

The World Turned Upside Down

Matthew 5:1-12; Micah 6:1-8

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Rev. Paulette Mixon-Weller

I am just back from the Magic Kingdom. It really was magical. I made shirts with a 1977 photo of my 2 sisters, my mom and myself on them. The 4 of us wore the shirts our whole time at the parks. We felt like kids again. The Magic Kingdom recently turned 50 years, and there were all sorts of retro shirts and posters and banners that were around when we were kids. It was so special. Certain people were honored in the Kingdom: those who paid into the Disney Vacation Club, certain actors who have been given life-long membership, and others.

The Kingdom of Heaven- The empire of God- is very different than any human Kingdom. Those we do not expect to be honored are honored.

Jesus sits down on the mountain with his disciples, maybe only 4 of them, and he teaches them. He teaches them that God's Kingdom is different. It is based on grace and compassion- not merit or riches.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, you when you are reviled- persecuted- falsely gossiped about.

The opposite of who we expect to be blessed are blessed. We expect those who achieve to be the blessed ones. One edge of the gospel is dealing with that expectation that we have.

I heard this story recently: (Oliviral)

A busy executive boarded the plane. She hurried to her seat where sitting next to her she found an older man who smelled a bit wearing

old tattered clothes. She alerted the flight attendant upon taking her seat. The flight attendant answered warmly, when the woman abruptly said, "Find me another seat immediately."

The flight attendant responded, "I'm sorry Ma'am, but the economy cabin is fully booked." The rich woman replied, "But I'm not going to travel beside a worthless bum. Do something."

While the elderly man stared in disbelief, the flight attendant responded, "I'll talk to the Captain about this." The flight attendant went to the captain and asked, "Captain, a woman feels uncomfortable sitting beside a poor elderly man. What should we do?"

Surprisingly, the Captain's face changed. He looked amused and said, "This woman is interesting. I've never encountered an issue like this before. I have a plan. Listen..."

And the Captain relayed to the flight attendant what he wants to do. The flight attendant was stunned at his plan. In fact, she was amazed.

A few minutes later, the flight attendant returned. "The Captain said we could use an open seat in First Class. He also wants to apologize for having to travel with such a terrible person."

As the woman rose out of her seat, the flight attendant reached out her arm towards the poor elderly man. "Sir, will you please follow me?" To which the plane applauded.

Who do we expect to be honored? By which rules are we playing our life? The Beatitudes are counter-cultural. God's Kingdom is counter-cultural.

Our text from Micah this morning talks about how to come before God. What does God require of us? Is it a huge offering or great riches?

“What does the Lord require of you? To do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your God. If we live our lives according to these requirements, those around us will be blessed. God cares how we treat each other. Our faith is demonstrated in the very way we treat others. Notice that we don’t run with God- trying to keep up while we are gasping for air. We are to walk with God. Step by step God transforms us for the Kingdom. We live into the Kingdom of God.

We aren’t called to burn out for Jesus, but to shine as God made us. Each one of us, each one of you has gifts to share. Unique and wonderful gifts that only you can bring to the table in God’s Kingdom.

I know I have said this before, but here it is again. My daughter Chloe was 6, and we had spent a lot of time talking about how God gives each of us special and unique gifts. Chloe said to me after a Girl Scout meeting; I was the leader. “Mom, I know what your present is.” It took me a minute to figure out what she meant; then she told me, “Your present from God is to be able to talk to anybody.” I don’t know about that, but her wording stopped me in my tracks. God gives us a present. A present that we get to unwrap to use for others. I so love that idea!

In God’s Kingdom we don’t keep our gifts to ourselves, we share them. Loving community is God’s intention.

What does the Lord require of us? To do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

Don’t grow tired and weary as you walk. Stop and be refreshed. Don’t be blinded by the culture into striving to find glory, but honor those who are poor in spirit, those who are struggling, those who need a hand. Amen.