

## GOD'S ORDER, ME FIRST?

Today's parable is not one that would be very popular with the culture and even some Christians. There is a relentless drive in our culture to be first, number one, whether it is in sports competition or on the job or at the box office. There is also a hunger for me to get mine+. People who study the culture say many in the younger generations are caught up in a me first+attitude. This is not God's order as we have heard in today's reading.

We find the verses ahead of this parable are the story of the rich man and how to obtain eternal life and Peter asking the question "what then will there be for us?"+ After the parable of the workers and their wages, come the mothers of two of the disciples asking Jesus to guarantee their sons place in the kingdom.

Do you see a theme here? Everyone wants their reward, whether it comes in the form of wages, recognition or position. More important than the rewards sought there in these three stories is the attitude each person had displayed.

We have had in the last three weeks, stories of forgiveness, fellowship, and excuses. This week's story along with the events before and after it makes an ironclad connection between all of the stories -that is attitude.

In forgiveness, in fellowship and with excuses, what our attitude is and transmits can make all the difference in the world with results. Notice I said **our attitude**, that is the thing God is interested in for us, He'll take care of the other person so we are not to worry about them and their attitude! What type of attitude should we transmit? It must be important Jesus keeps telling us stories about it and the place it holds in the kingdom. The parable of the workers can really find application in our lives as members of the kingdom and as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our walk is not one to be absent of action and demonstration. Any one of the words Jesus uses is not only a noun, but it is a verb meant to be used and demonstrated to others. Many people in the culture want to avoid being a role model and have said such in interviews or by their actions. I am here to tell you today whether you like it or not as a disciple of Jesus Christ **you are a role model!!**

Just like the workers in this parable how we react to situations around us goes a long way in demonstrating kingdom principles that Jesus talked about in these parables.

Jill we stumble at times? Sure, but what we do after we stumble, and how we move forward with the right attitude on our spiritual walk is what matters.

It continues to amaze me how these simple stories show us about human nature and we remain unchanged. We, as modern as we think we are, encounter the same problems as the people in Jesus' time. However, if we look at and study the Word we can be that disciple that witness Jesus desires us all to be with the help and power of the Holy Spirit. We can be effective witnesses instead of stumbling blocks, when we improve our attitudes toward people and things.

What can we discover from today's lesson and other scriptures about attitude? What is our attitude toward God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, toward people, toward things?

A few definitions I found to get us on the right track . *attitude* is the way you think and feel about someone or something or *attitude* is a feeling or way of thinking that affects a person's behavior. I believe those two definitions of *attitude* can really find application for us.

The workers toiled, some all day and some not until the end of the day. We can assume there was the usual talk when working - about family, friends and the work itself. No real complaining until the wages were handed out. It is then and only then the real person was shown to us. *Attitudes* have that element to show everyone who we really are. Why? Let me use an illustration - here is a jar filled with liquid. The lid is on loosely. If I shake the jar, the liquid water comes out. Now the question, why did the water spill? Some will say the lid was loose, some I shook the jar, and others the more scientific ones say gravity. Those are all good reasons, but the real reason was the jar was filled with water and what's on the inside is what comes out!!! Remember Jesus spoke and really shook up the Pharisees telling them it was not what went in a person but what comes out from the heart and if you recall Jesus certainly saw what came out of the Pharisees. They proved Jesus' lesson by their very words and action.

*Attitudes* are one of those things that can like a jack-in-the-box pop out expectedly if, if we harbor such *attitudes* inside. That is the reason it is important to have a positive *attitude* so we can be an effective witness for Christ and build relationships. How important is your attitude?

Your *attitude* is more important than: facts - circumstances - what others say - it's more important than your past - your education and your money. Your *attitude* is

more important than anything else. And understand that your *attitude* is much deeper than just a few thoughts you might think or not think. Your *attitude* comes out of the core of your being. Your attitude represents your disposition, your outlook, and your very character.

In Proverbs 23:7 "for as a man thinks in his heart, so he is..." **your attitude determines the success and failure of every relationship in your life. (repeat).** Who wants to be around a person with a negative attitude? And the sad truth is the negative person gets even more negative because no one wants to be around them! Attitudes affect those closest to you . spouse, children, as well as at work, at church and with friends. Just like that jar of water attitudes will come out in destructive words or actions. People with such attitudes tend not be trusted because they will do things that you never thought they would do. Things we criticize and get stirred up about are not really the problem at all. The problem is our own negative attitude. However, our attitude is always a choice. Amazing thing God gave us, free will; it can be a curse or a blessing . **your choice!**

We can apply one of the oldest stories, the half full or half empty glass, your choice in the way you see it. Just like the glass we can view things with a negative or a positive attitude. The choice and the focus are ours. Coming soon is our church conference looking at a possible expansion. What attitude will you go into this with? Will it be a problem or an opportunity for centennial? **Your choice.**

How do we overcome these negative attitudes? These attitudes may be a result of our experiences from our very younger days to just yesterday. First, we pray and ask God to heal us. God is there to hear us ..

Psalm 30:2 *O lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.*

Psalm 147:3 *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

Jeremiah 17:14 *Heal me, O Lord, and i will be healed; save me and I will be saved.*

No matter where your negative attitude came from or resulted from you can be healed . your choice!

There is a saying ~~practice~~ practice makes perfect+. When we practice a more positive attitude toward people and things it becomes a habit. In Ephesians 4 "don't say anything that would hurt [another person]. Instead, speak only what is good so that you can give help wherever it is needed, that way, what you say will help those who hear you." Listen to this translation -

Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, **each word a gift.**” Now this is an *attitude* that is positive and effective!

Another step we can take is no matter what happens, look for the good and don't be surprised when you find it! It is not that there are not negatives out there; it is whether we **choose** to dwell on them. When we pursue good we will find it!!! A good application of this is in a marriage. If you are looking for faults all the time oh, you'll find them. But if you are instead always looking for the good and focus on it, you will see it in your spouse rather than focusing on the negative and that goes especially for our children.

There is a phrase in the world of technology . *garbage in garbage out*”. Well that can be said of our thoughts too. What types of thoughts are filling your mind? What are you feeding it? It is not enough to filter out the negative. We must feed on the positive. If you spend much of your time on all that is wrong with the world, then you never see the good that is going on in it.

As we get older we seem to wish for the good old days and miss the good in the new days!!! Young people, another word on this subject. Stop, look, and listen whether it is the music you listen to, the material you are reading or who you associate with. All these things and people can have a negative effect on you. Taint your views if you will. If what you are listening to, reading or the people you are associating with are not a positive influence on you then rethink where you are going. The same goes for us as adults too. It is a battle all through life.

A final step in improving your attitude is not giving into the negative. If we pause a moment and think, most negative things can be categorized as gossip, rumor or innuendos. As a Disciple of Christ we are commanded not to participate in such negative things. An interesting way the bible says this is in Proverbs 26:20 “for lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.” In Philippians 4:8 the message in part says *Summing it all up, friends, i'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse...*”

By choosing to focus on these positive things, we will

- Replace anger with love,
- Replace fear with faith,
- Replace complaining with gratitude,
- Replace judgment with acceptance,

Replace bitterness with forgiveness, and  
Replace feeling sorry for ourselves with helping others.

Words that we can apply to tie it all together and demonstrate how attitude affects us

Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words.

Keep your words positive because your words become your behavior.

Keep your behavior positive because your behavior becomes your habits.

Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values.

Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.

The last shall be first and first last+having the right attitude will go a long way in understanding God's order. Amen.