

Following the King — Sermon 6

The Community of the King: Living Together Under Heaven's Rule

Text: Matthew 18

Series Recap: *We have been walking step by step with the King: (PUT ON ONE SLIDE)*

- The Call (Matt. 4): *Leaving nets for destiny.*
- The Constitution (Matt. 5–7): *Living the Kingdom's culture.*
- The Commission (Matt. 10): *Sent with power.*
- The Conflict (Matt. 16): *Cross before crown.*
- The Climax (Matt. 17): *Glory on the mountain, power in the valley.*

Introduction: The Fall of the Colossus

In the ancient world, one of the great wonders was the **Colossus of Rhodes** (PUT UP PIC). It was a bronze statue towering over 100 feet high, straddling the harbor, a symbol of permanence and power. **For decades it stood as if nothing could bring it down. But history tells us it**

didn't fall to invaders, and it wasn't toppled by war. No enemy army destroyed it. Instead, the Colossus collapsed under its own weight when its foundation gave way.

And isn't that the story of so many churches? Most churches are not destroyed by persecution from the outside — but by pride, offense, gossip, and division from the inside. **They don't usually die from storms — they die from strife.**

That is why in Matthew 18, Jesus shifts the conversation. After showing His glory on the mountain and His power in the valley, He turns to His disciples and says: **If the Kingdom is going to last, you have got to learn how to live together. Because glory on the mountain is fleeting if community in the valley fractures.**

Now we come to The Community (Matt. 18) — where Jesus teaches us how to preserve the power of following Him together.

Revival does not last because of what happens in the pulpit, but because of what happens in the pews. The Kingdom of God is preserved in the way His people live with one another.

1. The Posture of the Kingdom — Humility Like a Child (vv. 1–4)

Text: “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”

- The disciples argue over rank. In rabbinic culture, disciples often fought for the seat closest to their rabbi.
- Jesus pulls a child (***paidion***) into the center — powerless, voiceless, without rights.
- In Jewish law, children had no inheritance until maturity. Jesus says: **That is how you enter the Kingdom — by renouncing rights, reputation, and rank.**
- Chrysostom: “The surest mark of true greatness is not to seek it.”

The world measures greatness by how high you climb. But in the Kingdom, you don't climb ladders — you kneel low. Humility is not weakness, it is greatness redefined.

Humility is the only posture that preserves community.

In the world, greatness is measured by how many serve you. In the Kingdom, it is measured by how many you serve.

2. The Protection of the Kingdom — Guarding the Weak (vv. 6–9)

Text: **“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”**

- **The “millstone” (*mylos onikos*)** was huge — turned by donkeys. Drowning with it was unthinkable.
- **Why Jews feared water:**
 - Israel was not a seafaring people. The sea symbolized chaos and death (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 69:1–2).
 - Drowning meant shame, because the body could not be properly buried — burial was sacred in Jewish thought.

- Water often symbolized judgment (Noah's flood, the Red Sea, Jonah's plunge).
- So, when Jesus says drowning is "better," he's saying: Better to suffer the most cursed death imaginable than to destroy the faith of the weak.
- **Early Church:** The Didache warned believers not to exploit new converts but to nurture them as infants in Christ.

That is how serious Jesus is about protecting community.

Revival does not die from demons outside - it dies from disciples inside, wounding one another. If we want the Kingdom to last, we must guard the weak as if our very lives depend on it.

Hell cannot destroy the church from the outside if we protect one another on the inside.

3. The Pursuit of the Kingdom — Seeking the Straying Sheep (vv. 10–14)

Text: **"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and**

one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

- Jesus says the Father’s will is that not one should perish.
- **He invokes angelic imagery — in Jewish thought, guardian angels interceded for individuals (Tobit, 1 Enoch). Jesus affirms heaven itself watches over the vulnerable.**
- Rabbis prioritized the 99 over the one. Jesus flips the value system: **the one missing is worth pursuit.**
- **Augustine: “God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us.”**

The Kingdom is not about keeping score, it’s about keeping souls. When one walks away, heaven does not shrug its shoulders — heaven sends the Shepherd running. **If heaven pursues, how can the church stand still?**

A church that does not pursue the one is not following the One.

4. The Practice of the Kingdom — Conflict & Reconciliation (vv. 15–20)

Text: “Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

- **Jesus gives a clear process:**
 - Private correction (Lev. 19:17).
 - Witnesses to confirm truth (Deut. 19:15).
 - Tell it to the church (ekklesia). This is the first time He calls His disciples “church.”

- **Cultural contrast: Romans sought public shaming; Jews took cases to courts. Jesus says: Don't air it outside — heal it inside.**
- **Ignatius (2nd century): urged believers to reconcile before the Lord's Supper — echoing Matthew 18.**

Conflict is inevitable, but division is optional.

- The devil does not need to destroy a church that is already destroying itself.
- Jesus is saying: deal with it. Face it. Heal it.

The blood that reconciles us to God requires us to reconcile with one another.

5. The Power of the Kingdom — Forgiveness Without Limits (vv. 21–22)

Text: “Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’”

- Peter suggests forgiving seven times — rabbis taught three was enough. **Jesus replies: “Not seven, but seventy times seven.”**

- **Why 70×7?**

- **Genesis 4:23-24: “Then Lamech said to his wives: ‘Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.’”**
- Cain was sevenfold, but Lamech boasts of vengeance “seventy-sevenfold.”
- **Think about the power of this – Jesus is linking unforgiveness and the first murder in the Bible. Unforgiveness is a murdering spirit!**
- Jesus reverses it: unlimited vengeance is replaced with unlimited forgiveness.
- Daniel 9:24: God ordains “seventy sevens” until redemption is complete — **forgiveness is God’s redemptive timetable.**
- 7 = completeness.

Seventy times seven = the fullness of fullness. Infinite mercy!

- Parable of the Unforgiving Servant:
 - 10,000 talents = billions today — an unpayable debt.
 - 100 denarii = a few months’ wages.

- Forgiven much but refusing to forgive little dishonors the King.

Athanasius: “The measure of our likeness to Christ is our measure of forgiveness.”

Jesus is saying, “Peter, stop counting. Stop keeping score. Keep forgiving.”

The Kingdom cannot survive on grudges — it only survives on grace.

The most supernatural miracle is not opening blind eyes but opening hardened hearts.

Mercy is the miracle that multiplies community!

Conclusion — Preserving the Power of Community

- The Kingdom is not sustained by miracles alone, but by relationships preserved.
- Acts shows us: when they prayed in one accord, power fell. When they broke bread in one accord, revival spread. Division was always the enemy’s weapon.

Tertullian: “See how they love one another!” That testimony conquered Rome more than their arguments.”

If we want the glory of the mountain to endure in the grind of the valley, then we must guard the community of the King. Humility must be our posture. Protection must cover the weak. Pursuit must drive us to the lost. Reconciliation must heal the offended. Forgiveness must flow without limit.

The world will not be convinced by our sermons, but by our supernatural love. When the church becomes a community of humility and mercy, it becomes an unstoppable force — the very body of Christ on earth.