

“Kingdom Come”

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1 Kings 3:16-28

Matthew 25:31-46

And the Mighty One will answer them saying,

*“I tell you the truth, when did it for the least of these –
my brothers and sisters, of the minority in your midst,
you did it for me...”*

Matthew 25:40 [DWV]

Let us pray... O God,

Help us to do better to love you by caring for and loving others and ourselves, too.

Help us to do what is good and right as we would like to be treated.

And help us to remember that even when we falter, you love us and will help.

Amen

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible interprets Matthew 25:40 this way:

And the King will answer them,

*“Truly I say to you, as you did it to the least of these [my brothers and sisters]
you did to me...”*

If you know this much scripture – if you get what it is about and

you are willing and able to put it into practice in your life,

then you would know all there is to know

of what is most important about the Bible and what God expects of us.

Matthew 25:40 embraces the Greatest Commandments to –

Love God and one another as oneself;

along with the Golden Rule to –

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

It is the only fair measuring stick for judging human beings on Planet Earth

because it puts us all on a level field regardless of

privileges or resources, rich or poor, class or culture or gender,

philosophy or religion, tall or short, leader or follower, younger or elder.

It is the key for understanding the rest of the Bible

which describes the success and failure of humankind

to live up to God’s expectation that we use our heads *and* our hearts

to realize that it makes sense to be kind...

Speaking about judgment, today’s lesson from 1 Kings

could have had a traumatic outcome depending how King Solomon decided
the fate of a days’ old baby claimed by two mothers.

King Solomon used ‘reverse psychology’ before it was even invented yet!

In the process, he evoked two passions from each person respectively:

The desire for victory at any cost, and the desire for the common good.

Both desires have their use in life, but the king was gambling that empathy

would take priority in a moral choice.

Willard, p.2

Isaiah 49:15 in the Common English Version describes the love of God in terms of the love that a mother has for her child...

The LORD answered,

“Could a mother forget a child nursing at her breast?

Could she fail to love an infant who came from her own body?

Even if a mother could forget, I will never forget you.”

There are certainly plenty of examples in the news about mothers who have no regard for their children through criminal neglect – and even murder.

Just to be clear,

I do not consider this text to be supportive of the pro-life argument.

It seems ironic that an anti-abortion position is often held by those who don't have the same commitment to the lives of those actually born,

considering they generally advocate for guns rights & the death penalty – which could be argued to be a kind of 'abortion' with a delayed reaction.

Nevertheless, Isaiah 49:15 speaks to the inherent principle of how women are hard-wired for nurture –

and that this is also a reflection of who God is.

What we have with this text is the 'God of the Old Testament' speaking like Jesus, who expects of us to follow the example of a woman's love for her child

as a baseline for human conduct, and that it just makes sense to be kind...

However, the strident tone of Jesus' story in our Gospel lesson today is consistent with that of the two previous parables that he told his disciples

as they have settled down for the night on the Mount of Olives...

It had been an eventful day that began with Jesus anxious and hungry –

because he knew what he was going to do to provoke the powers in Jerusalem.

Then he saw a fig tree in the distance, and he was thinking breakfast,

but when he came up to it there were no figs to eat.

Now, you'd think Jesus would have known it was still early in the growing season –

but I like what a friend of mine said about this as an explanation,

“He just forgot.”

Well, he was upset at this and he condemned that fig tree,

saying no one would ever eat from it again – then, he walked on.

Now, it so happens olive trees and grapevines are symbolic of national prosperity.

Jesus went to the Temple in Jerusalem – and began to overturn the booths of the moneychangers and sacrificial dove peddlers in the outer courtyard.

Then he denounced them all for preventing access to God

which the Temple was supposed to encourage.

Later as Jesus and his disciples leave the city,

Jesus predicts the Temple itself will be destroyed –

Then, as they are walking along,

the disciples are horrified to discover that the fig tree had withered away!

Willard, p.3

So, it was in this context of anger and anxiety that Jesus told them these 3 parables:

The first about 10 maidens –

5 of whom were shut out from a wedding just because they were late.

Then, a rich man gives his servants monetary ‘talents’ to invest –

though one didn’t do so and was cast into the outer darkness.

Finally, the Son of Man arrives like a king to judge the world –

and exclude clueless perpetrators like sorting out goats from the sheep.

Yes, Jesus’ stories seem harsh with hard lessons,

perhaps to pound home the significance of what was ahead

so that his disciples would get it!

They would be caught sleeping when the authorities showed up

to arrest Jesus like those maidens who had run out of luck.

Jesus’ challenge to the moneychangers would be considered a threat

to Temple finances and that he would be dealt with severely –

like the servant who refused to invest in his cruel master’s fortunes.

However, the Son of Man who returns to bring judgment

does not behave like an earthly king.

There is punishment, but not for human violence –

it is for indifference and the neglect of the vulnerable minorities.

This is consistent with Jesus’ teachings

in the third part of his Sermon on the Mount.

This section begins traditionally by Jesus saying,

“Judge not, that you be not judged.” [Matthew 7:1]

But he goes on to talk about how we still have to judge – yet with discernment.

Hear my interpretation of Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:1-11...

DON’T PRE-JUDGE UNLESS YOU WANT TO BE PRE-JUDGED

[Don’t be prejudiced, unless you want others to be prejudiced against you].

FOR THE SCRUTINY WITH WHICH YOU SCRUTINIZE OTHERS

WILL BE USED TO SCRUTINIZE YOU.

AND THE MANUEVER ROOM YOU GIVE WILL BE THE SAME YOU GET.

NOW, WHY WOULD YOU NOTICE A SPECK IN SOMEONE ELSE’S EYE

BUT IGNORE THE LOG IN YOUR OWN EYE?

YOU HYPOCRITE!

TAKE THE LOG AWAY SO THAT YOU CAN SEE CLEARLY ENOUGH...

TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE.

BUT DON’T GIVE SACRED THINGS TO HYENAS.

DON’T TRUST YOUR TREASURES TO SWINE.

FOR THEY WILL TRAMPLE THEM IN THE MUD AND BREAK YOUR HEART.

Willard, p.4

ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND,
KNOCK AND THE WAY WILL OPEN UP FOR YOU.
FOR EVERYONE WHO ASKS WILL RECEIVE;
EVERYONE WHO SEEKS WILL FIND;
EVERYONE WHO KNOCKS WILL FIND THEIR WAY.

NOW, IF YOUR CHILDREN WERE TO ASK YOU FOR A LOAF OF BREAD,
WOULD YOU GIVE THEM A STONE INSTEAD?
IF THEY ASKED YOU FOR A FISH,
WOULD YOU GIVE THEM A SNAKE?
EVEN IF YOU ALL WERE EVIL-DOERS,
YOU WOULD STILL KNOW TO GIVE GOOD THINGS
TO YOUR CHILDREN.
HOW MUCH MORE SO WILL YOUR HEAVENLY GUARDIAN
GIVE YOU GOOD THINGS WHEN YOU ASK FOR THEM...

This brings us back to that nurturing principle of care for children
that is hard-wired in the biology and psychology of women.
This is not to say that women are morally superior to men –
because women are just as human as men.
The boot of injustice fits their feet just as easily as it does for men
when power undermines compassion.

Nevertheless, it is from the authority of women's pain
in the struggle for their rights that brings to light injustice
against the generations to come – all children.
We can see how this is true for minorities from the authority of their pain
in their struggle for civil rights as people of integrity and deserving respect.
But we know that if justice is to prevail, that men must be allies in all these struggles,
because we are all in it together – and it just makes sense to be kind.

Even when people are hypocritical and do what is evil,
they still know what is right because of the enduring example of women
caring for children who are the next generation.

We also have the example of God
through the words and deeds of Jesus Christ to guide us.
Our God hears from afar the wordless cries of children in distress
and God will help us to help one another.

We are challenged to do our part – but we are also to make for God
by asking God for help, by seeking wisdom to make good decisions,
and to keep knocking on doors to find the resources we need
to make it a better world for us now and the generations to come,
for when God's 'Kingdom [will] come, on Earth as it is in Heaven'.

Amen

Our lesson today from 1 Kings 3:16-28 as found in the Common English version, describes how King Solomon used reverse psychology to evoke compassion...

- ¹⁶ One day two women^[a] came to King Solomon,
¹⁷ and one of them said:
Your Majesty,
 this woman and I live in the same house.
Not long ago my baby was born at home,
¹⁸ and three days later her baby was born. Nobody else was there with us.
¹⁹ One night while we were all asleep, she rolled over on her baby,
 and he died.
²⁰ Then while I was still asleep, she got up and took my son out of my bed.
 She put him in her bed, then she put her dead baby next to me.
²¹ In the morning when I got up to feed my son, I saw that he was dead.
 But when I looked at him in the light, I knew he wasn't my son.
²² "No!" the other woman shouted.
 "He was your son. My baby is alive!"
"The dead baby is yours," the first woman yelled.
 "Mine is alive!"
They argued back and forth in front of Solomon,
²³ until finally he said,
 "Both of you say this live baby is yours. ²⁴ Someone bring me a sword."
A sword was brought, and Solomon ordered,
²⁵ "Cut the baby in half! That way each of you can have part of him."
²⁶ "Please don't kill my son," the baby's mother screamed.
 "Your Majesty, I love him very much, but give him to her. Just don't kill him."
The other woman shouted,
 "Go ahead and cut him in half. Then neither of us will have the baby."
²⁷ Solomon said,
 "Don't kill the baby."
Then he pointed to the first woman,
 "She is his real mother. Give the baby to her."
²⁸ Everyone in Israel was amazed when they heard
 how Solomon had made his decision.
 They realized that God had given him wisdom to judge fairly.

Let us be challenged and guided by these words

Inspired by Matthew 25:31-46

**“SOMEDAY, THE SON OF MAN, THE TRUE HEIR OF HUMANITY
WILL SHOW UP BY THE GRACE OF GOD
ACCOMPANIED BY ALL THE ANGELIC BEINGS.
THEN THIS MIGHTY ONE WILL BE SEATED UPON A RADIANT THRONE
IN WHOSE PRESENCE WILL BE GATHERED
ALL THE PEOPLE OF EVERY NATIONALITY.
AND THEY WILL BE SEPARATED, ONE FROM ANOTHER,
LIKE A SHEPHERD SORTS OUT SHEEP AND GOATS.
AND WAITING ON ONE HAND
WILL BE THOSE INNOCENT ‘LAMBS’ WHO ARE SELF-RIGHTEOUS.
AND ON THE OTHER,
THE ‘SCAPEGOATS’ WHO ARE ALWAYS LEFT BEHIND.**

**BUT THIS MIGHTY ONE WILL SAY TO THOSE WHO ARE ‘IN THE RIGHT’,
*“WELCOME, DEAREST OF MY HEAVENLY GUARDIAN
AND RECEIVE YOUR INHERITANCE OF BELOVED COMMUNITY
PREPARED FOR YOU FROM SEEDS SOWN
SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD!
FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD TO EAT,
I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME WATER,
I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME,
I WAS HOMELESS AND YOU SHELTERED ME,
I WAS SICK AND YOU VISITED ME,
I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU RESCUED ME.”***

**THEN, THOSE WHO ARE ‘IN THE RIGHT’ WILL ANSWER, SAYING,
“LORD,
WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY AND FEED YOU
OR THIRSTY AND GIVE YOU WATER?
AND WHEN DID WE SEE YOU A STRANGER AND WELCOME YOU
OR HOMELESS AND SHELTER YOU?
AND WHEN DID WE SEE YOU SICK OR IN PRISON
AND CARE FOR YOU?**

**AND THE MIGHTY ONE WILL ANSWER, SAYING TO THEM,
*“I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHEN YOU HELPED
THE LEAST OF THESE, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE MINORITY IN YOUR MIDST, YOU HELPED ME.”***

THEN, THIS ONE WILL SAY TO THOSE WHO ARE NOW 'LEFT',

"BEGONE FROM ME!

BE CONDEMNED TO THE FIRES OF TRUTH

PREPARED FOR THE DECEIVER

AND THAT ONE'S SERVANT LIARS!

FOR I WAS HUNGRY

AND YOU GAVE ME NOTHING TO EAT,

THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME NOTHING TO DRINK,

A STRANGER AND YOU DID NOT WELCOME ME,

HOMELESS AND YOU NOT SHELTER ME,

SICK AND IN PRISON

AND I WAS OF NO CONCERN TO YOU!"

AND AT THAT TIME, THEY WILL ANSWER SAYING,

"LORD,

WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY OR THIRSTY

OR A STRANGER OR HOMELESS

OR SICK OR IN PRISON AND NOT CARE FOR YOU?"

THEN, THE MIGHTY ONE WILL ANSWER, SAYING,

"I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHEN YOU NEGLECTED

THE LEAST OF THESE, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

OF THE MINORITY IN YOUR MIDST, YOU NEGLECTED ME."

AND THOSE WHO WERE HARDHEARTED IN LIFE WILL GO OFF

INTO ETERNAL DISAPPOINTMENT,

WHILE THOSE WHO LOVED OTHERS

WILL ENTER LIFE EVERLASTING."