



## **Act Four: Kingdom Community**

### **Possible with God**

Warning-Beacons  
Matthew 18:1 – 35

Jesus' plan to urgently spread his Kingdom message around the world from nation to nation is an invasion through his own network of warning-beacons called the Church. The Church witness depends on her being very different to the culture in which she dwells → she is a colony of heaven, living the values of God's Kingdom in a world where Satan has his throne. Therefore in chapters 18 to 22 Jesus instructs, rebukes and fashions his first followers in the way that they must live.

Jesus tells them;

- They must humble themselves like little children
- Cherish the weakest believer without a dog-eat-dog mentality.
- Every single Christian has been sought and saved by God and have guardian angels to protect each of them.

Those who follow Christ all suffer gladly for each other;

- Their mutual love exceeds that of the pagans as they dare to challenge, confront and discipline each other out of a common passion for godliness.
- They have a willingness to forgive but reject ungodliness as it is the only way to win them back in broken repentance.
- Such local churches shine like mighty warning-beacons, proclaiming through their witness that the message of the Kingdom is true.

Jesus makes bold promises to such churches in 18:18-20;

- They speak with an authority that Satan and his demons are powerless to resist.
- They experience God's presence in their meetings such that unbelievers heed the call.
- Kingdom communities that look like Jesus, live like Jesus, and burn like Jesus, change the world.

Jesus built his group of twelve disciples into mighty warning-beacons. This lit other warning-beacons from Samaria to Antioch, and on to Ephesus, Corinth and Rome.

The Gospel message;-

- Is more than an abstract concept.
- Is more than an individual lifestyle.
- It is the call of the Living God who bids a rebellious world to submit to his rule.

**Let the Lord set your church on fire and become a radical beacon of hope in the town or city where Christ has placed you.**

Kingdom Forgiveness  
Matthew 18:21 – 35

Forgiveness is very powerful but it is easier to admire than copy.

- Pharisees liked receiving it but not giving it → quick to punish i.e. eye for eye and tooth for tooth.
- Jesus' call is very different and hence this kind of God-empowered forgiveness is why the church is such a beacon of hope.
- Forgiveness talk inspires people as well as a multitude of objections.

*Isn't this kind of forgiveness unreal?*

- Forgiveness does not minimize sin.
- Jesus tells us that unforgiveness leads to destruction and torment.
- Genesis 4:23-24 → forgive 70 x 7 → be as full of forgiveness as Lamech was full of revenge.
- Forgive freely without counting because if we don't we will reap consequences more deadly still.

*Isn't this kind of forgiveness unjust?*

- Those who sin deserve punishment so why treat them as they don't deserve?
- God forgives massive debt because of what Jesus did on the cross; paid debt as he died in our place.
- On the cross, Jesus showed perfect example of forgiveness → *"Father, forgive them!"* and the Gospel is the wonderful news that he has.
  
- Unforgiveness shows that we have confessed our sin to God BUT not grasped either its gravity or his grace.
- People who don't forgive do not lose their salvation BUT people who truly repent instinctively forgive.

*Isn't this kind of forgiveness impossible?*

- Unless you have God's help it is humanly impossible to forgive from the heart.
- The Gospel of Jesus Christ – that he paid our crippling debt with his blood – what is impossible in our own strength becomes possible in his.
- Jesus did not merely bare our sin he also bore our pain; we need bear it no longer. We can forgive.

*"When he tells us to love our enemies, he gives, along with the command, the love itself"*

*Corrie ten Boom*

Jesus does not minimize the wrong you've suffered; neither will he minimize the sin of unforgiveness.

He calls us to pray, and live, the prayer of Matthew 6 vs. 12: *Lord, to the degree that I forgive people who sin against me, that's how I know you will forgive me.*

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Back to the Beginning  
Matthew 19:1 – 12

- Around the time of Christ there was a large amount of immorality like today.
- When Pharisees asked about divorce they were trying to get Jesus to say something that would offend Herod who had just divorced his wife and thus be killed like John the Baptist – Matthew 14:3-4.
- Marriage wasn't invented by men but by 'the creator'.
  
- God made man and woman to reflect his own Triune nature → Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- God made humans to feel incomplete until they find a life partner with whom they have children and hence reflect the glory of the Trinity.

- God gave a wonderful wedding present called sex, which unites them spiritually and physically to become one.
- Each person owns the other's body as well as their own – Ephesians 5:28.
- God uses marriage to unite people in body, soul and spirit reflecting his three-in-one nature as the pinnacle of his creation.
- Not surprising that Satan hates this! He is determined to deface the image of God by corrupting sex and marriage.
  - ❖ Same-sex attraction where Adam-and-Eve becomes Adam-and-Steve corrupts the reflection of God.
- Satan has a favourite weapon => divorce.
- The Mosaic Law gave permission to divorce but not permission to remarry.
- Some choose singleness for the sake of the Kingdom as God hates divorce – Malachi 2:16.

Jesus is still forgiving, extending grace to adulterers and prostitutes who turn from the life of sin. There is freedom for sinners by the power of Jesus' life-changing cross.

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Possible with God  
Matthew 19:16 -30

When fishing for crabs;-

- Salmon is eye-catching and very tasty and will attract lots of them but it's also very crumbly making it difficult to reel in the crabs.
- Squid-head is smelly and incredibly unattractive but does not pull apart.
  - ❖ Therefore salmon may attract more crabs to the hook but only squid can land them in the bucket.

Hence Jesus' blunt response to the rich young ruler after asking a perfect Gospel question. Yet Jesus rebukes him for calling him teacher and orders him to sell all he has and give it to the poor before he tries to apply for salvation. Jesus' evident goodness should have convinced the man that Jesus was actually God (Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18-19).

Why does Jesus make such an aggressive demand? → He fished with squid and not salmon.

- It's tempting to preach a salmon-Gospel message that is appealing in the hope that we reel in people with a cut-price conversion and disciple them later.
- At first it looks like its working but very few of those 'saved' get added to the church → they respond to the message that Jesus could improve their life but are not willing to come to church.
- We preached to their flesh and persuaded their flesh but didn't confront their flesh, and therefore down the road will take hours and hours of counseling making little progress in their man-made faith.

The squid-Gospel requires more patience but is more fruitful.

- It means partnering with the Holy Spirit his power can cause dead spirits to bite at such an unattractive message.
- Those who get saved get added too and become true disciples of Jesus, therefore easier to disciple them afterwards.
- This is why Jesus spoke brutally but lovingly to the rich young ruler – Mark 10:21.
- Jesus preached squid-Gospel and let Holy Spirit work in a person's heart.

**Away with the salmon-Gospel, let's preach the squid-Gospel. Nothing less can produce churches which are worthy of the name. *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"*.**