“Life in the Kingdom: Growing a Gospel Reflex”

Matthew 5:38-42

(Notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 1/1/23)

The phrases “turn the other cheek” and “go the extra mile” both had their origin in the Sermon on the Mount. Does this mean Christians are to be pacifists? Pushovers? Doormats? You can be sure that in 2023 you will be insulted, imposed upon, or have your sense of comfort or liberty infringed upon. How will you react to such things? Are you growing a Gospel reflex? Your instinctive reaction says much about Christ’s influence in your life.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is presenting the way of life in His Kingdom. This Kingdom is entered by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus. Life in this Kingdom demands a right understanding of the Law. We are not to be legalistic or licentious. The Gospel way is a narrow way that avoids these two pitfalls. In Matt. 5, Jesus teaches how to apply the Law correctly. The Pharisees’ interpretation was all pretense and pragmatism. They misapplied the Law. They twisted the Law to accommodate sin. But God, in His wisdom, put a fence around our strong desire to take revenge. He says, “Let Me take care of it.”

So how do we apply these verses? Jesus is saying, “Follow Me, don’t seek revenge.” He gives four examples of the correct response. And He does not ask His people to do anything that He has not already done (1Pet. 2:21-23)! How little it takes for the “little vigilante” in me to rise up! John MacArthur said, “Retaliation, usually with interest, is a natural extension of selfishness.” Jesus says, “When you are insulted, let Me take care of it.” The Spirit of God wars against the spirit of vengeance (Prov. 20:22). Joseph gives us a good example of doing it right. Rom. 12:19 reminds us that nobody ultimately gets away with stuff. God says, “I’ve got it covered.” The principle here is this: don’t stand on your right of personal comfort and convenience. If your rights are threatened, your reflexive response should be like Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8).

The people of Jesus’ day were required to carry the gear of a Roman soldier if asked. We face similar sudden interruptions that we are required to accommodate: things that cause inconvenience, humiliation, or even a change in our agenda. How do you react? Your reflex reaction reveals a lot about you! Do you receive the interruption with gladness? (Col. 3:23-24) Remember Who you serve. Your time is not your own. Your daily agenda is not your own. We are to be bright lights for Christ in a dark world obsessed with getting its own way.

Am I an “extra mile” Christian? Would God have me give to everyone who asks? Do I just give, or do I give with kindness? Do I lovingly enjoy giving? Let’s look as some other scriptures as we look for answers. Jesus also tells us to not cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). We need to discern if people are lazy and unwilling to work, or if there is a real need. We are to be as wise as serpents, but as innocent as doves (Matt. 10:16). We are to be wise stewards (2Thes. 3:10). We are to love not just with words, but “in deed and in truth” (1John 3:18). Let’s be a people who “hold on loosely” to God’s stuff. May we have His eyes to see the TRUE needs around us, both locally and across the world.

The natural man cannot live the way Jesus is describing. Only Kingdom people who have God’s Spirit living within them can live this way. Love for Christ and gratitude for His good gifts empowers a radically unselfish attitude toward my rights and my possessions. None of us is there yet… but we are progressively made more and more like Jesus. He is chipping away those parts that don’t look like Him! Jesus Himself let go of all His rights and privileges for us. May we all go forth and live as “grace-infused” people whose first reflex is to be like our King. Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. Let’s start off easy. What does Jesus say we are to do when…
2. We’re insulted (v.39)
3. Our personal comfort is abused (v.40)
4. Our own agenda is upset (v.41)
5. We are asked to give (v.42)
6. Why are the correct responses in #1 so HARD!?!?
7. Share a time when your “reflex response” went well, and a time when it didn’t go well (maybe that game of Rummikub? Just sayin’…) What made the difference?
8. Living with a grateful heart and living with a servant’s heart take practice. Share different ways you and your family can practice these two traits.
9. Rom. 12:1-3 is a gold mine of truth regarding how to live with a Gospel reflex. Write down at least 4 nuggets from this passage and share them with your group.

“Great is Thy Faithfulness” (Chisholm)

1

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,

There is no shadow of turning with Thee;

Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not

As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”

  Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—

    “Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

2

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

3

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,

Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!