kingdom citizens?

Discussion:

I. Kingdom living is more than “going to church” (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

- A. Jesus said not everyone who calls Him Lord will really be part of the kingdom of heaven. It is not enough to call Him Lord, He actually has to be Lord. One of the ways we simply call Jesus Lord is by attending assemblies and placing membership in a congregation. Sadly, many Christians think attendance is proving Jesus is our Lord. Not so, that is merely claiming Him as Lord. Too many check in on Sundays or even attend every time the door is open, but the kingdom gospel never impacts their lives.
- B. Sadly, this is why there is often strife among brothers and sisters. We “go to church” but we don’t become the church. We get our name on the congregation’s roll, but we don’t change our behavior. We continue to allow our old nature to govern our interactions, especially when there is a problem or hurt. The things we are going to talk about in this lesson are not easy. In fact, if you’re like me, by the time this lesson is over you are going to be downright mad. You will be saying things like, “No one has a right to ask that of me.” And yet, I also hope you see that we’re simply learning the shockingly, countercultural message Jesus taught His disciples. He has called us to be different. That difference is nowhere more shocking than when we talk about dealing with the hurts and struggles between people.

II. Walk together in love (**Matthew 5:43-48**).

- A. It is sad when brothers or sisters become enemies. And yet that happens sometimes. In **Philippians 4:2-3**, we learn about Euodia and Syntyche and the struggle they were having. All too often if a brother or sister becomes an enemy, we start trying to figure out why they are really an evil sinner so we don’t have to deal with them. But Paul pointed out both of these sisters were fellow laborers in the kingdom. Had one of them done something wrong? Probably both of them had. But that didn’t make them bad, evil people.
- B. Unfortunately, many Christians are happy to act loving as long as everyone lives up to their standards. But let someone cross them, hurt them, or make a mistake and all bets are off. Consider Jesus’ words about love. Even tax collectors and Gentiles can do this. His audience would have seen these as the most unspiritual people. We might say even atheists and Muslims can do this. In the congregation, we need to live in love with our brethren especially when there are hiccups and struggles.
- C. Love is defined and described in **I Corinthians 13:4-7**. Even when a brother or sister has become an enemy, we must behave in these ways. We are patient and kind. That means we remember no one is perfect and we patiently show kindness even when we feel others haven’t been kind to us. We do not envy or boast. How often when a brother or sister has become an enemy do we let everyone else know how great we are? Sure, we have made some mistakes, but nothing like brother or sister so-and-so. Love is not arrogant or rude. That is, we don’t think we are entitled and above others. Therefore, we don’t behave with rudeness. We don’t snub and avoid. Love does not insist on its own way. We don’t start politicizing with brothers and sisters to get them to side with us against our enemy to have things go our way instead of theirs. Love isn’t irritable or resentful. We don’t carry that low-level frustration, boiling beneath the surface as we deal with others. We don’t rejoice in wrong-doing, but rejoice in the truth. Certainly, we don’t turn a blind eye to truly sinful behavior, we deal with it properly. Sadly, too often with enemies we do rejoice in

their wrong-doing. We collect it as a stone that we can toss at them when the time is right, rejoicing that here is another indication that we are better than them. Rather, we are excited to see them growing in truth. Love bears all things and endures all things. Just understand it; we are all going to mess up. Have you ever messed up and hurt someone? Then understand others will do that to you. We don't want to throw people out of the body just because they've hurt us. Rather, we endure and bear with them. Finally, love believes and hopes all things. Sadly, too many of us are all too ready to believe the worst about brothers and sisters. We get our feelings hurt and we tell ourselves a story about how malicious and evil the brother or sister is. We read the worst into every look, every word, every action. That is not love. We need to tell better stories about what we face among each other. We give the benefit of the doubt. This is living in love.

III. Remove the spirit of judgment (**Matthew 7:1-2**).

- A. Perhaps the most misused passage in this kingdom sermon is **Matthew 7:1-2**. This passage does not teach that we ignore sin. It doesn't teach that we are never to make any judgments about right and wrong in the lives of our brethren. **I Corinthians 5:12-13** demonstrates we must do this sometimes.
- B. On the other hand, it is also one of the most ignored. Sadly, many who quickly explain what it doesn't mean, never get back to asking what does it mean. We just prove it doesn't mean we ignore sin and then we move on and ignore the passage. It really does say something about judging. It really does say we aren't supposed to do it. If it doesn't mean we never make judgments and it doesn't mean we ignore sin, what does it mean?
- C. It means we need to check our spirit, our motivation. Even when we have to make judgments, we have to check why we are doing it. In **Luke 9:51-54**, a Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus. James and John asked, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (ESV). Jesus responded, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy people's lives but to save them" (**Luke 9:54**, ESV footnote). This same point is made in **John 12:47**.
- D. Sadly, some Christians walk around with suspicious eyes, longing to prove how they are so much better than everyone else. They speak from on high with judgment and condemnation. In Mccarthy-esque style, they want to hunt down and weed out everyone who simply doesn't measure up. They look down with disdain and can't wait for the opportunity to pounce on someone for their sin or lack of spirituality. That is not what we are about. Our goal must not be to judge and condemn people, even our brethren. Our goal must be to save people. We long to lift people up. Even when we have to judge our brethren as Paul told the Corinthians, we do it from a desire to save, not condemn, putting them in their place, showing them how much better we are. When we have that attitude, then we can expect that same kind of judgment from God as He shows how much better He is than us and He puts us in our rightful place in eternity.

IV. Remove your own logs first (**Matthew 7:3-5**).

- A. One of the problems that leads to improper judging between brethren is obscured vision. We see a speck in someone's eye (or think we do) and we go to pluck it out. However, the huge log in our eye keeps us from being able to get the job done. In fact, our log keeps jabbing them in their other eye, causing worse and worse problems. So, before we can be of any real use to anyone else, we have to work on ourselves first.
- B. We have to work on clarifying our own vision and perception. The logs in our eyes are sins, attitudes, misbeliefs, errors that obscure our vision and perception of what is going on in the lives of others. Consider some of the logs we allow to linger in our eyes as we try to remove the specks from the eyes of others.
 - 1. *You spot it, you got it*: Because Jesus uses the word "hypocrisy," we immediately think about those who are trying to correct someone's sin, but they are committing the same sin in bigger ways. While that is not the only kind of hypocrisy Jesus is referring to, it is certainly a log. Sometimes Christians are trying to cover up their own sins by being harsh with folks who are doing the same thing. One of the facts I've noticed in my life is what I've labeled this log. Usually if I can spot a sin in your life, it is because that is what I've got. Of course, the problem is not that you necessarily have the sin. The problem is I interpret things through my own sin filter, assuming you think and feel the same way I do, so I see your actions through my sins and I spot them in you.
 - 2. *The image consultant*: Some are so busy making sure we look good that we can't be honest about what is really going on in our lives. We spend more time trying to cover our backsides that we can't help anyone else or be helped. It is like we are carrying a personal image consultant with us everywhere we go. It would be awful if anyone, anywhere found out we did something wrong. It would be awful if we admitted we did anything wrong. Therefore our image consultant assures us we did nothing wrong.
 - 3. *Competition mindset*: Sadly, when we are usually full of competition with others. Like the Pharisee of **Luke 18**, we want to impress God with how we are better than everyone else. The problem is that in

order to accomplish this, we have to treat others with contempt. We can't possibly look clearly at their lives to help them if we are looking through the filter of proving they are worse than us.

4. *The blame game*: As we strive to prove we didn't do anything wrong, we often wear the log of the blame game. We are angry, upset, or hurt and have to blame someone. This log is often prevalent when children have fallen away. It was the preacher for being too hard or too soft. It was the elders for not taking enough interest. It was a Bible class teacher who rubbed the kid the wrong way. It was the other kids in the congregation who mistreated the child. Sadly, this game is usually played because the parents are afraid they might be to blame. Remember **Ezekiel 18:20**. If your child has fallen away or refused to surrender to the Lord, the only one to blame is the child. You do not have to suffer for their iniquity. I have no doubt there were influences. We will all give for our influence. But there is no need to play this game or carry this log. Those who have sinned are the ones to blame for their sins.
5. *The busybody*: Some of us think everyone else's stuff is our stuff, everyone else's problem is our problem. We run around looking for juicy stories and then insert ourselves into other people's lives where aren't needed or welcome. This often leads to our next log.
6. *This is just half of the story*: Paul Harvey made a mint off of telling the rest of the story. Sadly, many Christians make a mess off of only hearing half of the story. They hear one side of an altercation and they are certain someone must do something. Might as well be me. But if I only know half the story, only one side of the story, then I have a huge log in my eye. I'm only going to cause worse problems.
7. *Personal sensitivity*: Dave Roberts jokes with me about being one of those guys who sees the huddle on the football field, and thinks, "Why's everybody talking about me." Sometimes we think everything is about us and take it personally. We can be overly sensitive to every stray look, every missed handshake, every offhand comment, every giggle. Most things are not about us. Thinking they are is a huge log.
8. *My mama/my baby*: Some people have a sense of ownership that hinders their ability to see things objectively and properly. Let's face it; if someone said your baby is ugly or talked bad about your mama, you are going to have a hard time objectively dealing with the issues at hand. When we see something as our baby or our mama, we have a log in our eye. It's my church, my idea, my program, my preacher, my sermon, my class, my job, my friend, my family, my whatever. Since it's mine I take it personally.
9. *Traditionalism*: "We've always done it that way." "We've never done it that way." Sometimes someone does something a little different and we can't handle it. We have this huge log of traditionalism in our eye that doesn't allow us to live with scriptural differences.
10. *Pride*: Several of the logs fit under this general heading. But we need to name this one just to make sure we are aware. Whether it is personal pride, family pride, ownership pride, pride hinders our ability to see clearly to help others. We need to pursue humility in all of our relationships.

V. Talk to your brothers and sisters, not about them (**Matthew 5:21-26**).

- A. As much as we think no one should get angry in local church relationships, we must understand it is going to happen. We are all growing, but none of us are perfect. The Pharisees believed if they didn't do any physical harm, they were alright. But Jesus points out if we badmouth or call names, we are just as guilty.
- B. When a brother or sister has hurt us, we need to go to them. We don't need to talk about them to anyone else. We don't need to spread rumors about them, share accusations about them, gossip about them. We need to talk to them. **Matthew 18:15** explains that when a brother or sister sins against us we should go talk to them privately. Of course, the sad reduction I've heard some Christians make as they badmouth a brother or sister, "Well, I wouldn't say it was a sin." Here's the deal. If it was a sin, go talk to them privately. If it wasn't, and you won't go talk to them about it, be quiet about it.
- C. Additionally, Jesus points out if you know a brother or sister is upset with you, you need to go to them and get it resolved. Don't think you can just pray about it, take care of it with God, and move on without having to admit any wrong to your brother or sister. Get it straight with them, then take it up with God.

Conclusion:

The great majority of the time, when kingdom citizens gather and work together it is a wonderful experience. Generally, Christians are loving, caring, and generous. They work together well, serving others, encouraging one another, and lifting one another up. But on occasions, toes get stepped on, feelings get hurt, nerves get rubbed the wrong way. Tempers can flare. Words get exchanged. Storms brew. Trouble arises. That is when our kingdom living is really put to the test. That is when we really see whether or not Jesus is really Lord of our lives or if we are just making an empty claim by attending the assemblies. Is Jesus your Lord?