**Principles of the Kingdom of God:**

**The Law of Responsibility**

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Elder Bob Vibe

For my past several messages, I have been teaching on the Kingdom of God which has come into our lives as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For much of His time with the disciples, Jesus taught them about the principles or laws of the Kingdom of God so that they would understand how the Kingdom of God works, and more importantly how these principles would affect their lives as children of God.

To receive or enter into the Kingdom of God, Jesus said that we must be “born again,” referring to a new spiritual birth (John 3). Jesus gave many parables or stories explaining what he meant by being “born again.” In addition, the Apostles Paul and Peter added clarity to its meaning in their epistles. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:17: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come.” The Apostle Peter added in 1 Peter, chapter 1, saying “God has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that does not fade away, kept in heaven for you.”

Jesus not only explained how to access the Kingdom of God through our faith in Him, but He also gave His disciples many illustrations demonstrating the importance of seeking His Kingdom. Jesus described His Kingdom as **a pearl of great price**, worth selling all one had in order to possess it (Matt 13:45-46). He also described in the Parable of the Sower how God sows the Word of God into our hearts, and the varied results of that sowing. Some seed of the Kingdom is not understood and stolen by Satan. Some seed is received with joy, but due to a lack of deep roots is eventually unfruitful due to persecution and tribulation.

Some seed is received but choked out due to the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, also producing no fruit. Lastly, some seed is received and understood, bearing fruit that is 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown (Matthew 13:1-23).

Jesus also described the Kingdom of God as **a mustard seed** so we would understand the degree of power it could work in changing our lives. He said that even though its seed is very small when it is planted in our hearts, it produces an abundance of fruit in our lives that He described as the largest plant in a garden. If we look at our lives as a garden, we know that there are many seeds planted in it. Some of these seeds are good and some are bad. Jesus explained the planting of these seeds in our lives in the parable of the weeds. He said that the Son of Man (Jesus) is the one who plants the good seed which is the Word of God into our hearts and this seed grows to produce a harvest. However, He said that the evil one (Satan) plants or sows bad seed into the garden of our hearts. These seeds can also produce a crop if we allow them to grow in our hearts. At the end of the age, these bad seeds will be burned up, and the good seed and its harvest in our lives will remain forever. It is our responsibility to choose which seeds are planted in our hearts and minds. Therefore, **guard your hearts** and determine to only receive the Word of God, and not the temptations of Satan or the thinking and values of this world.

Jesus then gave specific parables to explain the working of principles of the Kingdom that have far reaching effects in our lives. I have already discussed some of these principles in earlier messages. They include the principle of reciprocitywhich has its foundation in the Scripture, “Give, and it shall be given to you.” Other principles included the law of use, the law of unity, and the law of perseverance. As I have stated many times during the teaching of these principles, **they are God’s laws, and they work for our good if we obey them, or to our peril if we reject them.**

Another Principle of the Kingdom of God that I would like to share with you this morning in found in Luke, chapter 12, verse 48. It is often referred to as the **Principle of Responsibility**. Jesus was teaching His disciples and encouraging them to be watchful and to prepare for the Master’s return. This discourse, which was read earlier, began with verse 35 and finished with verse 48, in which Jesus stated, “That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know (his Master’s will) and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. You might think this is a difficult passage to reconcile with the love, grace, and mercy of God. It is sobering, but as Children of God, we are subject to discipline from God for right or wrong behavior.

In Hebrews 12:5-6, it says, “My son, do not despise the discipline from the Lord, nor grow weary when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son (or daughter) whom He receives. I remember when our two girls were 2-4 years old, we would use a wooden spoon or ping pong paddle to discipline them. As time passed, if they knowingly did something wrong, sometimes they would hide the ping pong paddle thinking that would save them. Somehow, that ping pong paddle was always found, and discipline was carried out. Our tendency to want to hide our wrong-doing and avoid consequences began in the Garden of Eden and continues today.

But as the Body of Christ, we must remember that the stakes for obedience to God couldn’t be higher. God has given us the mission and responsibility as His Body to make disciples of all peoples, in all nations. This gospel message is given so that they may be rescued from their bondage of sin and live an abundant life for God. In verse 48b, the measure of our responsibility is clearly defined. **To whom much is given, of him much shall be required. And from him to whom much was entrusted, much more will be asked.”**

 Jesus made it very clear to His disciples that with His blessings, also comes responsibility. He also makes it clear that rejection of this responsibility will result in consequences. Those consequences will be great if we know God’s will and fail to do it, compared to those that are ignorant of this truth. The Lord made it clear that this parable was for the favored or blessed in any category; whether spiritual or physical, whether in the visible world, or the invisible Kingdom of God. Whatever level or opportunity is given to us, both man and God expect a certain level of responsibility. Therefore, **the degree of responsibility depends on the degree of blessing the Lord has entrusted to us.**

This principle goes hand in hand with the parable of the talents, in which God gives differing amounts of gifts, whether spiritual or financial, to all believers. He then expects that we will put these gifts and talents to work for the benefit of His Kingdom. For example, in the parable of the talents, the man with 10 talents who gained ten more talents was rewarded for multiplying his talents. The man who buried his talent was punished by having his talent taken away for failure to use it. This principle works the same way with spiritual gifts. We need to **use** (the Law of Use) our gifts for God’s glory, or he will remove those gifts and give them to another believer who will use them.

Throughout history, the law of responsibility has played an important part in the affairs of man. Early in the nineteenth century, a French Duke, Gaston Pierre Marc, wrote in a collection of Maxims and Reflections a two-word statement that has become part of our language: **“Noblesse oblige.”** Despite historical abuses, it **describes the law of responsibility in the physical world we live in**. Nobility obliges or nobility obligates states the obligation of people of high rank, position, or favor to behave nobly, generously, kindly, and responsibly toward others.

**This idea of noblesse oblige reached its pinnacle with the British in the nineteenth century.** During this time, the British felt a responsibility called Pax Britannia or the British peace, to exist on every continent. They called it a burden of the empire and sent their men and women to India and the four corners of the earth, challenging any nation that would disrupt the peace of the world. The British viewed this as their responsibility, but other nations disagreed, calling their influence an invasion, or responsibility that had become power and influence with domination. The English failed to understand that everlasting peace can only come and exist through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

As the United States emerged as the most powerful nation in the world, our responsibility to the world also grew.One goal that seemed to be prominent was the goal to lead a world economy. We viewed this as a responsibility, but some viewed it as interference. On achieving this goal of leading a world economy, we began to fail to live up to our responsibility as the richest nation in the world. We began to spend more money than we made, increasing our debt and our borrowing. Soon our spending ignited inflation, which we exported overseas, since our currency was tied to every major currency in the world.

Today, with a national debt now surpassing 34 trillion dollars, and rising with every new spending bill passed in Congress, we have become the biggest debtor nation in the world. We have failed to learn from Scripture that borrowers become slaves to our lenders. From these two examples of Great Britain and the United States, we can see that **responsibility can be easily misguided and lead to peril.** We have lost our understanding of the leadership and responsibility required of a country to which much has been given.

**Just as this law of responsibility has consequences for man, and nations, it also places similar expectations on the disciples of Christ.** The notion of “noblesse oblige” can be found in the writings of the New Testament. Paul tells the disciples that they are “kings and priests” unto God and that we are joint heirs with Jesus in His Kingdom. Paul then encourages us to be worthy of this high calling in our responsibility to spread the Gospel and minister to the needs of people. I believe that Christians in the United States, at least partially, have lived up to our God-given responsibility. We have spread the Gospel by sending countless missionaries all over the world and funded billions of dollars to help meet the needs of the poor and destitute in many countries.

In the parable of Luke to be watchful, Jesus refers to our responsibility of being diligent to be about the Master’s business and to be ready for His return. It is the same responsibility that He gave the early disciples - to bring Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life into the hearts and lives of people.He commanded us to preach the Good News of His Gospel to those who haven’t heard it. He also calls us to heal the sick and broken-hearted, and to deliver them from demonic oppression. Lastly, God calls us to make disciples of them, teaching them about the kingdom of God that has come.

Jesus knows our weaknesses. He knows that we can be reluctant to put into action what we know we are called to do. That is why Jesus warned His disciples in the parable that we must be about the Father’s business. We are just like the people of Israel in the days of the prophet Isaiah when it comes to understanding our God- given responsibility to minister to the needs of people around us.

In Isaiah 58, which was read earlier, Isaiah explains to the people of God exactly what they were responsible for**.** Isaiah defines these responsibilities into two parts. The first part has to do with the **spiritual needs of people**, and the second part has to do with the more practical or **physical needs of people**. Speaking of spiritual needs, he said beginning in verse 6, “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke.”

Isaiah is talking about setting people free from their sins, their bondages, addictions, and burdens that weigh them down. Then, in verse 7 Isaiah expands God’s ministry call to include basic physical needs: sharing our food with the hungry, providing the poor with shelter, clothing the naked, and caring for our own flesh and blood.

Isaiah goes on to say that if God’s people will be responsible in these things, tremendous blessing will result. Isaiah outlines these blessings in verse 8. First, he said that our light will break forth like the dawn, and our healing will quickly appear. The use of the term ‘light’ has many applications in Scripture, but one is that light dispels darkness. Many of us have darkness in our lives: physical weaknesses, disease, wounds and hurts from the past, or bondages that haven’t been broken. God’s light can break these bondages in our lives. This is the first blessing given by Isaiah (Isaiah 58:8): that God’s light will break forth in our lives and healing will quickly appear. The second blessing is that our righteousness will go before us, and the glory of the Lord will be our rear guard. To me, this means that God is going before us and following behind us, guiding us, protecting us, and walking with us as we join Him in what He is doing!

A third blessing for being responsible to do the Father’s business is revealed by Isaiah in verse 9: “Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: Here am I.” Isaiah is speaking of answered prayer. When we are involved in the ministry that He has called us to, God promises to answer our prayers when we call to Him or cry out to Him in our time of need. As His children, we have total access to God the Father through the shed blood of Jesus. In addition, Jesus is standing before God as our advocate and High Priest bringing our prayers before the Father (Hebrews, chapter 8).

The fourth blessing is revealed in the second half of verse 9 and verse 10.

Isaiah said that if we do away with the yoke of oppression which is brought about by our pointing finger and malicious talk, and instead spend ourselves on behalf of the hungry and oppressed, our light will rise in darkness so bright that it will be like the noonday sun shining in our lives. Isaiah is pointing out that some oppression in people’s lives comes as a result of our own finger pointing and malicious talk. This is one way that we become irresponsible. Instead, we should focus on ministry which will result in light springing forth in our lives.

In the next verse, Isaiah speaks of further blessings of the Lord’s guidance and his satisfying our needs, even in a sun-scorched land, and a strengthening of our physical bodies. He said that we would be like a well-watered garden or a spring whose waters never fail. As the Body of Christ in this world, let us all make the choice to be watchful servants, anticipating the return of our master, Jesus Christ. Let us remember the words of Jesus concerning our responsibility to Him: “**From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, more will be asked.”**

It is my prayer for each of us as believers in this congregation, that we will prayerfully consider the many blessings, both spiritual and physical, that God has given to each one of us, and that we will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit to use, to an even greater degree, what He has entrusted to each of us for His glory in furthering His Kingdom here in Carson City and beyond. AMEN!

NOW LET US PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR COMMUNION!