

**Thy Kingdom Come; Thy Will Be
Done: A Narrative Approach to the
Kingdom of God**

Cara L. Caudill

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Biblical Studies Advisor: Duane Watson, Ph.D.

Literary Studies Advisor: Diane Chambers, Ph.D.

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**In Honor of William “Chet” Campbell for showing me the
ways of the Kingdom of God**

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Many little girls love their grandpas. In fact, the following study has been birthed out of the love of this little girl for her grandpa. Some of my earliest memories are of my grandfather folding me into his arms and ushering me into the early 20th century world of moonshine, pawpaw patches, and lumber mills through the telling of his lively stories. In the twenty-two years that I was blessed to share with my grandfather I found myself all over the world, watching nearly a century go by in story form. Oh, sweet constancy; the stories were always the same, even down to the inflection of his voice and the expressions on his face. I can recite many of his stories word for word because they never changed. This man who only had an eighth grade education was a master oral historian.

The idea for this project became solidified in my mind one night after my mother called to tell me that my grandfather had gone back into the hospital. With tears she told me that this sickness would be his last. That night I lay in bed reflecting on the years spent with my grandfather. Warm tears streamed down my face as I quietly choked back emotional sobs. Weeks earlier as I spent time in prayer the simple phrase, “Grandpa is dying,” had come to me repeatedly. I had rebuked such thoughts telling myself that I was ‘in the flesh,’ and ‘overly emotional.’ But I wasn’t in the flesh and I wasn’t overly emotional. I had heard from God about his death and had refused to listen. So that night as I lay in bed, I committed myself to recording my grandfather’s stories on tape. After he was gone I wanted to be able to close my eyes and escape to the soothing drone of his stories. However, I knew that

capturing a person's life story could be a convoluted and painstaking task. I began wondering how I would ever find time to fit this task into my already booked schedule. At three in the morning I found the answer. My grandfather's story would become part of my thesis project. I burst out of bed and found myself typing yet another revised thesis proposal in my dim-lit room. I had decided that if I could not fit this task *around* my other tasks, then I would fit it *into* my other tasks.

Approach and Methodology

Initially, I had chosen to study the Kingdom of God for my honor's thesis project. The breadth of this topic was overwhelming, but I was drawn to the study because the Kingdom serves as the central theme of Jesus' teachings. However, something in my approach seemed lacking. The task of biblical studies is primarily limited to exegeting a passage. Exegesis boils down to understanding what a text meant in its original context, and this task is essential because it is the mode by which students of Scripture remain grounded in the authors' original intentions. However, exegesis is not primarily concerned with how the fruit of biblical studies should be applied for today.

In dealing with the natural limitations of the exegetical task, I began searching for appropriate ways to apply what was learned about the Kingdom of God. Concurrently, as life situations arose with my grandfather I began reflecting on the impact of his life. This time of reflection was formative for this project, because as I thought about his life stories I realized that I understood the Kingdom of God more fully from his example.

Thus, the task of understanding the Kingdom of God in its original Scriptural context will be understood through the traditional theological task of exegesis. This traditional form of biblical studies will then be married to the more recent field of narrative studies in order to engage in the art of applying exegetical findings to our contemporary setting. Specifically, this project is the combination of research done on the Kingdom of God and research done on my grandfather, a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It hopes to flesh out Kingdom principles through the life and the stories of my Appalachian grandfather. I encourage you to interact with my grandfather as if he were your own. Hear him. Know him. Love him; because, as he shares his life with you, you should be able to see the Kingdom of God manifesting itself through him.

As we talk about the Kingdom of God, the lens through which this topic will be studied is that of the Gospel of Matthew and especially of the Matthean beatitudes.¹ The rationale for this decision is twofold. First, the scope of this project does not warrant an entire biblical analysis of the Kingdom, especially since the Gospel of Matthew is in keeping with the ethos of Scripture on this topic. And second, compared to the other three gospels Matthew appears to have the most extensively developed Kingdom theology, making it the perfect candidate for study.

The rest of this work will be devoted to a biblical exploration of the Kingdom of God, its principles, and its ideals, through the case study of my grandfather's life. Through studying his life we can see the principles of gradual, fruitful growth, the knitting together of history, and the significance of each individual playing an important part in the larger whole of God's purposes. Thus, studying the life of this

¹ Other Scriptures may be used in the process, but the focus will be limited to this gospel.

individual in his historical and spiritual context should enable us to see the Kingdom of God growing and manifesting through him. There is much to be learned from the life of this modern-day citizen of the eternal Kingdom.

Concerning methodology, this project is a hybrid. The first section is the result of traditional biblical studies stemming from literary and historical analyses; the biblical studies section is designed to exegete the Matthean beatitudes in order to provide a basis for understanding Matthew's theology of the Kingdom of God. This in turn should help to inform my grandfather's life story, which constitutes the second section of this work.

The primary narrative voice within my grandfather's life story is his own, and it was acquired through numerous days of tape recording. However, my voice is present in order to introduce and bring cohesion to my grandpa's oral history. As a result, my grandfather and I share in the role of narrator.

The taping of my grandfather's narrative was largely done while he was in the hospital with congestive heart failure and kidney failure; and, within two weeks of making the final tape he died. The taping was done under extreme circumstances with countless interruptions and while my grandfather's speech was severely affected. As a result, the transcription process became quite difficult. Thus, there are numerous places within his narrative that are [bracketed]. These brackets represent my interpretation of unclear wording that is the result of noise pollution and grandpa's jumbled speech.

Also, some of the information within his narrative came from a tape that was found dating back to 2004. On this tape Grandpa was answering questions

concerning his life, and he tells many of the same stories that he recounted on the most recent tapes. Consequently, the final form of these narratives represent his own words piecemealed together from the various tapes based on word choice and clarity. Though coming from different tapes, the stories were not changed in content, and they represent my grandfather's usual verbiage and story telling techniques.

The final section of this project then takes the biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God in Matthew and uses the findings therein as the interpretive grid through which to understand my grandfather's narrative. This section serves to illuminate Kingdom theology through the life of a contemporary Kingdom person, and it displays what the Kingdom looks like in modern terms.

Ultimately, it is this section that represents my purpose in writing. The goal of this project is to understand the Kingdom of God and how it is to be lived out on a daily basis. The other two sections are servants of this end.

The Kingdom of God is a large topic and would require a project much bigger than the current one if it were to be understood en masse. It is for this reason that the scope of this project was narrowed to a single book, and to primarily a single section within that book. The project was also narrowed so that the Kingdom of God has been understood mostly in terms of Kingdom living rather than in eschatology.

PART ONE

Matthew's Development of the Kingdom of God

Matthew alludes to the Kingdom of God from the outset of his Gospel by including a very purposefully written genealogy of Jesus. Note the structure. From Abraham to David, fourteen generations are listed (1:2-6); from David to the exile, fourteen generations are listed (1:7-11); and, from the exile to Jesus, fourteen generations are listed (1:12-16). Then, in case one did not catch the structure of fourteen generations, Matthew reemphasizes this point in verse 17. It is worth quoting. “Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.”

An observant estimation of the length of fourteen generations shows that this genealogy is not complete in nature. We are dealing with a highlighted version. There would have been a number of ways in which one could have gone about highlighting the notable relations in Jesus' genealogy,² and yet Matthew seemed to be quite purposeful in his fourteen generation structure. Through understanding the significance of the numerical structure undergirding Jesus' genealogy, much becomes apparent about Matthew's Kingdom focus.

In biblical Hebrew, as in biblical Greek, the letters of the alphabet were given number values so that א (aleph) and א (alpha) = 1, ב (bet) and β (beta) = 2, and so on throughout both alphabets. These systems were created because neither culture had independent numbering systems. It is interesting then, that the spelling of David (*dwd*, 777) in Hebrew equals fourteen, and that in Matthew's genealogy David is the

² See the Gospel of Luke for a different approach.

fourteenth name.³ Coincidence? Possibly, but given the surrounding context the structure seems to be quite intentional.

Unlike Luke's genealogy, which traces Jesus' line to Adam and ultimately to God, Matthew's version traces Jesus' ancestry back to Abraham. This may seem like a minor point, but Matthew's version has clear Jewish leanings in that three major points of Israelite history—Abraham fathering the nation, David reigning as the ideal monarch, and the nation suffering the pains of exile in Babylon—have been obviously selected and emphasized, with the reign of David serving as the middle point. The story that these emphases tell is that with Abraham, Israel was born a nation of promise, that with David, it grew into the glory of that promise, and that at the time of the exile, Israel, because of its rebellion, traded in the glory of that promise for the shame of banishment.

During the time of the exile messianic hopes grew to new heights because it was apparent that Israel needed a savior to release them from their bonds of slavery. Messianic hopes differed, but they usually revolved around Israel's time of glory, the Davidic monarch. Thus, when Matthew's genealogy emphasizes 14, 14, 14 or by extension David, David, David, with David's line sitting in the middle of the passage, one should be prepared for messianic fulfillment in the pages to come. To buttress this point, in Matthew 1:20 Joseph is called the "son of David." Out of the three sets of 14 generations, David is the name that Matthew chooses to summarize Jesus' ancestral heritage. Also, in 2:1 when the magi come to visit Jesus they ask, "where is

³ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*; eds. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 86 (see footnote 105).

the one who has been born King of the Jews?” It is clear that even from the beginning Matthew is stressing Jesus’ role as the messiah.

This Matthean leaning is important for our purposes, because if we are seeking to understand the Kingdom, then we must realize that all kingdoms have a ruler. From the outset, Matthew identifies Jesus as the promised ruler of the Kingdom of God—called the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew—and the rest of his gospel is devoted to demonstrating what the Kingdom looks like under Jesus’ kingship.

Matthean Structure

The theme section for Kingdom theology in Matthew is commonly identified as the beatitudes and encompasses Matthew 5:3-10. As with Matthew’s account of Jesus’ genealogy, structure becomes important. Verse 3 reads, “Blessed are the poor in spirit *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” Verse 10 reads, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” In biblical scholarship this pattern is called an *inclusio*, which is a rhetorical device that is roughly equivalent to bookending a passage by beginning it with a specific phrase and then ending it with that same phrase so as to set apart those things that fall in between the identical phrases, and to show that the whole section draws its theme from these repeated phrases.

Besides the *inclusio*, the literary principles of repetition and particularization are at work as well. Repetition is the reiteration of a point for effect and can be seen in the phrase “blessed” being used eight times between verses 3 and 10. With this,

particularization is the progressive qualification of a generalized statement that appears in the beginning of a pericope and is expanded upon as the text advances. In the beatitudes particularization occurs beginning with Matthew 5:3, which reads, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This verse serves as an umbrella statement that the remainder of the text expands in order to describe both Kingdom people and Kingdom promises.

By combining the literary insights gained from recognizing the *inclusio*, the repetition, and the particularization, we can summarize the main teaching of the beatitudes. In essence, this text teaches that Kingdom people are poor in spirit, and that the Kingdom will be given to those who are poor in spirit. Then, verses 4-10 qualify these two generalizations by explaining what it means to be poor in spirit and how the blessedness of the Kingdom is manifested.

Matthew’s Beatitudes

The beatitudes appear in the Gospels of Matthew and of Luke. However, the differences between the two versions are stark. Several times throughout this analysis Luke will be referenced in order to provide a point of comparison for Matthew’s Gospel. Hopefully, seeing the points of divergence between the two accounts should help us to more clearly pinpoint Matthew’s particular emphasis concerning Kingdom theology.

Matthew’s first beatitude is rendered in the NRSV, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew’s addition of τῷ πνεύματι (*to pneumati*—in the spirit) is much different from Luke’s, “Blessed are you who are

poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Given the surrounding context, Luke is arguably referring to the economically poor, whereas Matthew is speaking to a mindset of poverty.⁴ However, this mindset of poverty is not completely detached from the economic state. Rather, it gains its meaning through understanding the latter. Those who are poor in possessions and in influence are humbled because they recognize their state of absolute dependency on God and on others. Also, especially in the context of the ancient world, the poor were frequently deprived of justice and were scorned by the powers that be. These things working together created a recognizable attitude of lowliness and submission that was the result of the impoverished acknowledging their depravity of possessions and power.

Thus, Matthew adopts the language of the economically poor in order to display qualities that should be exhibited by the spiritually poor. Just as much as the economically poor are forced into a state of recognizing their lowliness and responding with humility and submission, so also should the spiritually poor bear in mind their lowly state before God and in turn live lives of humility and submission before God and humanity.

This total lack of haughtiness and pride seems to be the dominant ethic of the Kingdom of God in Matthew. All other descriptions of a Kingdom person can fit this generalized understanding, and the remaining beatitudes seek to expand this comprehensive descriptor.

The second beatitude concerns the blessedness of those who mourn. In Luke’s version, the weeping seems to be in conjunction with one’s economic status; whereas, given Matthew’s theological leanings, his depiction of mourning seems to

⁴ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 199.

be twofold. First, Matthew repeats the blessedness of those who are persecuted so that the content of this beatitude appears twice. One must wonder what the life scenario was for Matthew and/or his audience at the time of writing given the special importance of those who are being wrongly persecuted. The point being, mourning for Matthew probably has much to do with the kind of mourning resulting from the loss of life and limb due to persecution. However, this type of mourning, though definitely present, is probably not Matthew's focus in this beatitude.

This leads to the second and most prominent type of Matthean mourning. Referring back to Matthew's summary statement in 4:17 we see that Jesus preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Repentance in Scripture almost always begins with mourning over one's sins.⁵ Thus, when Jesus says that "those who mourn will be comforted," the most immediate context is that of being humbled in spirit because the depravity of one's life is recognized in light of the holiness of God's being. Traditionally, the mourning of repentance is present for personal sins and for corporate sins. Both are most likely in view here, and both capture the heart of what one who is poor in spirit will exhibit. Additionally, mourning over the loss of loved ones and because of difficult situations should not be excluded from the scope of this beatitude, though this type of mourning is not the primary focus.⁶

Ultimately, the result of mourning over sins should always be meekness, which is the theme of the third beatitude. Meekness is closely associated with

⁵ Ex 33:3-5, Num 14:38-40, Neh 1:3-7, Job 42:6, 1 Sam 7:1-3, Eccl 7:3-5, Ezra 10:5-7, Joel 1:12-14, Joel 2:11-13, et al.

⁶ Also, consider that as one mourns because of difficulties and strife, especially when the difficulties are connected to death, one's mind should be brought to repentance because one recognizes that corporately, our pain is a direct result of our sins (Genesis 3). In this way, even mourning over the most unspiritual situation should turn our eyes to spiritual matters.

humility and gentleness⁷—assuming that once people recognize how lowly they are in comparison with God, their tenor will change so that they live in light of the lowliness of their depravity. This humbled state makes them gentle with other depraved humans because they recognize that they are no different from others. Also, the greatness of their sins in comparison to the greatness of God makes them recognize how gracious God is to sinful humanity; this grand realization permeates to the very soul so that people wish to grant that same graciousness to others.

As many have noted, meekness is not to be understood as weakness.⁸ Rather, on many occasions the one who is meek is the one who is able to wield power over others, and yet yields out of mercy. Jesus himself is the greatest example of meekness in the Gospel.⁹ Twice Matthew uses the word here translated meek (*praus*, *πραῦς*) to describe Jesus. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus calls himself meek in the context of asking others to take his yoke upon themselves, because he is meek (*praios*, *πραος*) and humble in heart.¹⁰ Then, in Matthew 21:5 the evangelist comments concerning the triumphal entry, “Tell the daughter of Zion, Look your king is coming to you, meek (*πραῦς*) and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”¹¹ In Jesus we see one who is capable of giving rest because of his gentleness and also one who, though he is a king, refuses to be haughty and desires to deal gently with his subjects.

⁷ See Ephesians 4:2 and Colossians 3:12 (take note that a version of the same word used for meekness in the beatitude is translated gentleness in many English versions of these Pauline Epistles).

⁸ See, however: Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 201-202, for his discussion of *πραῦς* and the possible connotations of powerlessness assumed by this word.

⁹ Antithetically, Jesus’ parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 is exemplary of how not to display meekness.

¹⁰ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching)*, ed. James Luther Mays; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 39.

¹¹ Hare, *Matthew*, 39.

The cross bears witness to these characteristics. He remained quiet before his persecutors even though he was in the right; and, when they hanged him on the cross he allowed himself to be wrongfully killed even though he had the power to destroy those who were crucifying him. This meekness was not the result of powerlessness by any means. Rather, his meekness was willfully chosen because his heart was deeply submitted to the will of the Father (Matt. 26:36-46). Ultimately, meekness begins with submission. For sinful humanity this submission is born out of respect for who God is and out of gratitude for the mercy he has given to us.

It is natural, then, to transition from the beatitudes concerning repentant mourning and the resultant meekness to the beatitude concerning those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. After seeing the greatness of God's holiness and coming under submission to his will, we would be remiss if we did not absolutely hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God. Luke's version of Matthew's third beatitude deals with the physically hungry. He writes, "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled". Matthew, on the other hand, takes similar imagery and uses the characteristics of those who are hungry and thirsty and applies them to spiritual matters. This passage is reminiscent of Psalm 42:1-2 where the psalmist says "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for the living God." Matthew's language in the third beatitude draws its imagery from a common understanding of what it is to hunger and to thirst. The same longing, the same feeling of imminent death that one experiences without food and water, should exist within us when we are devoid of righteousness.

This righteousness, however, is most specifically understood in terms of longing for Yahweh's justice.¹² In both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek there is a strong connection between these two terms. In fact, Grudem deals with righteousness and justice as a singular attribute of God on the basis that in the Hebrew and in the Greek, the same word group lies behind these characteristics.¹³ The antonyms of righteousness and justice are wickedness (Prov. 11:5), unfaithfulness (Prov. 11:6), deception (Prov. 11:18), stubbornness (Isaiah 46:12), etc, and these evil characteristics go contrary to the righteous nature of Yahweh (Deut. 32:4) and his laws (Ps. 19:8) which are characterized by acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

The hunger and thirst for righteousness, then, becomes twofold. First, the desire for righteousness is understood in a temporal manner so that one would immediately begin to see God's righteousness reflected on the earth through justice, mercy, and humility. This hope longs to see humans walking in the ways of God and manifesting God's righteousness on earth. And, it is a hope that desires righteousness from oneself as well as from others.

This longing, however, is not expected to be met on a global scale without the intervention of God. The second facet of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, then, is seen in desiring divine intervention—in desiring the Kingdom in its fullness. To properly long for righteousness one must ultimately long for God himself. In the

¹² See Psalm 36:6, 37:6; Prov. 8:20; Isa. 1:21, 5:16, 59:14, Hos. 2:19, Amos 5:24, et. al. to see the frequent juxtaposition of righteousness and justice.

¹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Intersociety Press, 1994), 203-205. Grudem points out that the word groups based around *tsedek* (צדק) in the Hebrew and *dikaio* (δικαιος) in the Greek are used as a basis for the English words righteousness and justice. The interconnection of these two words is not as clearly seen in English versions of the text as it is in original language versions of the text.

Old Testament this longing was commonly expressed by prophets through messianic and/or Kingdom expectations. Take for instance Isaiah 16:5, “Then a throne shall be established in steadfast love in the tent of David, and on it shall sit in faithfulness a ruler who seeks justice and is swift to do what is right.” This passage recognizes that in the future a Davidic King will return in order to restore justice and righteousness. This seems to assume that it will take the rightful monarch over Israel to bring about ultimate righteousness. Also, the righteousness in view here is not a momentary righteousness, but an eternal one. In this vein Daniel speaks, “seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24).¹⁴

Subsequently, when Christ says “blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness,” the righteousness that should be desired includes both personal and corporate righteousness manifested in temporal and in eternal ways. It must be remembered, however, that our personal righteousness is the only facet of righteousness that we can actively control. Thus, Christ delivers the next three beatitudes which expand upon how righteousness should be exhibited in one’s life. Matthew 5:7-9 shows that hungering and thirsting for righteousness requires mercy, purity and peacemaking. The first of the beatitudes to increase our understanding of righteousness centers on the theme of mercy.

The Greek word *ἔλεος* (*eleos*) is used throughout Matthew to describe this attribute of righteousness.¹⁵ In its secular usage this word refers to being moved by

¹⁴ Also consult Isaiah 32:17, Isaiah 51:6, Isaiah 61:11, Hosea 2:19, Malachi 4:2, et. al. for a fuller picture of the eternality of the righteousness hoped for in Jewish prophesy.

¹⁵ Matthew 5:7, 9:27, 12:7, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30, 20:31, 23:23

someone's sufferings so that alleviatory action is encouraged.¹⁶ Accordingly, Bultmann notes that in ancient trials the judge's *ἔλεος* (mercy) was always sought, sometimes with tears, in hopes that the judge would rule in one's favor out of compassion.¹⁷

Similarly, the Matthean rendering of mercy has much to do with compassion. Compassion is an emotional stirring depicted by the word *σπλανχνον* (*splanchnon*) which describes the entrails of a sacrificed animal and by extension refers to the inward seat of feelings.¹⁸ The picture this word portrays is of one's bowels stirring so that this feeling motivates moral action. In the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35 the merciful king is moved by compassion (*splanchnistheis*) and forgives an enormous debt. Then in return, the man who had the large debt forgiven later refuses to forgive the small debt of a fellow servant. When the king finds out about his servant's unforgiveness, he confronts the servant and says, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Matt. 18:32-33). Jesus then connects the actions of the king with the actions of the Father so that God is seen as merciful and desirous that humanity be merciful as well.

This parable, which expounds on the beatitude of mercy, reflects Jewish thought in which God is seen as abundantly merciful (Exod. 20:6, Deut. 5:10, et. al.) and in which mercy is seen as a religious virtue (Hos. 6:6, Mic. 6:8, et. al.).¹⁹ As a result, when Christ says, "Blessed are the merciful," the type of mercy referred to is

¹⁶ R. Bultmann, "ἔλεος, ἐλεεω" *TDNT* 222-224.

¹⁷ C. Spicq, "ἔλεος," *TLNT* 473 (quoting Bultmann in *TDNT*, 2:478).

¹⁸ Bultmann, *TDNT* 1067.

¹⁹ Spicq, *TLNT* 476.

one born out of a deep stirring of compassion that is manifested in acts of kindness intended to alleviate pain and suffering, and that frequently offers forgiveness.²⁰ If we are to act righteously, then we must reflect the merciful characteristic of the righteous God.²¹ The same is true of the characteristics of purity in heart and peacemaking.

The blessedness of the pure in heart sets up a theme in Matthew that contends with the excessive ritual purity of pharisaic Judaism. In Matthew 23 Jesus proclaims a series of woes. Verses 25-28 are especially pertinent to the theme of purity in heart. In this pericope Jesus calls the teachers of the law and the Pharisees wicked and hypocritical because outwardly they seem righteous but inwardly they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Similarly, in the previous woe Jesus decries their mastery over tithing and yet their deficiency of justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23-24). In this context he describes the previous triplet of characteristics as the more important matters of the law—the matters of the law that should be manifested in our lives if we are truly pure in heart.

This section informs our understanding of what Jesus meant by proclaiming the blessedness of the pure in heart, and it coincides with John Nolland's understanding of this concept. Nolland notes that this type of purity refers to one's

²⁰ See Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1999), 169 and Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 204 for discussions of the outgrowths of mercy. Both commentators describe the bent towards action that is implied by the term translated mercy. This is especially seen in the morphology of *ἔλεος* (*eleos*) so that it came to describe the religious duty of almsgiving.

²¹ Acting righteously also includes reflecting the nature of Jesus, the ruler of the Kingdom of God. Implicit in this beatitude is Jesus' desire that Kingdom people would be so deeply moved over the sufferings of humanity that they would generously perform acts of kindness, goodness, and love in order to reduce sufferings. Jesus models this characteristic in Matthew 20:29-34. In this story two blind men call out to Jesus asking him to have mercy on them. Matthew then writes that "Jesus had compassion on them" and healed their eyes (Matt. 20:34). Having compassion was not the ending point for Jesus. Rather, his compassion was a starting point that compelled him to bring healing. To be a Kingdom person means that we must follow the example of the ruling King of the Kingdom.

motives being able to stand against “open scrutiny”—an idea that relies heavily on the Jewish understanding that the heart is the seat of human thoughts and emotions.²² Jesus’ reinterpretation of adultery (Matt. 5:28) and his teachings on other evil characteristics (Matt. 15:10-19) are the logical conclusions of such an understanding of the heart.²³ It follows that if one’s emotions and thoughts are bent on purity that their actions will be pure as well.

Similarly, much of how this passage should be understood comes from the Psalms. Psalm 24 reflects the demands of a temple worshiper and summarizes these demands by extolling those who have clean hands and a pure heart. These dual requirements are inseparable from one another and translate into actions proceeding from pure thoughts and emotions.²⁴ In Psalm 24 the immediate understanding of clean hands and a pure heart revolves around keeping oneself away from idols.

However, purity of heart is elaborated in Psalm 78 by explaining the actions of those who are not pure in heart. The impure are characterized by pride, violence, iniquity, evil conceits, scoffery, malice speech, arrogance, and oppression (Ps. 78:2-9). To summarize this beatitude, a Kingdom person will not merely perform acts of righteousness, but those acts of righteousness will flow from an inward righteousness that seeks the face of God and God’s righteous ways (Ps. 78:16-28). Though actions are not the judge of this inward purity, they are indicators. Thus, if we are truly pure in heart we will display justice, mercy and faithfulness, and we will stray from the impure actions described by Psalm 78.

²² Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 205.

²³ Hare, *Matthew*, 41.

²⁴ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 48-49.

The final beatitude describing what it means to hunger and thirst after righteousness is transmitted through the seventh beatitude which exalts those who are peacemakers. The blessedness of a peacemaker would have been a timely exhortation given the general uneasiness that had been aroused between Israel and Rome as the result of messianic warriors trying to instate the Kingdom of God by force.²⁵

Matthew's usage of the word εἰρηνοποιος (*eirenapios*), which is translated "peacemakers," represents the only New Testament employment of this word.²⁶ εἰρηνοποιος (*eirenapios*) carries the connotation of the promotion of human concord,²⁷ also includes the absence of war, and is derived from εἰρηνη (*eirene*) which normally translates *shalom* in the LXX.²⁸ *Shalom* roughly means the state of being "well, complete, safe, and sound." As a result, a peacemaker is one who actively seeks to make wellness, completeness, safety, and soundness a reality for oneself, one's family, one's friends, and even one's enemies. This beatitude is closely connected with later sections of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus counsels both reconciliation and radical love.

In Matthew 5:24 Jesus addresses the need for peace between brothers—between those with an intimate connection, especially a religious one—and he advises his listeners to be reconciled to one another before offering their gifts at the altar (i.e. before worshipping). This constitutes a need for *shalom* between one Kingdom person and another. However, Jesus' commands become more challenging.

²⁵ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 167-168.

²⁶ W. Foerster, "εἰρηνοποιος" *TDNT* 210-211.

²⁷ Foerster, *TDNT* 211.

²⁸ Spicq, *TLNT* 424-438.

There is a clear connection between the seventh beatitude and Matthew 5:38-48 through the promise of being sons of God (5:9, 5:45). The latter pericope deals with a Kingdom person's relationship to those who are evil and who wish the righteous person harm. Christ tells his listeners not to resist an evil person, but rather to be kind, generous and loving to that person, always praying for the one that is doing the persecuting. These characteristics are attributed to the Father who provides the ultimate example of what constitutes being a peacemaker. Thus, a peacemaker is one who does good and shows love to all, even to the most evil (Matt. 5:44-46).

Matthew's particular bent on peacemaking provides an appropriate transition to the final beatitude, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). This beatitude is then repeated and expanded in Matthew 5:11-12 where Jesus connects the persecution for righteousness with persecution on account of Jesus' name. Jesus tells his followers to rejoice when persecuted on his account, because their persecution for righteousness models the persecution faced by the prophets—a persecution that Jesus himself will suffer later in the Gospel. Persecuted disciples are to find solace in the fact that they are carrying on the prophetic tradition of righteousness. Accepting persecution when one is in the right is the perfect example of how being poor in spirit is to be manifested. Just as the cross was Jesus' ultimate expression of the ethics of the Kingdom, so too, when people are willing to share in the ways of the cross (Matt. 10:37-39) they perfectly exemplify the beatitudinal behaviors of the Kingdom.

As already seen, Jesus calls his followers to be poor in spirit. This distinction draws its meaning from the economically poor who faced constant persecution. It

seems that Jesus is making the claim that just as the economically poor are frequently persecuted, so also will the poor in spirit be persecuted for their spiritual leanings.

However, the driving theme of the Kingdom is blessedness, and this blessedness will sustain even the most severely persecuted as they look forward to the full inheritance of Kingdom riches.

In Kingdom terms, being poor in Spirit through the embodiment of a beatitudinal life reflects the ways of Christ, the forbearer of the Kingdom, and thus testifies to the ways of the Kingdom. The result of this embodiment is broadly understood through the phrase “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” and includes being comforted, inheriting the earth, being filled with righteousness, being shown mercy, seeing God and being called sons of God.²⁹ Jesus calls his disciples to follow him in taking up an attitude of being poor in spirit. This attitude will be manifested in mourning, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity, peacemaking, and even persecution. However, as Jesus asks his disciples to follow him in living out the difficult ethics of the Kingdom, he also promises his followers the grand blessings of the Kingdom as their reward.

Kingdom Theology in Perspective

At this point, we now have the content of the beatitudes summarized, which means that we also have the message of the Kingdom summarized because the beatitudes serve as the main interpretive grid for Kingdom theology in Matthew. This enables us to catch a glimpse of what Matthew was proposing concerning the core message of

²⁹ Completing an in-depth study of the implications of these Kingdom rewards is beyond the scope of this project since our focus here centers on how one man embodied Kingdom principles.

the gospel. This is possible because Matthew frames the beatitudes as inherently descriptive of the gospel. In Matthew 4:17 the Evangelist says that “*from that time*” Jesus went about preaching “repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near.” Also, Matthew 4:23 summarizes Jesus’ preaching ministry throughout Galilee by saying that he was “teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom.”³⁰ Then, directly following these two summary statements concerning the good news that Jesus was preaching, Matthew inserts the beatitudes which serve as a model of what Jesus taught concerning the Kingdom.

These initial insights drawn from the beatitudes should be kept in mind while reading my grandfather’s narrative, because his life displays these Kingdom qualities and blessings in a contemporary setting.

Before starting his narrative, it must be said that the Kingdom is an exciting topic; but, a word of caution is warranted. I have found that we are often incapable of immediately making radical changes in the world. Unfortunately, people tend to react to this reality by doing nothing because they feel overwhelmed and paralyzed. However, I contend that throughout history God has not been calling us to immediately make changes on a grand scale. Rather, Kingdom theology in both testaments bears witness to the principle of gradual, pervasive change brought about through faithful individuals and communities. This call can be clearly traced from Genesis to Revelation and it is practically beneficial because it is less overwhelming than single-handedly trying to transform entire empires in one fell swoop.

It is quite evident in Scripture that the Kingdom of God will start small and gradually overtake the world. One of Jesus’ Kingdom parables in Matthew vividly

³⁰ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 196.

portrays this principle. He notes, “[the Kingdom] is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree” (Matt. 13:31). This text is reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2:24-45 where a stone hewn from heaven destroys earthly kingdoms and eventually overtakes the landscape of the world by becoming a great mountain (representative of a great kingdom). From these texts, and ones of a similar nature, we see that the basic mode of large-scale transformation takes place through individuals and small communities living out Kingdom principles; these communities eventually gain converts and, over time, spread globally (thus making large-scale changes).³¹

Two prime examples of God working through small communities in order to bring about worldwide change are seen in the nation of Israel and in the church. The nation of Israel was a relatively small community that was called to live differently from the rest of the world in the ways that they worshiped, ate, drank, worked, and dressed. As a nation Israel suffered many abuses. However, “in the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) Israel brought the savior of the world into human history.

This savior called to himself a core of twelve disciples who would be responsible for the spread of the good news of the Kingdom into the entire world. This community of disciples was designed to generate more disciples all over the world. Their mode of operation was to go into areas, establish Christian communities and community leaders so that these communities could impact their regions. The

³¹ This is not to fall into post-millennialist thought. For sure, the Kingdom of God starts small and gradually begins to make worldwide changes. However, Scripture attests to the need for a radical move of God to bring about the eternal reality of the Kingdom of God (see the book of Revelation, especially chapters 18-22).

church began with twelve³² people and has spread globally over the course of 2000 years to include you and me.

To summarize, God starts with a small group of faithful people and uses those people to make lasting changes in the world. A movement does not have to be big or popular, or even overtly successful to be of God. He has his sovereign ways, and he calls his people to trust and patiently obey those ways.

Furthermore, we do not always see the things that we are working towards come to fruition (Heb. 11). In this vein, Peter reminds us that the apparent “slowness” of Christ’s return should not be considered as slowness in light of God’s existence outside of time-space history (2 Peter 3). We might want to see tangible results today, but God does not see today as we do. To God, all things are—whether they have happened on our chronological time line yet or not. Put differently, God calls things done that have not yet been completed in our time frame (i.e. God considers believers to be sanctified even though they are in the process of sanctification).

We must realize that it is through the knitting together of history that we get the finished product. Thus, each step is important. We would not have the church without first having the nation of Israel. We would not have the nation of Israel without first having the twelve sons of Jacob. We would not have Jacob without first having Abraham, and so on until we get back to Adam. Was Adam the grand finale in God’s divine play? I should say not. However, just because Adam was only a small part in the larger history of God’s plan in the world, does that mean that he was

³² plus or minus some taking into account Judas’ abdication and the other people gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

insignificant? We have already seen that without Adam we would have no church—Hebrews 11 seems to bolster this argument.

All of humanity, especially God's chosen people, has a significant part to play in reaching the telos of humanity. We are deeply interconnected and thus dependent upon one another (and ultimately upon God) to fulfill our purposes in God's sovereign plan.

The point being, just because we do not see how our individual lives could have any large-scale effect on the world does not mean that we should halt all attempts to make changes. Rather, we should adopt the biblical model that does not require instant gratification but rather sees each individual playing an important part in the larger whole of God's purposes based on his sovereign placement of humanity in time-space history (Acts 17:26).

Thus, in order to transform the world, we should seek to transform our immediate sphere of influence.³³ This is the part that Israel and the disciples played, and it would behoove us to adopt their strategy. We first must understand the type of life God is calling us to live—a life defined by the ideals of the Kingdom of God. Once we understand what these Kingdom ideals are, then we must seek to live a Kingdom life to the best of our abilities, no matter how insignificant or imperfect our efforts may seem. Communities that are based on Kingdom principles *will* bear witness—often through their very existence—to the surrounding worldly communities. Their witness will proclaim that the Kingdom of God does exist and

³³ This does not, however, reduce the need for worldwide missions; it merely emphasizes the fact that wherever we are in the world it is best to cultivate small communities and then to allow those Christ-centered communities to gradually bring about the transformation of the surrounding worldly communities.

that it is possible and even desirable to live according to Kingdom principles; Kingdom communities will point to a higher way of life, and they will call people into that higher way of life. This is a slow and frequently painful way to bring about worldwide transformation; yet, it is the biblical way—the only way.

With this thought we turn our attentions to the life of my grandfather.

PART TWO

Grandpa's Narrative

In the hill country of Eastern Kentucky, on the Kentucky side of Devon, West Virginia,³⁴ a little boy by the name of William Chester Campbell was born to his parents James Colfax Campbell and Tennessee Niccati Cherokee Catawba Samson Campbell in December of 1910. His father had been born James Blankenship but was later adopted by a Scottish medical doctor and given the name Campbell, while his mother was born to an English father and to a full-blooded Cherokee Indian mother.

Along with many people his age, my grandfather had been born a cultural mutt. And, as a number of these cultures collided in the melding pot of the Appalachian Mountains, a distinctive backdrop was painted in front of which my grandfather would live much of his life. This backdrop was simple, and yet profoundly complex, carefree, and yet full of pain. When “Chet” Campbell was born, women could not vote, the depression was looming in the distance, people still remembered the Civil War, and most everyone in Kentucky knew what it was to be in need. This was the era of William Taft, of lumber mills and coal mines, of child labor and raising hemlines, and of camp meetings. This was the era that gave birth to my grandpa.

More important than the era that gave birth to my grandpa are the people that gave birth to my grandpa. Culture may have a profound way of impacting the development of a child, but culture's impact cannot compare to the family's impact.

³⁴ More commonly known as Woodman, Kentucky.

Thus, in trying to understand God's workings in my grandfather's life, we must understand God's workings in his parents' lives. In describing the home in which he was born, my grandfather said the following:

[My Parents...there] ain't no way to describe them. It was a lovely home. We'd have prayer meetings, and a lot of times we had em in our home. They would sing some songs and pray and sometimes there were some of them that would shout a little bit. [Sometimes] they would pray all night for somebody that was sick. But in the homes when they would run out of seats we always had boards about 12 inches wide and about 12 foot long, and we'd put em on chairs or nail kegs or anything we could put em on. And you'd sit on that bench and there wouldn't be no back or nothing on it. A lot of times they'd go on till 11-12 o'clock at night.

[Now my mom's full name was] Tennessee Nicotie Cherokee Catawba Samson Campbell. She was a little short woman [who] smoked [an] old clay pipe.³⁵ She wasn't heavy, but she was Indian...about half Indian. You could tell she had Indian in her. Before she died, oh you could tell she was [Indian].

She was a religious woman. Every night if one of the boys was out late at night, your grandma would be on her knees praying for em until they come in that night. One time after my brother Dave, he was 50 years old, after he was divorced and was going out with another girl, she would sit there and worry herself to death about Dave, and him 50 years old, cause he was out with a girl.

³⁵ To qualify the fact that his mother smoked a pipe, he added, "But she finally quit that, though."

She started out in the Baptist church and when there was a baptism [she got baptized and] she was filled with the spirit and she was speaking in tongues. And the pastor come and told her, 'Tennessee, we like you. We want you in our church. But we can't have you speaking in tongues. We can't have none of that. You're gonna have to give that up.' She wouldn't give it up, and so they throwed her out of the Baptist church.

[Now my mom loved everybody]. She didn't say nothing about nobody. She always said, 'if you can't say nothing good about somebody, don't say nothing.' And she held it up too.

[And], if she ever met anybody to give to [and] they'd come in bumming, she'd never turn em away. [So] she cooked all the time. She'd always have enough food for a half a dozen people to come in and eat. They'd come just like a motel. They'd come in [and] eat. Old peddlers and things would stop there and eat, stay all night, eat and go on their way. They all knowed Tennessee. They'd all stop. Then they'd get up the next morning and leave. A lot of times they'd give her a whole bunch of junk—the old peddlers like that aren't like the ones now.

[Now] my mom, she went to school when Dad was schoolteacher there. And they married while [she was still in school and while he was still the schoolteacher]. He taught school awhile and then he quit teaching and did a little bit of logging up and down the river there. Then he went to the Ritter Lumber Company and he was kind of a blacksmith.

[My Dad], he was a Jack-of-all-Trades. Even if he didn't know how to do it, he'd try it out. He worked at the Lumber Company, [and] when he was working there if anybody died—whether he was an employee or not—[Ritter Lumber Company] would furnish the lumber and dad would make the caskets for em and line em...[and he wouldn't charge a penny]. If anybody needed a pastor or they didn't have no pastor to preach the funeral or anything, [then] he could preach the funeral too. He just tried to help people out.

These salt of the earth people gave birth to six children, the third of which was my grandfather. Grandpa was your average young Kentucky boy. In his own words he said:

We went to school and we played ball and we played all kind of games. And they had a big hillside at the back of the school and they had a big papaw patch up there that we'd go at and get papaws and eat them and play in them awhile. We'd play hide and seek and then we'd play cowboys and Indians and run all over them mountains and things.

Now, before getting an idealized view of an angelic boy running around the hill country of Kentucky, listen to what else he did in the pawpaw patches:

At school when we were kids, when the girls would go to the bathroom us boys would hide in that pawpaw patch and throw rocks at the outhouse.

And worse yet:

[My Cousin] Bob Varney was the best friend I had. [We were just like brothers]. [Every night after school Bob and me would wait on George Bailey, a kid from school, and beat [him up]. Just meanness [made us go

after him]. He lived just up on the hill from the coalhouse. [And] at the coalhouse that night his mother would be standing out there with a butcher knife waiting on us. Boy she'd get after us. She'd wait at the coalhouse [and be ready to kill us].

Now, grandpa's childhood antics are amusing and relatively harmless (though I wonder if George Bailey and his mother would agree). However, his devilish personality turned dangerous in adolescence.

During the height of Prohibition my grandfather fell prey to the temptations of his moonshining older brothers. With a chuckle he explained to me how he would frequently relax in the woods while watching Clarence and Crawford make moonshine. This highly coveted substance during America's dry period—the “elixir of joy”—would be made by my great uncles, passed on to my teenage grandfather and then covertly sold to the thirsty folk of Woodman by my morally decadent patriarch for twenty-five cents a pint.

The government may have had difficulties containing every pocket of alcohol production, but where Uncle Sam failed, Grandma Tennessee prevailed. Grandpa joked that whenever his mother would find their whisky she would pour it out—“*even if it was worth a thousand dollars or more!*” Characteristic of the good Christian women of the day, my great grandmother would not tolerate the demon in the bottle. If only my grandfather had followed suite. He began drinking with friends when he was fourteen, and he was gripped by drunkenness and carousing for the next twenty-seven years. In his estimation he was drinking at least 2/5 of a quart of Whisky and smoking two packs of cigarettes a day—a lifestyle that kept him drunk much of the

time. His drunkenness led him to acts of stupidity. Once he spiked the church water jug with 2 pints of Whisky; and, when he was well into his twenties he “accidentally” proposed to two different women—neither of which were my grandmother! Now, by accidentally I mean that he was too drunk to keep straight his multiple relationships with local women.

Surprisingly though, in the midst of his reveling my grandfather had great shining moments. He quit school and went to work in the lumber mills when he was sixteen to help out his family. During this time he took a great deal of responsibility for his two younger sisters who were 14 and 6. Each year “Chess,” as they called him, would take his sisters to buy Easter dresses. For Niccati, the 14 year old, he would buy all of her school supplies and whenever her outfits would start to get ragged he would buy her new ones. The juxtaposition of the responsible young grandpa and the drunk young grandpa is mind boggling.

Well, the drunk young grandpa got himself into trouble with the girls he had proposed to. They were coming close to finding out what he had done, and he was feeling the weight of his intoxicated decisions. He was in no way ready to settle down and get married and so in his own words he “*pulled out through the back door*” and ran away to the army. About the same time Hitler was invading Poland my grandfather decided that the difficulties of army life would be better than facing up to the tribulations that two angry women could cause.

So, grandpa joined the army in McClure, Virginia and did his boot camp training in Colorado. However, for someone who grew up running around the

mountains of Kentucky he had some serious disdain for the more tasking parts of military life. Listen to the way he described his first post:

Now when I went into the military I was in the 12th Infantry. And, I didn't like the 12th Infantry—we done a lot of walking in that— so I decided to get out of the 12th Infantry and go to some other outfit. They wouldn't give me a transfer so I took Cooking and Baking school at Fort Mede. Every year when I would graduate, if they wouldn't give me a transfer I'd sign up for more courses. [I just kept taking classes] until they give me a transfer.

Well, he finally got his transfer and he was sent to the White House Guard where he served for 18 months during FDR's administration. Unfortunately, his time at the White House was cut short because he enjoyed himself a bit too much there:

"I had a good time at the White House Guard. I went Absent Without Leave (AWOL) for a few days onetime. The sergeant of the guard was a good friend of mine, so he tried to sneak me through the back door of the kitchen. He come to me, cause he knew where I was at. He plopped down there and he said, 'Campbell,' he says, 'they're gonna pick you up.' He said, 'You better not let em pick you up.'

[So], I stayed at the house with the girls I was with. It was getting dark—you couldn't see to tell who anybody was in passing. So, I went back through the [base] kitchen and I just went to the captain's office, you know. And this old captain, he looked at me, and he said, 'Campbell, you're one of the best cooks I've got, [but] you don't seem to realize that you're guarding the president of the United States.' [That old captain] told me that if I didn't straighten up, he

would have to ship me out. I told him, 'I don't care where you send me.' Two weeks later I ended up in Tanacross, Alaska. I guess I said a couple of cuss words, cause I was still drunk. I got a few cuss words in, so he turned around and sent me to Tanacross, Alaska.

Now, one might think that after being sent to Alaska for unruly behavior my grandpa would have walked the straight and narrow for fear of where else they could have sent him. However, as this next story shows, that was not the case:

[Now], I was first cook up there [in Alaska]. And "we had all kind of old ketchup bottles there; so, this guy that owned the whisky store said, 'pull around behind the store,' and he says, 'I'll get rid of your ketchup and sell you all kind of [whisky]; [I'll put the whisky in the ketchup bottles] and seal [em] back up for ya and it'll look like that's the way they came.' So we'd go around behind the store and give him the ketchup and he'd seal it up with fifty dollars of whisky. And we'd take it back [to the base]. We didn't get caught for a long time until somebody got jealous of us [and told on us]. They locked us up for a night in the guard house, and then let us go."

It was by the graces of God that he did not get sent somewhere worse than Alaska. Anyhow, soon enough my grandfather would be free to go permanently. After the war was over grandpa was discharged at Patterson Air Field in Cincinnati, Ohio. He spent some time back in McClure, Virginia running a boarding house, but he was tired of Appalachia. As he always said, "[I had to] get out of [that] mud-hole." So, he went back to the city he had grown fond of—Washington D.C. He went back looking for a job, and he found so much more.

My grandfather had grown up in the same region as my grandmother. Though they were eight years apart, they went to the same one-room schoolhouse for three years. Apparently, on the way to the schoolhouse there was a creek that the school-kids had to cross. So, my grandfather took it upon himself to make sure that little Gertie was being taken care of, and as a result he would carry her books across the creek and watch out for her on the way to school. During those years he took care of her like a big brother. When my grandfather left school at 16, my grandmother was eight years old. If only those two kids would have known what the future had in store for them.

Through the passing of time and the changing of life circumstances my grandparents lost touch with each other. However, God's guiding hand was at work. When my grandpa moved back to Washington D.C. after his stays in Alaska and Virginia, he was surprised to find a contingency of people from back home living in D.C. As most country folk living in large urban settings do, my grandfather found solace in his Appalachian friends—one of them being my grandmother. Grandma and Grandpa started going to movies and to a hot dog shop they liked. After spending time together grandpa said that it just seemed "*automatic—like the right thing to do.*" So, he proposed. His reasons were more practical than romantic. He knew he loved her, but he also knew that there was "*no sense in her keeping [an apartment] and [him] keeping one.*" Soon after his proposal they "*went down to the big Baptist church in D.C. and got married.*" As he said, "*That's all there was to it.*" There were five people at the wedding: two witnesses, my grandparents, and the

minister. They didn't even tell their parents until after the ceremony, to which his mother replied, "*I won't have to bother with him now, let somebody else do it.*"

Well, unfortunately, my grandmother did not realize how much bothering she would have to do over her husband. He was always a kind man, but he still had a drinking problem—and even kind drunks are no picnic. I can imagine my grandmother being at the end of her rope with my grandfather, frustrated because all of her best efforts at curbing his drinking problem had ended in failure.

As frustrating as his drinking was for my grandmother, grandpa was in good company. St. Augustine confessed that he had prayed to God, "Lord make me chaste...but not yet."³⁶ In many ways my grandfather reacted to the sins in his life much like Augustine had. Grandpa explained that growing up he didn't care what he was doing "*just so [he] was out with somebody.*" This carried over into his church life too. He said that he would go to church and to prayer services faithfully because he enjoyed the walk in the cool morning air, he liked being with all of the young people, and he enjoyed the post-service youth activities. He especially liked the girls. In his own words, "*I would usually go to [whichever] one the most girls went to.*" Now, he admitted that he could not remember a thing that was said during those church meetings. However, those services must have had lasting effects on his life. Being surrounded by people who are praying well into the night, singing songs and hymns, and proclaiming the Word of God is not something that quickly leaves a person. Constantly being immersed in the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition would have left lasting impressions on his psyche concerning the nature of the church's ministry.

³⁶ See Augustine's *Confessions*.

More importantly, however, grandpa explained that before leaving Woodman he made a commitment to the Lord to follow God wherever he led. He made this commitment, and yet he refused to follow God into holiness. He continued to get drunk and to chase after girls. When he got married he stopped chasing after girls, but he still was getting drunk. He knew following the Lord was the right thing to do, but he wasn't ready to give in and to give up his ways. Like Augustine, God had planted seeds of truth in his life through his encounters with believers, and yet the deceptive sway of sin kept my grandfather from fully turning to Christ. He could openly proclaim that Christ was the savior, and yet he could not give in because he was still looking to Alcohol for his salvation.

It is an occasion for joy, then, when one realizes how God brought about the end of my grandpa's love for whisky. As the story goes, my grandfather had been given charge over my three year old mother for the afternoon. The two of them would often go into downtown D.C. so that my mother could ride the ponies; but, this particular day's destination, the Mt. Rainer Whiskey store, though equally exciting, was not nearly as age appropriate for my mother. After their interesting afternoon out my grandfather returned with his so-thought naïve daughter. Much to his surprise my young mother burst through the door shouting gleefully, "We went to the whikey store!" Yes, she said "whikey." Most people get quite a laugh out of this scene; however, most does not include my grandmother. Her response was not one of lightheartedness. And, the scene quickly turned precarious for my dear grandpa Chet. Among other things, grandma asked him, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" He replied by hanging his head and saying "yes." Apparently, the years of nagging from

the tag-team duo of his liquor-free mother and wife could not elicit a fraction of the shame he felt when his innocent little girl broke through the door, proud that she had been to the “whikey” store.

Shortly before this incident my grandmother had started going to the Brentwood Foursquare Gospel Church on the Maryland side of the DC line. There she had found comfort, community and Pastor Vernon. My grandfather would periodically attend church with his family. Church-going had been a part of his life growing up and he knew that he needed to raise his child in the same fashion. Even still, he did not let making it to church stop him from making it to the whisky store. He would go to church and drink both. Pastor Vernon knew about my grandfather’s double lifestyle and he called him out on it. He said, “*Campbell, I think it is about time you throw off your old ways and get saved and take good care of your family.*” This type of pressure especially increased after the “whikey store incident” because my grandmother had shared the story with Vernon. Evidently Vernon made it a common practice to challenge grandpa about his faith and his lifestyles. And, eventually my grandfather got tired of the constant cajoling. Here is grandpa’s account of what happened:

I told him one day, I said, ‘Now Pastor Vernon,’ I says, ‘you know you’re a good friend of mine. Whatever you say, I won’t get mad at ya,’ but, I said, ‘when I decide to get saved,’ I says, ‘you will know it cause I will meet you half way.’ Then Vernon says, ‘I’ll never ask you again unless the Lord says to.’

Well praise God, because the Lord said to. In Grandpa's words, "*One day I saw him coming up the aisle, so I met him halfway.*" Right there in the middle of the service, in the middle of the aisle, my grandfather made a clean break from drinking and smoking both. The moonshining, so drunk that he proposed to two women, soldier cussing at his superior grandpa died that day so that the gentle and kind, compassionate, Jesus-loving grandpa could be given life. In his words:

I was saved in the last part of 1951. I joined the Foursquare Gospel Church in 1952. I had always said that I would never act like some of them people did when they got the baptism. When I got the baptism, I done worse than what they did. There was about 30 some people when we started going there. We went for six months or something before I got saved. And when I got saved I was a drinking and smoking and everything when I got saved. And I quit drinking and I quit smoking both the same day. There happened to be this bunch of old ladies in the church—Sister Heath, Sister Jenkins, Sister Davis, Aunt Becky—and they was prayer warriors. Buddy they prayed. They believed in praying. If I'd get so bad a wanting whisky or cigarettes so bad I'd call them old ladies and they would pray, or get around me and pray for hours at a time. I don't believe I'd of ever made it if it hadn't a been for them old ladies.

Thanks to the community of faith around him, he was given the strength to fight against his sinful desires. And, this strength became evident to all. At the time of his conversion he was working at Sears and Roebucks Warehouse, and grandpa said that all of his coworkers noticed his change of life. It even seems that one of his

coworkers was so influenced by his transformed life that she started going to church, got saved and gave up smoking and drinking too.

Also, during the height of the Civil Rights movement my grandfather worked with a number of black men at Sears. Surprisingly, at a time when racism was common among men his age, my grandfather's attitude was much different.

I got along good with them black boys. I had the boys a working for me, three or four black boys and they would do anything in the world I asked em to do. They would jump in the river if I asked them to. Because I would uphold em. The boss over me, he would tell on em, everything they were doing and everything. But I wouldn't, I'd uphold em. [The bosses] they'd ask me where they was hiding their whisky and things... 'were they drinking?' I wouldn't tell em nothing. One time I told a manager, I said, 'If I did know, I wouldn't tell you.' And them boys found that out, and after that, buddy, them boys would do anything in the world I'd ask em to.³⁷

Grandpa's newfound love for Jesus turned into an enduring love for people that was able to cross racial bounds at a time when even ministers of the gospel could not find it in their hearts to do the same.

In addition to his Christ-like attitude towards to Civil Rights movement, God also began to impact his pocket book. Grandpa told the following story:

I'll never forget one time. I was in Mt. Rainer, Maryland. There was a preacher there having a revival. I had five dollars and a quarter in my

³⁷ Granted, to the day he died he still called black men "black boys." This may seem like a racist title to our politically correct minds, but when you were born in 1910 certain phrases are just a little too difficult to winnow out of your vocabulary—especially when it is doubtful if he even knew what the phrase "politically correct" meant.

pocket. So this preacher was taking up an offering, [saying], 'give this, give that...' I was going to give the quarter. But the Lord says, 'Give the five dollars and keep the quarter.' I said, 'Lord, this is all I got to do me to next week—buy groceries and stuff with.' And he said, 'Give the five dollars and keep the quarter.' So, well I finally broke down and gave the five dollars and kept the quarter. And you know, the next week somebody paid me a bill for, I think it was thirty, thirty-some dollars that I'd wrote off. I thought I'd never get it.

Control of the pocket-book is sometimes one of the last strongholds to go in a person's life, but God quickly overcame even that realm.

Well, needless to say, his conversion elicited a total turn around. He began helping around the church by working altar calls at night and by helping with other church activities. "Every time the church was open, we were there," he said. After a while Pastor Vernon confronted my grandfather about joining the church council.

Grandpa said:

'I know a little bit about the Bible.' And I said, 'the bible says you're not supposed to be on the board if you are a drunkard.' Then Vernon said, 'ahh, don't pull that one on me. I've been in church too long.' He says, 'you got saved! Why, you had to do something...how could he save you if you hadn't done nothing.' Well, then he said, 'we don't want a bunch of drunks and things workin' here, [but] that's what the Lord come for, to change drunks.'
[So], I served on the board fourteen years before I came off.

In addition to serving on the board, he was also put in charge of the hospital and nursing home visitation ministry. Even into his eighties he would say, “*we went to pray for the old people today.*” However, my grandfather would do more than pray for people. Here is an account of his:

...Let me tell you about one time before I forget now.

This old lady Sopher, she'd go out living by herself. And she got sick and she didn't have nobody to help her. And the doctors put her in the hospital. [In] the hospital she had three days. Then, they were going to send her to a nursing home for about a week or ten days so that way they could take care of her.

So, when [I] went to the hospital that day I seen she wasn't hitting it off with the nurses. So, this little black lady, she was about, oh, she was young, maybe about 30-35, she was just about ready to cry all day that day. She said, 'I can't get that lady to do anything. That lady won't eat; she won't get out of bed...said she was going home.' And I said, 'let me talk to her doctor.' And I went to talk to the doctor, and I told him what the problem was and things. He said, 'well, unless she'll agree to us, [and do what we want her to do], there's not much [we can] do about it.'

So, I went [to the room] and I told that little nurse, 'Just go outside the door. I don't want her to think she'll have to face both of us.' I said, 'now, let me say what I wanna say.' I said, 'after that, I don't care what you say to her, you can [even] cuss me out or anything you want to.' And so she said, 'okay.'

[And so I went in there, and] I said, 'sister Sopher, that doctor said you'll be in a wheelchair the rest of your life unless you [get] out of that bed, eat, and [do] what these doctors [tell] you to—the nurses told you that.'

[Well, Sister Sopher] said, 'Where is that nurse at now? I said, 'Standing out in the hall while I'm talking.' She said, 'Call her in here.'

I didn't know what she was going to do—I don't know, cuss me and the nurse both out, or what.

She asked that nurse, 'Will you help me get my clothes on?' That nurse said, 'I sure will.' So, that nurse says, 'there's not very much food up here now, but I'll have your plate fixed if you want me to.' So, we went down there, and boy, she eat good. And after that she start eating and [even] got started going to the mess halls.

Well, he would do more than just pray for people on these visits, as Sister Sopher found out. But, when he did pray, powerful things would happen. Take, for instance, this next story:

"One night Pastor Orewiler said, '[Chet] I've got to go to Ohio; [And I want you to lead the service].' So I said, 'Okay.' So, [there was] 'this old lady [who] lived in the Queenstown apartments. She come in there with both of her legs all swelled up and red. That was on a Wednesday night. [The service] usually lasted about an hour, an hour and a quarter, something or other. [Well], I didn't say nothing to nobody. I [just] said we're going into the church; we're gonna sing a couple of songs—then I've got something we're gonna do. [So] they [all] got singing; they all got happy. And I told

em, I said, 'Dorothy, come up here, and all of you [gather around]. And I said, '[Dorothy] sit on this chair here in the middle of the platform.' And I said, 'let's look at those legs.' [They were] all swelled and blue.

And so I said, 'well, Lord I haven't seen nothing like that before.' And I said 'I'll start it off praying.' And I said, 'now I don't want [any of you just sitting there].' I said, 'I want everyone in this building to pray, cause that lady needs it.' [So we prayed] [And], she got up and walked around, and the next morning she called the church and told em the rash and the swelling and stuff was gone! [She was healed]."

It is a miracle to think that the Kentucky boy involved with moonshine and too many girls was now praying for people and they were getting healed. When God does a work in someone's life, the changes are radical.

The story of Dorothy, the old Queenstown lady, was one of the last stories my grandfather ever told me before his death. After he finished this story I asked if he had seen a lot of healings in his day. He said that he had, and that we would see more of them today if church people would "*stay away from the things of the world.*"

Truly, my grandfather's life was a testimony to the power of a person who remains unstained by the world.

This thought especially occurred to me during his funeral. Throughout that bittersweet time I found that even in death grandpa's life is capable of speaking volumes. For instance, there were a number of people who traveled from out of state to be at the funeral, and when they came, they arrived with stories. As I conclude grandpa's narrative, I would like to share a few of these accounts.

The first account was shared by Michael. Michael is a middle-aged Nigerian man who has been in America for over twenty years. When Grandpa died Michael was sent from Washington DC as a representative of the Brentwood Foursquare Church. During the funeral he gave the following Eulogy:

We had met him for six years. I saw humbleness in him. He was under my teaching as a Sunday school teacher, and is supposed to be learning under my own teaching—one of those things where I said he was a humble man. A lot of things we learn from him. We also were adopted into his family, because we called him 'grandpa.' And it is because of his love that draw people to him and also to grandma Gertie. One thing I said was that he's a man you can emulate. He was nice, humble, loved people, attract people to himself, advise people. He was a blessing to the church because of the experience he has had. Most of the time when we go to visit him or to help him, he would tell us things how the church move from one place to the other and many people that has come to the church and left. But he was there. The time he was about to leave for Ohio, we didn't want to release him, because we see he is also our family. But you know the nuclear family is very, very important. So, reluctantly we say, 'Okay.' But in reality we didn't leave him, and he didn't leave us because each time he call us as if he was just a distance from us. If he has anything, like usual, he may call, 'Michael, I have pain in my neck.' And, we pray. We pray together—even on telephone after he has left. We pray. There is no time within three months that we shall not talk when he was alive. So, I thank God for his life. He has come and he has

played a very useful part on earth, and is exiting. I will not say more than this. Thank you.

Michael's gracious words are much more meaningful when one realizes who Michael is and who grandpa was. Michael is a middle-aged African immigrant and Grandpa was an old Kentucky man. What an unlikely pair, and yet Michael had been so touched by my grandfather's life that he desired to fly all the way from D.C. to testify to the love and the life of my grandfather. Similarly, Bob and Dorothy Harmon made the trek from D.C. to Ohio because they too wanted to bear witness to the impact grandpa had had in their lives. Bob spoke first:

William Campbell, affectionately known to all of us as 'Chet.' What can I say about a pillar of the church? He was a man amongst men. I've spent quite a long time with Chet when he was at Brentwood Foursquare. I used to go over to his house and cut his hair. We'd chat. We'd sit in the basement and chat, and I'd cut his hair. He'd tell me stories from when he was in the army, experiences he's had through his life, how him and Gertie had opened his house to many teenagers—had em' sittin' on their floor teaching em' the Bible. The man had a heart bigger than Ohio and a love that would extend to anybody. He was there. He was a good man. You know, I prayed with him on the phone as much as [Michael] here has, and he's left a mark in my heart. I should be so fortunate to be as great a man as Chet Campbell. We should all remember him in our hearts as the man amongst men. A man of God. A righteous man.

After Bob spoke, his wife followed:

When I became a part of Brentwood Foursquare, I actually went there crying because I was growing quicker in the Lord than my husband was at the time. My first Sunday there, Chet had come up to me cause I was crying—and he was, with all that gentle spirit, just trying to calm me down. ‘Everything is going to be okay.’ Well, we started talking, and he asked for our number and started reaching for my husband. He knew my husband was a barber so he was calling for him to come over. Through all of those types of experiences that he had reaching for my husband, my husband grew in the Lord. Without him I’m not sure if my husband would have been able to stand here today and do what he was able to do. [Chet] was a blessing to me, to my family. My husband became a different man because of the impact he had on his life. He was a better father, he was a better husband, he was a better all around.

After Dorothy’s words the minister who performed the funeral began to share. He told one story in particular that reflects the kind of man my grandfather was, and the kind of influence he had:

When I first came to Brentwood Foursquare Gospel church I came in following an older gentleman. I came in, and I was much younger than this man, and I was much different than the former pastor. I was really very radical in comparison, and so my first concern was [when] I walked in the front door and I saw a lot of people who looked askance at me. And I thought, ‘Ohh, this is going to be tough—its going to be tough.’ I immediately met Chet and Gertie Campbell and they took me to lunch that day. I’ll never forget the drive over. I’ll never forget spending time with this couple. And I just felt the

love of God. What happened immediately was we won their hearts. The people in the church accepted my wife and I—my wife is pretty conservative—they accepted me, the weird one. They accepted me, the weird one, because this couple accepted me. They gave the nod. As soon as they gave the nod, everyone else followed. That's the kind of influence they had, and they still have today.

PART THREE

Grandpa and the Kingdom

I share these accounts because they are the kind of stories that my grandfather never would have told. He was happy to share what God had done in his life; yet, his quiet humility kept grandpa from sharing what his life had done for others. Grandpa was able to have an impact on other peoples' lives because he exhibited the marks of the Kingdom in his own life. As his beatitudinal life grew and flourished many others were blessed by the work of God within him. This is reminiscent of Matthew 13.

Spread of the Kingdom

Matthew 13 highlights three parables relevant to our purposes. In the parable of the sower (13:1-23) Jesus explains that when the Word of God takes root in human hearts and is not quickly abandoned, it produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown (13:23). Basically, when the Word of God is given the proper conditions in a person's life, that person will bear fruit for the Kingdom. This thought is magnified by the telling of two similar parables.

In the parables of the mustard seed and of the yeast, the theme of an all consuming, expansive growth is explored. Both of these parables depict small things growing to overtake big things. The mustard seed is small and hidden, and yet given time it becomes the largest of garden trees, lending its limbs to the birds of the air (13:31-32) The language of birds perching in large trees is drawn from Ezekiel 17 and Daniel 4 and is used of great kingdoms.

Similarly, a small amount of yeast given a bit of kneading will overtake a large batch of flour (13:33-35). Keener notes that the amount of flour described here represents nearly fifty pounds—an amount that could easily feed over a hundred people and represents an unnaturally large batch.³⁸

Taken together, these parables represent the principle that the Kingdom of God starts small and grows large. This growth is probably understood best in worldwide terms, but it can also refer to the growth of the Kingdom within individual lives. The Kingdom of God will command expansion within a person's life and it will spread to the lives of others. These parables describe why the Kingdom spread through my grandfather's life as well as how it spread to him.

God's Sovereignty and the Beatitudes

In Paul's message to the Athenians in Acts 17:26-27, Paul explains that God sovereignly places humans in time and place (and, by extension, in families) in order that they would grope for God and somehow find him. Thus, God in his sovereignty specifically placed my grandfather in turn-of-the-century Appalachia within a devout Christian family. This placement in time and space shaped who my grandfather was and ultimately who he became. My grandfather was especially shaped through his economic standing and through his virtuous parents.

Being poor in spirit is much easier when one is economically poor.³⁹ As noted earlier, Matthew drew his imagery for the first beatitude from the economically poor because those who are poor in possessions often exhibit the characteristics necessary to be poor in spirit. My grandfather was born into an impoverished area in

³⁸ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 388-389.

³⁹ See Matthew 19:24.

a world on the brink of depression. He knew hard times and God used those hard times to forge him into a life of being poor in spirit. Once his economically derived poor spirit was combined with the Spirit of God, a magnificent crop of righteousness was brought forth.

But before that, alongside of the seeds for being poor in spirit, God planted the seeds of holiness in his life through his family circumstances. Children generally learn through observing the actions of their parents. And, that is precisely how my grandfather first encountered the Kingdom. He was a wild Kentucky boy with two devout parents who showed him the ways of Christ through the testimony of their lives. Their influence may not have been immediate, but it was lasting. Till the day he died, when he would talk about his parents it was obvious that he was remembering a happy time. They were his models in life, and even when he was not following their example, he knew that he should have been. Their very lives called out, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

They had especially shown their son the ways of prayer and service. As grandpa’s stories attest, the love of Christ radiated from within their lives. Recall these highlights from grandpa’s description of his parents:

1. *We’d have prayer meetings, and a lot of times we had em in our home*
2. *Sometimes they would pray all night for somebody that was sick*
3. *Every night if one of the boys was out late at night, your grandma would be on her knees praying for em until they come in that night*
4. *She didn’t say nothing about nobody*
5. *If she ever met anybody to give to and they’d come in bumming, she’d never turn em away*
6. *They all knowed Tennessee*
7. *When he was working there if anybody died—whether he was an employee or not—Ritter Lumber Company would furnish the lumber and dad would make the caskets for em and line em...and he wouldn’t charge a penny*
8. *If anybody needed a pastor...he could preach the funeral too*

9. *He just tried to help people out*

If these characteristics are not examples of the Kingdom of God being worked out in human lives, then I doubt that much else could ever qualify, because his parents were people of perseverant prayer who sought to bless others by constant acts of kindness and mercy. In every aspect they reflected the goodness of God, and through their godly characteristics the Lord was laying the groundwork of prayer and service in grandpa's life long before he converted.

Through the example of his parents he came to realize that he had something to offer those in need. This was manifested in two specific cases. First, when he was in his last years of his schooling he watched over my young grandmother in order to protect her. He watched over her in such a way that when my grandparents started dating, his aunt was surprised because she thought that his intentions toward her had always been brotherly in nature.

Second, he dropped out of school when he was sixteen in order to work and help provide for his younger siblings. However, not only did he willingly contribute to the family, but he also willingly bought dresses and supplies for his sisters. He went above and beyond what duty would require and lavished his sisters with goodness. These early manifestations of goodness were shadows of what God would do later in his life. Once God drew grandpa to himself, he transformed grandpa's life by allowing the seeds that had been planted in his life through the model of his parents to come to fruition through exposure to the light of Christ.

Kingdom seeds had been planted and were bearing meager fruits, but the cares of this world quickly destroyed the fruitful plants that had quickly sprung up.

Grandpa had made a commitment to the Lord before going into the army, and yet he was so caught up with alcohol that he refused the ways of holiness. In effect, Satan had been doing a good job of stealing the word of truth from his life. Yet, God was persistent.

Alcohol, the very thing that Satan tried to use to destroy my grandfather's life was the very thing that brought him to eternal life. When my innocent mother was able to recognize the "whikey" store and found it to be an attractive place, Satan tipped his hand. My mother's gleeful response about the whisky store was no longer a subtle attack on grandpa and his family—it was as if the Evil One had publicly declared war. This plain understanding of the Devil's plan to destroy everything about my grandfather's life was enough to begin waking him up out of his alcoholic daze. Ultimately, then, it was through a child that my grandfather was brought into a childlike faith.

Understanding what preceded this scene is significant as well. After being discharged from the army and returning to Virginia, grandpa said that he had to get out of the mud-hole of Appalachia. The mud drove him to Washington D.C., but how much of a hand did God have in the mud? God has given us the capacity to choose our course, and yet God's will transcends our decisions so that his will is done even through the most superficially driven choices.

Had my grandparents not independently decided to move to Washington D.C. in order to find work, who knows how history would have worked itself out? As it stands however, my grandparents did move to the Capitol. They did find themselves desirous of Appalachian friends. They did find each other as a result. And they did

get married. This marriage did lead to a child; and, this child did unwittingly open my grandfather's eyes to his disastrous trajectory. Could this be nothing more than a sociological occurrence derived from the random placement of human choices and world situations? Possibly, but I would rather attribute grandpa's entrance into the Kingdom of God to the sovereign, drawing work of God through his life situations.

We have already seen how God used the times and the family community to draw my grandfather into the Kingdom. But, how did he use the Church community? Shortly before the "whikey" store fiasco my grandmother began attending a church with a minister who was committed to reaching out to my grandfather. Just as John the Baptist and Jesus had called out, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt. 3:2, 4:17), Pastor Vernon called out the sin in my grandfather's life and confronted him with the need for repentance. My grandfather fought against these confrontations, but eventually it was Pastor Vernon who my grandfather met halfway down the aisle when he was ready to recognize and turn from his sins. In the light of Christ grandpa saw his detestable state and cried tears of mourning at the altar.

My grandmother remembers that before this profound moment of turning Pastor Vernon and the whole church had come together to pray diligently for his soul. This time of consecration occurred a week before grandpa gave his heart to the Lord and repented. However, the prayers of the church community, and specifically a special band of old ladies, did not end when grandpa went to the altar. Rather, they gathered around him all the more perseverantly and wrestled in prayer over his life. To the very end, Grandpa insisted that without those old ladies praying for him he

never would have made it; without the church community in his life he would have gone back to drinking and smoking and would have turned from the Lord.

Ultimately, the Kingdom centers on the power of King Jesus to do his work in the world—to draw people into the Kingdom through time, space, family and the church and to bless people through the Kingdom. The Kingdom also revolves around believers modeling the life and nature of King Jesus in the world. Matthew describes this type of life through the beatitudes, and those that came before my grandfather in the faith brilliantly modeled these beatitudinal ways. Then, after my grandfather's conversion he also lived accordingly.

Grandpa's conversion was a powerful display of God's ability to draw even the most stubborn of hearts to himself. The week before grandpa's radical transformation he had commented that Pastor Vernon could get everyone up to the altar except him and his brother-in-law Carl. Then, a week later he was at that very altar crying because of the weight of his sins.

From the moment of his conversion he began exhibiting the characteristics of the Kingdom through noticeable changes. He was filled with boldness as he stepped into the aisle to meet Pastor Vernon halfway. This boldness then enabled him to kneel at the altar in tears over his sins—tears that were not concealed. Only a work of God could convince a forty-one year old ex-army sergeant to bow humbly like this in a room full of people.

Truly, the characteristic of being poor in spirit was working itself out in the forms of mourning and meekness. His God-inspired poor spirit could also be seen in the behavioral results of his conversion. Three things changed immediately in his

life. That very day he gave up drinking and smoking and he began tithing. This immediate departure from alcohol and cigarettes was done cold turkey, and he was frequently tempted with turning back. Nonetheless, he endured the persecution of his desires and hungered and thirsted after righteousness instead. His appetite had been whetted for the Kingdom and he sought righteousness above and beyond the addictive pleasures of drinking and smoking.

This hunger and thirst for righteousness was not merely manifested in the things he gave up, but also in what he added. The very night he came to the Lord, he began giving a tenth of his income. Also, shortly after his conversion the Lord convicted his heart that he needed to give everything he had in his pocket except a quarter. He struggled with this decision for fear of how he would make ends meet until his next payday, but eventually he obeyed and gave up nearly all of his money. His willingness to part with his money runs concurrent with the theme of Matthew 6:19-34. In this Kingdom teaching Jesus begins by instructing that “you cannot serve both God and Money” (6:24). Then, he transitions into teaching his listeners not to worry about the needs in their lives because God knows their necessities and will meet them just as surely as he provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (6:25-32). This promise is qualified in 6:33 where Jesus says, “But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Our trust and reliance should be fully focused on the goodness of God who “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good” (5:45) and who feeds and clothes even animals and plants. Then, because we trust that this benevolent God will provide for even the lowliest of his creatures, the mode of expression for this trust

should influence our handling of money to the extent that we freely give of our resources as needs arise and God leads.

My grandfather demonstrated this aspect of Kingdom living by freely giving when the Lord prompted, even though his munificence could have left him hungry for a week. This scene displays grandpa's intimacy with God in that he was able to discern God's leading and also that he was willing to obey God's leading even when doing so put him at risk for undesirable circumstances. This intimacy translates into the building of an unshakeable trust, faith, and reliance within my grandfather about the nature of his God—about God's divine characteristics and what these transcendent characteristics require of his followers. In effect, when grandpa relinquished control of his money he freely bowed before King Jesus and said, "My kingdom is now devoted to the upbuilding of your Kingdom."

His devotion to the upbuilding of the Kingdom came not only in freely giving of his money, but also in freely giving of his time. As his parents before him had done, he was committed to acts of service. The prime example of his heart for serving others comes in his dedication to nursing home and hospital visitation. He spent countless days visiting with the sick and the shut-ins, praying for them and uplifting them in spirit. In our culture sick people, and especially elderly sick people, are shoved to the fringes of society because they have passed their point of "usefulness." Often they are left to wither away in lonely hospital or nursing home rooms. However, my grandfather was committed to their well-being.

There is a series of parables in Mathew 25 that at first glance seem unconnected, but are actually united by a common theme which relates to my

grandfather's ministry of visitation. The three Kingdom parables include the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13), the parable of the talents (25:14-30), and the story of the sheep and the goats (25:31-46). In the parable of the ten virgins the bridegroom was a long time in coming and all the virgins became drowsy and fell asleep. While the wise virgins brought extra oil for their lamps, the foolish virgins did not anticipate the long delay and had no reserves. As a result, the foolish virgins went to get more oil. However, while the foolish virgins were off getting more oil, the bridegroom appeared and ushered the prepared virgins into the wedding banquet, leaving the unprepared virgins outside. The moral of this story is that we must keep watch and be prepared with oil in our lamps because we do not know when the bridegroom will return.

The parable of the ten virgins is similar to the parable of the talents. In the parable of the talents Jesus tells a story of a man going away on a long journey. Before leaving, this man entrusts his money to his servants. He gives five talents to one, two talents to the next, and one talent to the final man. While the master was away the man who had been given five talents gained five more, the one with two talents gained two more, but the one with one talent buried his talent and gained nothing. When the master returned, the men who had earned more talents were told that since they had been faithful in a few things, he would put them in charge of many things. However, the man who had buried his talent was thrown into the darkness.

The moral of this story is that whoever has will be given more, so that he will have an abundance. And, whoever does not have, even what he has been given will be taken from him (25:29). Simply put, this parable is teaching that when the master

returns, we better have been using for good what he has given us. In this way, the proper use of talents is equivalent to having extra oil for our lamps. Meaning, the way to be prepared is to always be going about the master's business to whatever degree the master has entrusted his business to us.

The final story of these three shows plainly what the master's business is. Jesus says that when the "Son of Man comes...he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory...and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep on his right and the goats on his left" (25:31-33). Here, the sheep represent the righteous—those who will inherit the Kingdom of God—and the goats represent the wicked—those who will inherit eternal fire. What distinguishes a sheep from a goat is seen in their actions towards the Son of Man.

Jesus says that those who saw him hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned, and met his needs, are righteous; whereas, those that saw him in these states and did nothing for him are wicked. Both the righteous and the wicked then ask Jesus when they ever saw him in these states, to which Jesus replies that whenever they saw "the least of these" (25:40, 45) in need, they actually saw Jesus in need.

Consequently, this final passage provides the schema for interpreting the previous parables. The way that we keep oil in our lamps and use our master's talents wisely is seen in how we reach out to the lowly members of society. Thus, when my grandfather "looked after" the sick (25:36) he blessed those in need, he blessed Jesus, he had oil in his lamp and he did well with his master's talents. These parables

display how much my grandfather's simple act of visiting hospitals and nursing homes reflected the Kingdom.

The term "simple act" is used loosely, however, because his visitation ministry went well beyond keeping the sick company. He did offer the shut-ins a break from their usually lonely lives, but he also looked after their needs. Grandpa delighted in telling the story of Sister Sopher who would not cooperate with doctors or nurses and was well on her way to quickly deteriorating. Instead of rushing in and out of her room, seeing her problem, and offering a quick prayer, he offered the prayer but also spent time coordinating with her caregivers in order to establish a workable situation. This was invaluable and effective, but it took time. When it came to people and their problems he always had time to give, and he gave generously.

He also gave generously to the inner-workings of the Church. Beyond serving in leadership on the board, he was recognized as a teacher within the Church community. Accordingly, he often was given the responsibility of filling in when the minister was out of town. One of these times proved especially eventful. As grandpa recounted, an old lady from the Queenstown apartments "*come in there with both of her legs all swelled up and red.*" During the service he waited on the Lord and at the right time gathered the Church around this woman to pray for her. As a result she was healed. I can just see the years of down-home prayer services in Kentucky flash across his mind as Dorothy and her swelled legs came in the door that night. For years he had been surrounded by people of perseverant prayer, and that legacy had been passed down to him as well.

It was only natural, then, that my grandfather became a tried and true prayer warrior who wrestled with people in prayer both at and away from the altars. This required compassion, mercy, patience and diligence; and, given the stories told at his funeral, he obviously exhibited these qualities in abundance.

In her eulogy Dorothy Harmon remembered the first time she met my grandfather. She said she went to the church crying about her husband and met grandpa when he came to pray for her and to reassure her. She especially recalled his gentle spirit, the effort he gave in reaching out to her husband, and the impact that grandpa had had on her husband's life.

Her husband's account was similar. Bob said much about my grandfather as a man of prayer and of righteousness, but he also mentioned his love; Bob expressed grandpa's love accordingly: "*The man had a heart bigger than Ohio and a love that would extend to anybody.*"

It seems that Michael, my grandfather's Nigerian immigrant friend, had also been on the receiving end of grandpa's love. Michael fell on hard times after coming to this country and remembers how my grandparents adopted Michael and his family into their family to the point that Michael called my grandfather, "grandpa." When describing "grandpa," Michael said that my grandfather was a man that you could emulate because "*he was nice, humble, [he] loved people, attract[ed] people to himself, [and] advise[d] people.*" And, all of this came from a man far removed from my grandfather in both culture and race. Obviously grandpa had impacted Michael's

life with love and kindness. And, this sounds much like the Scriptural call to be good to resident aliens.⁴⁰

Similarly, for a man my grandfather's age, his dealings with people of color were surprising. In the midst of racial tensions grandpa worked with a group of black men at a Sears Warehouse. He claims that his black coworkers would have jumped in the river if he had asked them to because he "*would uphold em.*" During a time when blacks and whites were often seen as enemies, my grandfather had gained the respect and the friendship of his black coworkers. This sounds much like the beatitudinal call to peacemaking in the *shalom* tradition, and grandpa fostered a healthy relationship with his black coworkers even though this relationship could have resulted in personal harassments for my grandpa.

He upheld people and he also upheld righteousness and devotion. Not only was his devotion marked by works of bold kindness, but also by simply being present whenever the Church doors were opened. These things together earned him the respect of his congregation. Ministers would come and go, but sturdy Chet was always there.

Thus, when Pastor Art—the self disclosed “weird one”—appeared, the congregation waited to see my grandfather's response before they accepted the new minister. This was by no means an established system where my grandfather was the official patriarch of the church; but, because my grandfather was always present, the congregation felt comfortable with him and knew him to be a man of trusted wisdom and discernment. Consequently, when the congregation was hesitant about Pastor

⁴⁰ See Jeremiah 22:3 for instance.

Art, their hearts were put at ease when my grandfather accepted the new minister with love.

It was not merely his presence and his age that earned him this respect. Instead, it was the consistency of his lifestyle that made him an authority. He was quiet and tempered and yet beneath his humble spirit he possessed deep wells of wisdom and mercy. He was bold enough to call wrongdoings sin, but gentle enough to embrace wrongdoers when they recognized their sins. This kindness had been afforded him by God and by the Church, and he in turn displayed it to others. His heart was full of mercy towards others because his mind was full of the memory of God's loving kindness in his own life.

Conclusion

If ever I have met anyone who displays beatitudinal living, it was my grandfather. These accounts highlight the sovereign work of God that drew my grandfather into the Kingdom and they also show how God's mercy elicited Kingdom living from grandpa's life.

As this study progressed I realized that a point by point explanation of how each aspect of my grandfather's life perfectly matched a beatitudinal principle would have resulted in the deadening of the complexity of grandpa's story. As a result, this final section highlighted instances in my grandfather's life that broadly connected to the beatitudes, but it did not seek to draw 1:1 ratios.

This method keeps my grandfather's life in the context of the beatitudes—the driving theme of Matthew's theology of the Kingdom; but, it also recognizes that the

beatitudes are meant as a launching pad for Kingdom living, not as a set of propositions to rigidly be attained.

The placement of the biblical analysis of the beatitudes before my grandfather's narrative was designed to establish the general ethos of the Kingdom before reading about grandpa's life; this was intentionally done so that as readers were immersed in my grandfather's story, they could come to many of their own conclusions concerning modern-day Kingdom living. Thus, this final section highlights the most pervasive Kingdom principles seen from my grandpa's life, but it is only a highlighted version.

This study has shown me that Scripture points to behaviors characteristic of the Kingdom. Most likely, these characteristics will be manifested in some form in a Kingdom person's life. However, what Scripture especially provides is general ideas as to what Kingdom living should look like. It is at this point that the benefits of this project can especially be seen, because this method helps to fill the gap between the underlying theme of the Kingdom and how that theme translates into the actions of everyday life.

As with all Scripture interpretation, this method requires being led by the Holy Spirit. For instance, Scripture says, "Blessed are the merciful." Through biblical exegesis we can come to know the etymological history of mercy, how it was understood in its cultural context, and how the Bible understands this topic. These findings are all thoroughly important for staying grounded in the Scriptural intention for the meaning of mercy. However, these tools do not unpack the complexity of how mercy might appear in everyday life; and, understanding the latter can be a

daunting task, because stepping beyond knowing what mercy meant, and into what mercy means requires us to also step beyond the clear direction of Scripture.

Thankfully, this reminds me of Jesus' comforting words in John 14:26. Here, Jesus says that "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." As can be seen from the four very different Gospel accounts, a word for word delineation of the teachings of Jesus was not the focus of this promise. Rather, Jesus seemed to be speaking of an inner guiding light that would direct his followers into the truths that his words represented.⁴¹

For our purposes this assurance means that the Matthean beatitudes served as our starting place for understanding Kingdom living. Then, under the direction of the Holy Spirit we are free to explore how the beatitudes might be fleshed out. The remainder of Matthew's Gospel gives examples of this in a first century context, and the telling of my grandfather's narrative gives examples of this in a twentieth and twenty-first century context.

To end this project I quote my grandfather's Nigerian friend. *I thank God for [grandpa's] life. He has come and he has played a very useful part on earth, and is exiting. I will not say more than this. Thank you.*

⁴¹ See John 10:1-18

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