

Fantastic Future: Let Go of Resources IV- Life

Feb. 27, 2011

Texts: 1 John 5:11-12, 20, Gal. 2:20

John was home alone in bed with the flu while his church was having its annual Thanksgiving dinner. When the family arrived home afterwards one of the first ones into the house was their youngest daughter, Marie, age 4. She led her sister, Bev, into the bedroom to check on the invalid. She came up to her father and said, "Daddy, do you know who took care of you while we were at the dinner?" And he said, "No, who?" She said, "God." And then she added, "But you don't need God any more -- me and Bev are home now."

Don't you like stories? They are great. I think most people do. Why is that? Perhaps because they are interesting and pique our curiosity. Jesus told lots of stories, many of them parables, little simple stories he created to contain a single point which may not always be obvious. Here are some found in Matthew which he introduced by saying, "The kingdom of heaven (or God) is like..."

A man who was hired to plow a field. One day he stumped his toe on something sticking out of the ground. He stopped to try to uncover it so he could plow there and when he did he was shocked at what he found. It was a treasure chest filled with gold. What do you think he did? Steal some of it for himself? Ask for a reward? No, he buried it again and kept plowing for the rest of the day and went home. The next day he went and sold everything he owned, big-screen TV, Wee game system, baseball card collection, comic books (I threw that one for Matt), his VW Beetle, his house, everything he had, and he went and bought that field for himself.

He told another one, about a merchant who found the most magnificent pearl he had ever seen, the one he had only dreamed of all his life. At that point he sold all his inventory and personal property and bought that most precious prize. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Now you have two positive examples of the same point. What is the point, then? Is it obvious what they have to do with the kingdom of heaven?

They say the same thing... that the kingdom of heaven is so precious that we should give up everything we have to obtain it. And, what does he mean by the "Kingdom of heaven?"

The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible says:

God (is) king of the universe, the fundamental force behind all that is and shall be... and the promise of the kingdom is that people will at last come to realize divine justice and peace in all that they do.

Someone younger than I has said it this way, "**God is large and in charge!**"

The central theme of all Jesus' preaching and teaching was the "Kingdom of God." The disciples had another idea of what he was talking about and wrangled for the best positions in what they thought would be a new political regime. Jesus tried several ways to get his point across. He said on several occasions, "***If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.***" (Matt. 16:24-25.)

What Jesus is expecting of anyone who wants to participate in God's "new peace plan" will have to die to self, give up doing life THEIR way and start doing it GOD'S way.

The idea of **LIFE** on God's terms is a major theme in the **Gospel of John also**. The gospel begins by making it clear that the **LIFE** God is bringing into the world issues from his mouth as the Word, the force of creation, which is embodied in the person, His son, Jesus of Nazareth, the **LIFE "LIGHT" for all people** This is God's reaching out to help humankind regain some of the quality of the relationship with God that was lost through sin.

- ✘ In Chapter 3 to Nicodemus he is the source of "**LIFE by New Birth in the Spirit.**"
- ✘ In Chapter 4 to the Samaritan woman at the well he is the source of "**Living Water**" which satisfies eternally.
- ✘ He is the source of **LIFE-Giving Health** to the dead and dying.
- ✘ In Chapter 6 Jesus is the bread that satisfies human craving for spiritual sustenance, "Those who eat this bread which is my flesh **Will LIVE Forever**"
- ✘ In Chapter 10 he is the **Giver of LIFE "Abundantly"**

In the letter of 1st John 5:11-12 we read, (summarized)

And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Paul has a lot to say about life in God's peaceful kingdom and the kind of commitment that is required to be a part of it.

Rom. 8:2: ***For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.***

And to the new immature Christians in the Galatian Church 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

God is in the life business while we may be busy doing our own thing without regard to God's plans for us and the world. That is **DEATH** in God's terms. We are just a bunch of walking dead men and women until we let go of the puny life we cling to so desperately. We can't please God and ourselves, as Jesus said. We will love one master and hate the other. So which one will we chose as our master and which one do we hate? There is no life, only death if we are not swimming immersed in God's LIFE!

Paul says in Rom. 6:3-4: (summarized)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his DEATH? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into DEATH, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of LIFE.

God won't bring the **LIFE** into our old selfish and sinful selves. It takes an "**Extreme Makeover.**" The old life and its ways must go to make room for God's **NEW LIFE!**

Here is another story for you, a true one:

London businessman, Lindsay Clegg, told the story of a warehouse property he was selling. The building had been empty for months and needed repairs. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash all over the place. As he showed a prospective buyer the property, he took pains to say that he would replace the broken windows, bring in a crew to correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage. The buyer said, "Forget about the repairs. When I buy this place, I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site."

That's God's message to us! Compared with the renovation God has in mind, our efforts to improve our own lives are as trivial as sweeping a warehouse slated for the wrecking ball. When we become God's the old life is over. He makes all things new. All He wants is the site and the permission to build. There are still some trying to "reform," but God offers "redemption." All we have to do is give Him the "property" and he will do the necessary "building." As long as we hold on to the old life we and others have made a mess of, God cannot do what really needs to be done in us. We need to die, be demolished like that old warehouse, so God can build in us a life that is beyond anything we can imagine. Remember God is LARGE and wants desperately to be in CHARGE of your life!