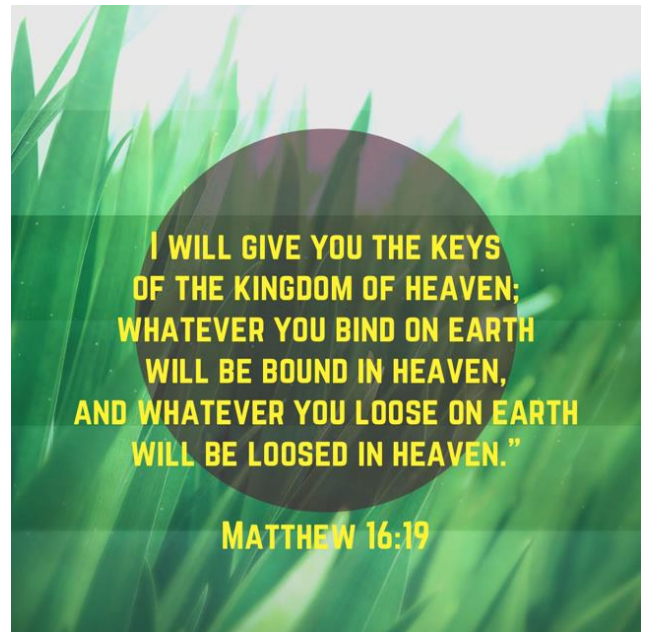


Devotions with Matt

May 15, 2020

LEAVE THE GIFT AND GO

When the first missionaries went to Alberta, Canada, they were savagely opposed by a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon. After a while the missionaries were able to befriend him and he responded to the Gospel and accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. Shortly after, a member of the Blackfoot tribe killed his father. Maskepetoon rode into the village where the murderer lived and demanded that he be brought before him. Confronting the guilty man, he said, "You have killed my father, so now you must be my father. You shall ride my best horse and wear my best clothes." In utter amazement and remorse, his enemy exclaimed, "My son, now you have killed me!" He meant, of course, that the hate in his own heart had been completely erased by the forgiveness and kindness of the Indian chief.



Every time I read the Bible, especially the Gospels, I am struck by how much of what Jesus taught is about relationships. Here in Matthew 5:23-24 Jesus tells His hearers that if your brother has something against you, leave your gift to God at the altar and go and reconcile to him. This means that if we are the ones who wronged another, we are to go and settle the matter quickly. In other words, God doesn't want our religious and false worship if we are not putting into practice what we believe. To not go and try to reconcile a broken relationship- especially at our making- does not please God, no matter what we are offering Him. "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" says the Lord. The one that comes to worship God and is filled with malice, hatred, envy and is at war in his heart with others is a hypocritical worshipper. God is not deceived and He will not be mocked.

Jesus later would say to Peter about all believers who confess Jesus as Lord, that He will give them all the keys to the Kingdom.

Keys. Plural.

I understand that The Key (singular) to God's Kingdom, now and in the future, is Jesus. He is The Way into the Kingdom, He is The Truth of The Kingdom and He is The Life in the Kingdom. But why keys? The more I read the Gospels the more I see the keys Jesus is referring to are the attitudes and actions of a heart that desires reconciliation, healing and justice here on earth. Thus, these keys are the characteristics that make up Kingdom life and allow for reconciliation and restoration of all relationships here on earth. Mercy, grace, forgiveness and love for another will heal wounds and bind up broken hearts. Without extending these characteristics of His Kingdom in our lives to others will result in broken relationships and unaccepted offerings to God.

Jesus tells us to leave our gifts on the altar and first go and be reconciled to the offended. First be reconciled means to settle the difficulty. It means to go and make proper acknowledgement or satisfaction for the injury. If you have wronged someone, make restitution. If you owe someone a debt, go and pay it. If you have injured his character or reputation, go and confess it and seek his pardon. Do all in your power, and all you ought to do, to have whatever grievous matter with another settled. The operative word here is go. Without the going, there is no forgiveness. Without forgiveness, there is no reconciliation. Without reconciliation there is a gift at the altar to God waiting to be accepted. We must go.

Jesus opened God's glorious Kingdom to us. He then gives us the keys of it. Will you use those keys to go and reconcile with another? Will you use those keys for the restoration of broken relationships? If not, the keys are

unused and the gift to God unacceptable. Who have you offended or grieved? Leave you gift right where you are and go make it right with them. Those who have been forgiven much, must also forgive much. Those who have received Christ's restoration into His Kingdom, must also be people of reconciliation and restoration. If not, you are really not using the keys He has given you.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” -Matthew 16:19

In Christ,

Matt