

- As you go through this life, we all get “wisdom” from people. Some of it is OK. Some is particular to us. And some is universal. Let me show you. Consider these sayings.
 - Good things come to those who wait.
 - If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.
 - The cream always rises to the top.
 - It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.
 - Life is what you make it.
 - The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
 - Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
 - When the going gets tough, the tough get going.
 - Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.
 - There's no such thing as a free lunch.
 - It takes money to make money
 - God helps those who help themselves.
 - Always expect the worst. That way you won't have to be disappointed.
 - Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until they speak.
 - You have to look after yourself because no one else will.
- Here is the problem with all these sayings. If we believe them to be true and follow them, we will get exhausted. We will be disappointed. We will spend our lives striving to attain somethings that is somehow elusive.
 - That’s because these speak to a particular view of the world. A world that puts self first and looks out for me.
 - Yet when we look at the life of Jesus and the teachings of the kingdom of God, the entire nature of this kingdom, as we have been seeing, is upside down.
 - If we are going to be a part of kingdom living, our thinking, our actions, must be shaken up.
 - Because the kingdom of God is a paradox. It seems opposite and upside down.
 - But the paradox of the kingdom is that **LIVING IN GOD’S KINGDOM BRINGS LIFE.**
- We are in chapter 10 in Mark.
 - Beginning next week, we step into the final week of Jesus life and the events of the cross.
 - The events are beginning to move quickly and Mark groups several encounters together because of the common message that Jesus was trying to drive home at the end of his life.
 - In each case, Jesus contrasts the way the world encourages us to live and the seemingly upside-down nature of the kingdom of God. **LIVING IN GOD’S KINGDOM BRINGS LIFE.**

I. You enter God’s kingdom by receiving it, not earning it.

- This is a familiar story. We often hear about it to show how Jesus deals with children. And it does. But it is not the main point that Mark is making nor is that what Jesus was communicating to his disciples.

Mark 10:13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them.

- These are infants up to pre-teens.
- They were “brought” to Jesus. Their parents were the only reason they were there and they wanted Jesus to bless them. To place your hands on someone was to impart or transmit a blessing, and that’s what the parents wanted.
- Their culture was not like ours. The refrain, “think about the children” was foreign to them. Children were certainly important, but they were of little consequence when they were young. They had no rights and they were to be seen and not heard.

- The disciples saw them as an unimportant nuisance. They could offer nothing. They were not even of age. Under Judaism, children were not considered under the law until they were 13 so they couldn't even receive anything particularly spiritual.

14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

- This is not just about Jesus love of children, although it says something about Jesus that children loved Him and that He loved children. Children don't love mean, sour people.
- The kingdom belongs to people who are like these children. He actually makes a strong, strong statement ("Truly I tell you").
- If you do not receive God's kingdom like a child, you will NOT enter it. You cannot participate in the kingdom and you will miss eternity with Jesus.
- The emphasis isn't that children are humble and innocent, because sometimes they aren't.
- Jesus emphasis is on the fact that children will receive what is given. They don't feel like they have to earn everything they get. In fact they could not make themselves worthy of it.
- Children are in a place where often all they can do is receive. They don't refuse gifts out of self-sufficient pride.
- To receive the kingdom like a child is to rely on love and grace to enter the kingdom rather than on observing the law or trying to achieve anything through merit or effort.

ILLUSTRATION

Going through Target and talking about CFA. Yippee! We are going to CFA. Didn't care who knew it. He was just excited.

- Jesus' point was that people must receive things associated with the kingdom of God as children receive things, namely, with trust and dependence on Himself.
- You cannot enter God's kingdom in any other way. **LIVING IN GOD'S KINGDOM BRINGS LIFE.**
- This is disorienting and freeing. You don't need position and power in God's kingdom. Anyone can be significant in his kingdom. It is all about trust and faith and receiving rather than earning it. The next account in Mark drives this point home.

- This story is a direct follow up to the story immediately previous to it.

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

- This young man was a man with money and power, but he was an earnest man. He wanted to do good. He was what we would all call a good guy.
- The focus of the man's question is what he should **do**.
- This man thought eternal life was a matter of earning and deserving, not of relationship.
- He didn't want Jesus to be his savior; he wanted Jesus to show him the way to be his own savior. Jesus saw it immediately but used the man's own language and thoughts to try and get through to him.

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

- These are all the second part of the 10 commandments – the part relating to others.
- 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him.*

- This man genuinely felt he had done everything he needed to do.
- I have heard this over and over and over in my life.
- I have thought it. I have said it.

- “I’m a good guy. I help people. I give money. I don’t steal. I’m a good dad. Good worker. Good neighbor.” Take your pick.
- Jesus recognizes the root problem Jesus was filled with loving compassion for this man because his life was so empty. He had climbed to the top of the ladder of success, only to find his ladder leaned against the wrong building.
- He was not trying to deliberately make this man’s life difficult. Rather, he saw what was keeping this man from the kingdom. What was blocking this man was righteous self-achievement coupled with a love of money.
- He was trusting in his wealth, wealth he probably viewed as evidence that his good works made him acceptable to God. So Jesus challenges him right where he was at.
“One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”
- The issue was not money. The issue was that his money was first in his life and he was trying to earn his way into the kingdom.

II. You engage in God’s kingdom by following Jesus, not rules.

22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- If we enter God’s kingdom by simply receiving it, we engage then in it by following Jesus, not a whole bunch of to-do’s.
- Yet even though he was good, he wasn’t *sure* about his salvation, his eternity. There was some level of uncertainty otherwise he wouldn’t have asked.
- This man put his money first. He wanted to follow the rules. Be a good person. But still be able to run his own life. Jesus invited him to follow him. To throw aside his money because it got in the way of following Jesus. What keeps you from fully following Jesus?
- Riches (we don’t consider ourselves rich yet compared to this rich young ruler, each one of us enjoys more luxuries and comforts than he did) tend to make us satisfied with this life instead of longing for the age to come. It is also true that riches must often be acquired at the expense of acquiring God.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

- This freaked the disciples out. In the entire world of that day, wealth was a sign of God’s favor. If you had much, you must be in good with God. If you were suffering, there was a problem with you or your family. God rewarded the good.
- The disciples would have viewed this man completely different than the young kids.
- Jesus then pointed out something crucial. (“Truly I tell you”)
“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

III. You advance in God’s kingdom through humility.

- There is no advancement in God’s kingdom without humility.
- Today many people consider themselves good because they have lived a moral life and have not committed “really bad” sins.
- Even when we follow Jesus, at some level we believe that he is asking us to “do a little better” or “do a little more” and then he will accept us or love us a little more.
- You are totally bankrupt spiritually and that even the best things you do are like filthy rags in God’s sight.

- If we are humble enough to follow him no matter where he leads, that that is how we advance. That's how we grow. That's how we get rewards. Note that Jesus has no problem with people seeking rewards and advancement in the kingdom. But we need to do it rightly.
- All who sacrifice for the Lord will be rewarded, but God's way and timing of rewarding may not match up with our way and timing of being rewarded. When God rewards, expect the unexpected. **LIVING IN GOD'S KINGDOM BRINGS LIFE.**

- To drive the point home, Jesus tells the disciples again about what was coming. *32 Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

- This is the clearest he has been so far. You would think that given what they had learned and heard about the kingdom, they would get it. They don't. *35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*
- The place of honor was the seat on the right. The place of second honor was the seat on the left. They asked for the two most prestigious places in Jesus' administration.

IV. You find fulfillment in God's kingdom through sacrifice.

41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

- This is no altruistic. They were upset because they harbored similar selfish ambition.
- Once again, Jesus has to set them straight.

42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus had just told them who he was going to suffer. Significantly, Jesus mentioned the shame of His suffering. Jesus suffered the most terrible emotional humiliation in His death, and it was done out of love for us.
- Instead of hearing him, they want position. They want power. They want authority.
- The world around us focuses on the benefits of position. The kingdom is about using our position to serve.
- The world uses any authority for themselves. The kingdom is about voluntarily placing yourself under others to help them.
- The world values comfort. We want everything to go well. He hate being uncomfortable and will pursue comfort at the expense of almost anything else.
- Instead, Jesus offers service, suffering and pain as the path to glory, honor and fulfillment.
- Everything we see in the world around us (pay attention to the messages you see this Christmas season) tells us that to live the good life we must do everything we can to make it happen.
- The reality is that it is **LIVING IN GOD'S KINGDOM BRINGS LIFE.**
- We enter God's kingdom through faith. By trusting in him. In confessing our sins. In believing in his sacrifice on the cross. By knowing we don't bring anything to the table. It is all him.

- We engage in God's kingdom by then following Jesus. We did not trust him for rules. He did not invite us in to then earn our way forward.
- We advance in his kingdom by following him humbly. By putting his agenda first. By never thinking of ourselves too highly.
- We find fulfillment in his kingdom through sacrifice and service. We get rewards, crowns, adulation, in the life to come by how we serve others in this life.
- It seems like the kingdom of God is a paradox. That it is upside down.
- It is actually the complete opposite.
- Living this way is how God created it to be.
- The way the world runs things is actually what is upside down and Jesus invites us back into living right side up.
- When we live according to the kingdom, that is what leads to joy, life and fulfillment. He invites us to orient our lives this way, and when we do, we begin to find that this life looks a lot different, and perhaps, a little more right side up than ever before.