

Christ Community Covenant Church
Living Upright in a Fallen and Broken World: Lawsuits and such!
Pastor Dave Scherrer – October 30, 2016

Kingdom Culture Wars

We are about to start a mini-series where we look at Christ and culture. Paul sets out in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, 7 and 8 to challenge the young church to look in a mirror. To look deep and to see if the image they see looking back at them looks more like the world's image in the reflection than it does like the reflection of Jesus Christ.

Maybe you have heard that we are in a culture war, and maybe you have also heard that we have lost the culture war. I don't know about all of that. Our tendency as evangelicals in the last 50 to 75 years has been to fight against the cultural drift of humanity as if it is the first time in human history that humanity has struggled with outrageous moral choices and unspeakable evil. That isn't to say that we should just 'keep it in perspective' and say nothing and do nothing. We must absolutely callout the habits and behaviors that are an offence to God but how we do that makes all the difference in the world (pun intended).

H Richard Neibuhr wrote one of the most important books of the last century called *Christ and Culture*. In it he summarized the thinking, the options, in looking at how we as believers are to interface with the culture. (Anyone familiar?). He identified 5 ways of examining the interface of Christ and culture and these five have set the agenda for this discussion for the last 75 years.

Christ against Culture, Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and finally there is Christ Transforming Culture.

It was a life changing book for me as a sophomore in college and very young in my faith. I had never heard of the idea that we as a Christian movement were to transform the world. I kinda thought my only purpose was to try to share Christ and kinda pluck people out of the world by getting them to confess Christ. That's how I had seen it presented to me. It was in this book that I first encountered the idea of the Kingdom of God breaking out in renewal of both souls and culture. That we were to truly pray "Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done" - not as a spiritual cliché but as the divine and only hope for the world.

According to Neibuhr, it turns out we are not at war with the world . . .

We are not at war with the World!

. . . We have been called to rescue the world.

Once we figure that out all we need to do is figure out how. But how is not so much about attacking or confronting them as though the world is an enemy to be defeated as it is an entire world of the blind and helpless that need to be shown the way out of danger. We do that by living differently and letting that divine difference draw them to the King.

Let's go ahead and look at our passage about lawsuits and such and see if we can see some meaning behind the obvious application.

Lawsuits and Such . . . and the Bigger Idea

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? ² Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge

angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The obvious intent of this passage is to not sue each other. We could call it a passage on unity and be done with it and we would be right as far as it goes. After all, if we are fighting amongst ourselves what is to become of the church especially the very first church expressions ever?? Jesus agreed on that -

Matthew 12:25

²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

And Jesus said the defining characteristic was to be love for one another.

John 13:35

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

But I think the passage is bigger than this. You have to know a bit about the culture of Corinth and of the make-up of the early church to get what is happening here.

Remember at the end of our last time in Corinthians in chapter 5 we learned that we are not to judge those outside the church, now we are encouraged to judge inside the church when behaviors go against the new laws of the Kingdom of God.

There is something bigger than just simple legal matters here. In the first century only rich people sued each other. There were no sophisticated legal systems, there was a Roman court to appeal to but it only makes sense to sue someone if they had money. This means that once again the wealthy leaders of the church are once again acting poorly for all the rest of the church to see. Before it was sexual sin of deeply disturbing proportions, now it has to do with power and money. There are two problems here that Paul is livid about:

1. The first is that these individuals in the church suing each other obviously do not understand what it means to call yourself a Christian and what it means to live by Kingdom Laws. That is distressing Paul that these guys are acting so immature.
2. Secondly these people suing each other are oblivious to what a terrible witness this is to the watching world. Here is the greatest sin “THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE IN THE BEHAVIOR OF THE CHURCH AND HOW THE WORLD BEHAVES!!!

Paul says with a tone of anger and dumbfounded-ness at the end of verse 6 - “This in front of non-believers!” So we have to move this forward to today and what does this mean in the 21st century. What does praying “Thy Kingdom come” mean in the 21st century?

“Thy Kingdom Come” – What does that mean in the 21st Century?

It means that we live differently than the world. Not to compete with them and to judge them but to show them how love and grace and mercy and hope and truth each give life and light to the blind and the hopeless.

The enemy we face is spiritual, not our neighbors that live around us who perhaps live poorly in our opinion. We face a bigger much more powerful and deadly enemy . . .

Ephesians 6:12

¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

“Our task as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, **is to announce redemption to a world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to a world that has discovered its brokenness, to proclaim love and trust to a world that knows only exploitation, fear and suspicion.** The gospel of Jesus points us and indeed urges us to be at the leading edge of the whole culture, articulating in story and music and art and philosophy and education and poetry and politics and theology.” ~ *N.T. Wright, The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*

What happens when we apply Kingdom principles to earthly problems?

First we might get ripped off.

We might get ripped off

1 Corinthians 6:7

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

Luke 6:5

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Being ripped off isn't a big deal for us in the Kingdom of God because we know that there is nothing here that matters to us. We are instructed to help all who have need. Yes, but what if they are lying.

Illustration: Being ripped off as a young married man.

Secondly, when we apply the Kingdom of God to our lives we learn to not look at our sins so much but we look instead to how we have been transformed by Christ. We celebrate Christ in us by remembering how far we have come.

We remember how far we have come

The list Paul comes up with in this passage isn't just about the greedy slanderers and swindlers willing to go to pagan court to decide over the church – it is about . . .

“ . . . the sexually immoral and idolaters and adulterers and thieves and drunkards” - And the list is descriptive not prescriptive. It is not exhaustive but representative. It's about us who have all been changed!

1 Corinthians 6:11

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The Kingdom has broken into the world. The world hasn't fully understood that yet. So we live lives marked by this new love, this new way of treating each other as members of The Way. When we act like this we bring the Kingdom closer.

We bring the Kingdom closer

And isn't that what we long for. Our lives contribute to the advent of the King. Our lives matter in the grand scheme of things. So when you think how you live your life is unimportant, you have to ask yourself...

Are you ready for the King? - He's coming. Come soon Lord Jesus, Maranatha!