

Series: The Seeker  
Pt. 17: The Kingdom has Come  
Jeff Kennedy / October 8<sup>th</sup> 2017

**Intro:** Jesus has been teaching through a series of dinner parties/debates and now Luke captures a topical arrangement of his teaching on Discipleship. This is followed by a brief snapshot of Jesus' Kingdom of God teaching which is what we'll unpack today. Let's jump in...

**Transition:** Today Jesus is going to show us the attitudes that should define disciples as they follow the Master and King—and the state of readiness regarding the coming Kingdom—which as it turns out was already among them.

**The first attitude that Jesus highlights for us is...**

**1. Tragic consequences for agents of corruption (17:1-4).**

**Illus.** Corrupting others into sin. **I had this kid in my youth group, his name was Jerry.** Jerry loved God memorized the Bible, and was the smartest Christian kid I knew. I think it's fair to say that Jer was sheltered, and unspoiled by the evils of society. Then he went off to college as many young men do, and within 2 years he had lost his faith. I remember he contacted me—not trying to debate or even dialogue about it—he just announced that through his associations with “enlightened” individuals and profs—he came to realize that the Christian worldview was just not intelligent nor was it tenable. So he gave it up and to this day is an avowed atheist.

Jesus says woe—what dreadful judgment awaits those become agents of corrupting the faith, the innocence, and the hearts of others.

I enjoy going to the movies with my kids, or watching a vigorous political debate/discussion, and I love the academy—I think the scholastic revolution is one of the best things that every happened to western culture. But a believer also has to carefully navigate how they engage these institutions as well...

- Entertainment industry has become incalculably vulgar, pornographic, and remorseless.
- Political structures are corrupted, bitter, vitriolic, petty—creating laws which are increasingly becoming detached from the moorings of biblical morality and values.
- The University systems are breeding grounds for atheism and a brand of humanism that isn't content to ignore God but to actively oppose the knowledge of God.

As Christians I hope you don't retreat from our culture—I hope you have a theology of engagement with it. But that doesn't mean we're fools. It doesn't mean that we drink it in and allow it to crush our faith, to rob us of godly values, and cause to engage in wrongheadedness.

But notice Jesus says, “Pay attention to yourselves!” My job as a believer is not to protest Hollywood, or abandon the political process or avoid the secular state universities altogether. My job is to be vigilant of my own faith, being careful to nurture a heart of devotion to Christ and commitment to his truth. Walking with him daily and withstanding the elements in the world that are bound to come and tempt to me to give it all up. But Jesus says how tragic it will be for the agents—those who have devoted their lives to corrupting the heart and faith of the faithful. Keep the heart clean by practicing repentance and forgiveness. Be quick to repent—make haste to forgive.

## **2. The need for quality faith rather than a great quantity of faith (17:5-6).**

The disciples want Jesus to increase their faith. They want what we all think we need. A greater quantity of faith.

And Jesus has to reorient their understanding of the nature of faith—particularly the nature of its object—the object of faith.

You see, if you have a limited god with limited power, who hasn't been around all that long. It can be any finite idol. Money, recognition, an actual idol e.g. pagan symbols or created things—or just a diminished view of God. When you have a limited God, you need greater faith.

When you have a faith system that doesn't come with very much evidence, yes, you need a grain silo of faith. But if your God is that of the Bible: The almighty, everlasting Father—the God who the highest of heavens cannot contain, the God who is everywhere all the time, ever present help in time of need—the infinite and singular God of creation—well then you don't need a lot of faith.

You don't need a grain silo of faith with a God like that. You just need a grain—a mustard seed.

## **3. The need for a servant's heart rather than an entitled attitude (17:7-10).**

**Illus. Have you ever worked for the son of your company's owner?** I had an experience where I worked in the sales division of a company and two sons of the owner ran the company. The old son, Kevin, was approachable and very cool to work with. You always sensed that he was the guy in charge, but he never really talked to you that way. He was affable, approachable and a friendly guy—and level headed.

His younger brother, Erin—not so much. Erin was entitled, and puffed up—and he would come into a meeting where you were closing a deal with a customer and just blow it up with braggadocio, abrasive and no people skills and it was unpleasant when he was in the room. It's because he had this entitled, self-important attitude.

- Here's what Jesus said about us—that we are friends not just servants.
- That we've been given the right to become the sons of God.
- Paul said we are co-heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, seated in the places of honor as honored sons in God's Kingdom.

You'd think by all this, that we'd be somewhat justified in having a sense of entitlement.

**Illus. Charismatic Church days,** this is just the attitude that I found pervasive among many who embraced the health and wealth gospel that was all the rage back in the 80's. The Health and Wealth heresy in the church is the false belief that every believer can magically claim Scripture's promises and demand their assured blessings (as they read the Bible). This demand is made *both to*

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*the devil for having (in their view) stolen our right to health and wealth and prosperity—but it is also a demand they make on God. In fact they teach explicitly* that God expects them to come with a temerity of faith, a supreme confidence in his promises. To pry it out of God's white clinched white knuckles.

I had a friend tell me one time when I was sick, “Don't claim that! You're a king's child. Sickness is not for you.”

“Well” I replied, “nevertheless—this son of the King has a fever of 100.”

**Let me tell you what faith isn't. It isn't a denial of reality.** If you're sick, you're sick. If you're broke and you don't have a job—then it is not whatsoever an act of faith to pretend that your circumstances are somehow illusory and that the confession of faith will bring about the “real” spiritual blessing God has promised you. It's false faith.

Faith doesn't bring a denial of reality it can bring an intervention on our reality.

**Jesus teaches here that an entitled attitude is entirely out of place for those who serve God** as his children. We are servants of the Most high God—and we are his sons. But we are to behave as servants—humble and understanding the difference between being worthless and unworthy.

I don't provide for my children because they've proven their worthiness. Everything I give them is a gift and not because they perform and show their merit and value. They have value because they are mine. And they have dinner on the table and clothes on their back and a bed to sleep in because they have worth.

We have worth because of our vital association in faith with Jesus the Son. But we are unworthy of his grace and lavish care and concern—we don't need to merit that.

**Jesus said, “all of you sons of God who are in Christ—have a servant's attitude and disposition.”**

#### **4. The need for a thankful heart in blessing (17:11-19).**

**Luke** then tells us about the ten lepers in a leper colony. They stayed at a distance and cried out for healing.

All ten were healed and only one returned to thank Christ—and he wasn't even a Jewish leper. Here we see the sense of national entitlement played out in graphic terms. Jesus' sarcastically asks, "Weren't ten cleansed? Why only did one return to say 'thank you?'"

Of all the father's day cards I've received, the only ones I've kept are the spontaneous acts of gratitude from my kids. As a father, there is just something about a grateful little heart who receives the gift and says "thank you". It's one of the ways that the recipient acknowledges and shows respect to the giver.

#### **5. The need for alertness in light of the coming Kingdom (17:20-37).**

Now he Pharisees asked Jesus "when" the Kingdom would come. But Jesus' message was "The Good News of the Kingdom" Jesus didn't teach that the Kingdom was coming—he taught that the Kingdom of God was already here.

- **It's unobservable nature:** It is spiritual (v.20). The Kingdom of God is the reign and the rule of God in the hearts and minds of mankind. It is subduing the last, unconquered territory—the most difficult terrain, the most impenetrable boundaries—the heart of man in rebellion. Until that territory is subdued, until men's hearts and minds are turned back to God the Father in repentance—no earthly Kingdom set up by any merely earthly Messiah will last. You may get one excellent generation led by an amazing King—like David—but even that King will have his flaws (the occasional penchant for sex and disobedience) and even that physical kingdom will eventually become corrupted. So how do you get an everlasting Kingdom—one not made by human hands or human ingenuity, or forged in the fires of war? You must bring a revolution of the heart. You must bring a subversive message of change of the inner man and that Kingdom is not off in the future somewhere, as it were, it is here, now, invisibly taking root like a small mustard tree seed which will eventually grow and spread and effect all of humanity. Jesus said, "The Kingdom is in your midst."
- **It sets into motion copycats and imposters (v.21).** Jesus said to his disciples that he would go away—and in that interim while Jesus was not physically reigning and ruling the Kingdom of God on earth—a spiritual renewal of the heart would be taking place—and as a result many imposters and pretenders would arise. False Jesus'. It's inevitable that fakes will be made after the original to lure unsuspecting disciples in—as though the Kingdom was now emerging as a "restored" Christianity in this movement or that. There have been hundreds of these so called Christianity's over the last two millennia. But Jesus warned them "don't buy it. Believe me, you will know it when I return to inaugurate my earthly Kingdom. When heaven and earth are fused together and the presence of God will be our light, the Messiah—God's only Son will be our Lord—and we will shake off the corruption of this age and put on the immortality of the New Heavens and the new earth. Hallelujah.

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(v.24) “For as lightening flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.”

The kingdom comes first humbly, secretively, subversively as hearts and minds are changed one by one by one... The Message of this Kingdom spreads across the earth and we live in this tension between its proclamation and the opposition to it by a world of entrenched darkness; those driven to prop up those old structures and failed institutions. So the Kingdom has come in power and no tyrant no despotic government no law can be made that can keep the life transforming power of this kingdom from the hearts and minds of its subjects.

**But the Kingdom is coming too.** It’s final form when God will restore and set the world right. When God will judge the wicked, reward those who in faith have laid hold of the promise of forever with him, and that world will be so much greater than its predecessor—a shadow of the glory that will be revealed.

So what is their response to be?

**1.) A sense of urgency given the intensity of the opposition to this kingdom message.**

**2.) A sense of immediacy**—the final Kingdom can come suddenly like a flood or without warning like a Roman centurion carrying off a young girl—tearing her away from her mother’s side while grinding the day’s grain. Or a Roman legionnaire suddenly riding up in your field and taking the youngest, strongest and brightest—leaving one man, the old man, standing. The sense of immediacy and urgency is palpable in the text.

**3.) A sense of expectancy**—knowing that there will be a great gathering—a church service to end all church services when Christ sets up his rule and brings into subjection the kingdoms of this world, and is installed as King of Kings and Lord of Lords—a title he has had since the resurrection, proclaimed by the church to the powers of the air and their puppets in the earth—and now fully realized in the Kingdom of his glorious Son.

And what is the disciple’s disposition to be until that day?

- Resisting temptation practicing repentance and forgiveness.
- **Humble dependence on the Greatness of our God.**
- **Servant’s heart, willing to die to self and live for others.**
- **And watchful spirit which recognizes the urgency of faith needed, endurance—perseverance** in the face of fanatical opposition of the people who resist the Kingdom’s power and influence, who reject its rule and reign in their lives.