**You Say You Want a Revolution? Part Nine**

1. We have emphasized the kingship of Jesus as we've walked through this Sermon on the Mount – Kingdom Manifesto, as we call it. Nowhere in the Sermon on the Mount does our king sound more like a king than in these closing passages.

2. Kings can be benevolent, generous, and supportive (vv.7-12). They can limit participation or citizenship in their kingdom (vv.13-14). They can issue warnings about enemies and make a call to vigilance (vv.15-23). And they can promise security and safety to those who obey the king and destruction to those who do not (vv.24-27).

3. Following our Lord, and obeying our King, is a process, not an event. Are we saved when we acknowledge Him as our king and pledge our allegiance to him (faith), or when we repent and start removing all those things in our lives that mark us as citizens of the world (repentance)? Are we saved at baptism (taking an oath)? Are we saved by participation in the kingdom (Christian living)? I could keep going but the answer is "yes…but" to each of these.

4. We are saved, yes, but – we are saved because we are facing the right direction and looking to the right king for our leadership and meaning. (Matthew 7:7-8) A young man was not impressed by me when I came to speak at his congregation. He was large and powerful. I was small and thin. When I took a staircase two steps at a time, he scoffed and said "Well, I guess you are a man after all." I stopped and looked at him and said "A man is not measured by the length of his steps, but by their direction."

5. I have sinned and will sin again. I have failed and will fail again. I have stumbled and veered off course and will do so again. But I lived my life facing Jesus and, when I die, I will still be facing Jesus. Note that he doesn't reward those who think they already have everything; he rewards those who live their lives in asking, knocking, and seeking mode. The religiously arrogant and smug need not apply because they don't need Jesus: they have their system and that is all they can see.

6. Harsh? Consider our arguments about worship and doctrine that have torn apart families and churches since day one. Where is the Jesus in those arguments? When a few older members complained constantly to me about the new songs the church was singing and threatened to leave and take their contributions with them, I asked them where the Jesus was in their argument. They struggled a bit so I helped them with a question. “Jesus ate, sat, and walked with sinners and publicans. Are you refusing to even sit with people who like different songs of praise? That seems to be very thin soup, a very weak position to take if you are truly following the steps of our king.”

7. Live your life knowing that you don’t have to be right about anything but Jesus. Get that right and he will craft you into who you need to be. But…what if you can’t see what He is doing and you are concerned that, somehow, He has not answered you and given you what you need? Matthew 7:9-12.

8. Stunning, isn’t it? God gives you what you need and it is better than anything you are currently asking for. You ask to get over the flu. He gives you grace and forgiveness. You ask him to give you good weather for an outdoor wedding. He gives you a faithful partner for life. You ask him to protect your children. He saves them and gives them a home in heaven.

9. Let me be clear: God has a history of not giving me what I ask for, on my knees, sometimes with tears. I am not happy about that…but I understand it. God and I still have some rather pointed conversations but He is God and He is able to handle our pain and our temerity when we challenge His wisdom and work. Remember: the name He gave His chosen people was Israel which means “those who wrestle with God.”

10. So, while I can get frustrated with God, He is not frustrated with me nor is He frustrated with you. Even if we do not see or appreciate the gifts He has given us, He has showered us with gifts, love, and salvation through Jesus, our King.

11. And we are reminded, once again, that the point of all of this is to treat others as we would wish to be treated – the Golden Rule. Most of us get that but I pray that, one day, the religious leaders in

the world will notice the last part of that verse that says that this sums up the law and the prophets. And it certainly fits well with Matthew 25 and the criteria Jesus uses for those who will enter His kingdom at last.

12. Matthew 7:13,14. We need to do some correct surgery with what has been taught about this passage. For most of us, we have been told that this is Jesus plainly saying that the entire plan of God worked out from before the beginning of the universe and planned with perfect love, perfect power, and perfect wisdom will fizzle out and only save a comparative few. I'd like to push back against that concept.

13. Why? Because I think more highly of our God than that. And I think our King Jesus is more powerful, wise and loving than that. AND because I don't think that "life" here applies mainly or entirely to eternal life. Relatively few of us will tap into the richness of a life in Christ while we are here because we allow too many other things to strangle it. We allow too many things to avert our gaze so that we are not focused on Jesus. We are like a kid at the zoo or a large amusement park who reaches out to take their mother or father's hand only to realize it isn't their parent. They got turned around. They took their eyes off their parent and are (temporarily, we hope) lost.

14. Pascal's wager is well known. He said that if he lived his life as a devout Christian and dies only to complete end with no heaven, no God, nothing at all…he has lost nothing. He lived a life of joy, forgiveness, grace, kindness, and love. However, if he lived a life denying the existence of God, lived in whatever riotous behavior he wanted, and then died only to find that there IS a God and He IS our king, then he has lost everything. To Pascal, a mathematical genius, the equation was clear: it made far more sense to "bet" on the existence of God.

15. One day, driving home from school, my son asked me why so many teens are in a constant fight with their parents. He said it seems to make no sense. The collector of the Book of Proverbs would agree. He warned his children to "make level paths for your feet." In other words, don't make it harder than it has to be.

16. Most of us will make our day harder than it has to be. Flashback to our king telling us to limit the amount of words we use. Simplify your language. Simplify your life. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus and you will find what few of His many, many children really find while still on this earth: life. The life he has always wanted for you in the here and now.