

21 *“But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. 22 “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” 23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. 24 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ 26 “But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. 27 “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. 28 “And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. nasb*

At our house I'm going to pull out a number of between 85% and 90% of the TV we watch is so-called reality shows that are contests where you begin with a large number of contestants and as time goes by they are eliminated one by one until you have the ultimate winner.

The most astounding one in my estimation is the batchelor thing where all the beautiful women are literally throwing unmitigated sexual attraction around until the final selection takes place. That's bizarre.

But then we have cook off's, bake off's, glass blowers, knife and weapon makers, talent scouts and people who thing they have talent, would be music stars, dancers, cake bosses, and a myriad more that I haven't even thought of. Most of it, I quietly leave the room and let my weary life partner nap in peace with doggies on her lap. It's almost totally rubbish. My new word for trash because I enjoy the British take on things over the American. Excrement.

When you tire of that, if you flip on the news shows, it's the same exact thing in a more virulent form. Who's winning, who's losing. On all kinds of scales including real mass violence and murder. Somebody's winning even if they

have to murder entire populations, and somebody is losing. I make a point of not watching the news.

Politics. Need I say more. People bashing other people to pieces in order to get to the top of the people pile. At any cost.

This is the world left to us after the fall in the garden where our father, Adam, sold the entire human race into a sinful rebellion against the creator and forfeited the authority to rule and reign over this world to Satan who introduced the possibility of rebellion against God.

This world is condemned. The ruler of this world is Satan. Every human born into this world is born into rebellion, born into sin, born into a condemned world that is at war with God and at war with each other.

The world is totally broken. Condemned. Worthless. Rubbish as the brits would say. But into that chaos, God graciously instituted some restraints on the mass chaos that would ensue if Satan had full control to destroy.

It was for common grace and survival in this condemned world that God instituted marriage. Family units with stable moms and dads. God gave us that. God instituted governments to hold chaos and evil at bay at some level. God endowed the police with deadly force in order to maintain some kind of a livable situation in Satan's world.

Finally, God gave us a basic morality to adhere to for basic human thriving. The 10 commandments if followed, brings thriving on every human level. Families thrive, marriages are stable and thrive, children thrive within those families, there is civil thriving among families and communities and at larger scales because of governments and police authorities that enforce moral order based in God's moral laws.

All of the restraints given by God in His gracious love for His fallen creation are given to restrain our fallen sinful natures whose default is like Cain's, kill the person between you and where you want to be. Eliminate whoever is in

the way of you being Alpha doggie.

That's our sinful default if all restraint is removed, and that's why all of the reality shows get watched, because deep within our fallen selves, we want to be at the top. We want glory. We want power. We want fame. We want the world's accolades. So we shoot into those rubbish TV programs, and they keep making that stuff . . . why? . . . because we want it and it sells.

That's the setting and the introduction to our passage this morning. Jesus has introduced to His disciples the fact that there is a defector who is going to betray Jesus. We covered that with all of its implications about sovereignty and guilt last week. It's posted on our little web site.

But that truth has led to a discussion among the disciples and an argument about who it might be. We saw that such a discussion began with humility, Lord is it I? and then quickly degraded to a different form, Is it him? and then we find ourselves in vs. 24 where it has digressed from Is it him? to who is the top dog in this group. Who is greatest. The fight is on.

The disciples have defaulted to a reality TV show mentality. Who's going to be top disciple. Who's going to run this deal if Jesus is removed, which He keeps telling us is going to happen. Who's going to be boss if Jesus is gone.

We can't help ourselves. That's our sinful default inherited from our father Adam. It's born into us in the noetic effects of the fall into sin. Any time you see a half dozen children playing together (rare these days) out in the street, you can watch that game unfolding. Who's in charge of this game we're playing. Who gets to make the rules. Who enforces the rules. It's our default.

And the disciples are no different. They've been fighting with each other about who is the boss, all the way to Jerusalem. It's a struggle within their ranks that they've been having for months. Who is greatest. In the kingdom.

24 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

Let me introduce for you here, a problem and then we're going to look at Jesus teaching about that problem.

Two kingdoms exist together like parallel universes, but they share the same real estate. The kingdom of God, as opposed to the kingdom of Satan. The authority to reign of God, dwells on earth in the midst of another kingdom, the authority to reign of Satan.

Two parallel universes in the same place at the same time. And those parallel universes function with different rules. The kingdom of God is occupied by people who have been purchased out of this sinful world, forgiven, and brought out of Satan's family, Adam's family, adopted into God's family.

The kingdom of God doesn't look like Satan's kingdom. Hate, murder, lies, sexual brokenness, infidelity, all of the defaults we inherited from our father Adam are left behind in the old world when we take our place in God's world.

That's perfect black and white, but it doesn't quite happen that way, does it. We are born into God's world, but our sinful flesh doesn't leave us the same day, does it. In fact we struggle with our old selves the entire time we're here.

That's why Paul cries out with the same distress that every christian in every place at every time since this day with Jesus in Jerusalem until today;

21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 OH Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

The disciples have digressed to their Adamic default. They're arguing with each other over who's the boss, who's next in line at the top just under Jesus.

Is that a problem? Is that something Jesus should address? Why?
Is it a problem if God's kingdom looks identical to and acts with all of the same defaults as Satan's kingdom? Is it a problem if the church looks just like the world? If you can't tell the difference between the church and the world?

If there are two distinct separate kingdoms, one fallen and disgraced and sinful, and one that is redeemed out of that rebellion, purchased with blood, set apart, should they both look the same? Or should there be a clear distinction between the two?

Hold those thoughts. Here is Jesus answer;

25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' 26 "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.

Jesus answers with a dichotomy. This group is like this. But that's not how we roll in our group. Our group is like this. He says *"But not so with you,* Not so with you. We don't roll how they roll. We live by a different rule, a different set of rules, and those rules are contrary to your fleshly defaults.

In the kingdom of Satan, bequeathed to him by Adam when he sinned, and indwelt by all condemned sinners born into this world, it's one way. But in God's kingdom, indwelt by forgiven sinners purchased by the blood of Jesus, we no longer follow the defaults of fallen fleshly men. *Not so among you.*

Jesus illustrates. Satan's world, someone is at the top, someone is king of the world, king of the region, king of the county, king of the town in descending order. Kings and sub kings. We strive to work up that ladder. Be king of something. King of all glass blowers. woohoo. King photographer who commands the most money for his art.

Jesus says, that's the normal default, but that is not to be so among you. In God's kingdom, different rules. Different order of heirarchy.

God is King of kings. We are slaves who are adopted heirs who will reign together on thrones with Jesus. We're going to see that in a few verses. But for now, we are slaves who belong to the benevolent loving King who purchased us, that's the up down ranking, and laterally, we are all just fellow slaves, fellow servants of our King. We are a brotherhood of slaves. That's it.

What does that look like? While the world is scratching each other's eyes out clawing their way to be king of something, anything, the church, according to Jesus, is a fellowship of fellow slaves who serve each other. No rank. One King of kings, and below Him, slaves who are fellows with each other, and who serve each other.

Want to be the highest ranking fellow slave. Serve the other slaves more than all the others. That's Jesus example. To be the highest, be the lowest. It's a self cancelling equation. Want to rise to the top, go to the bottom. We have one King and there are no sub kings under Him.

This teaching is so important for these men and for us because false religion always defaults to a man at the top and a hierarchy under that man of men who would attain to that seat.

Organized false religion always, always, always works the same as the fallen world which it dwells in. Someone has to be top man. And under the top man are the next in line to top and the next in line to that level and all the way down the hierarchy ladder.

That phenomenon, that system wherever it is found is the default of sinful men in a fallen world. Top man, next level below top man, level after level below those men etc. etc. etc. Look around. Even the muslims who claim to have no hierarchy at all can't help themselves. Top prophet, who is dead, Caliph, prophets, imams, ordinary muslims. Get to the top by killing infidels.

In Matthew 23, just days prior to this discussion amongst his own disciples, Jesus attacks and exposes the hierarchy system of false religion. Obviously

the disciples didn't get it then and are getting a refresher course. Listen to what Jesus taught in the temple just days prior to this upper room discourse;

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. 4 "And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6 "And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. 8 "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 "And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 "And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 "And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

This world loves it's winners, it's top man. False religions default to what this world automatically does. Top man, top dog, generals under top dog, then commanders, then lietenants, then sargeants then soldiers on the ground.

The problem at the root of all of this kingdom building and hierarchy climbing is worship. Man wants to be worshipped instead of God. Get to the place where men oooh and aaah over you, bow down to you. Get to the top. It's a hidden desire built into our fallen selves that wants others to notice us, worship us. The root is pride, and God hates it.

That's where the disciples are headed with their argument about who is greatest, and Jesus says; NO. That's how the world does it. That isn't how it's going to be with you. Don't be called Rabbi, or the logical equivalent in whatever false system it is. Don't be called father. Don't be called leader.

We, as the church, in order to be seperated and removed from the sinful world

that we share real estate with, need to avoid hierarchical systems. We are to simply be brothers. Fellow slaves.

Some of you like to call me pastor. Shepherd. I get it and I allow it but I'm not quite comfortable with even that. Within the categories of spiritual gifts there are shepherds that are gifts God gives to His church. That's OK. And biblically there is an office of overseer. God gives His church elders who oversee the flock, protect the flock, feed the flock.

Those men answer directly to God. It's actually a liability, not an asset. Overseers are responsible to safeguard and feed God's flock. It's a stewardship of God's assets that the overseers, or elders if you will, are accountable to God for. Greater accountability = greater liability in my estimation. Different from how the world rolls. Fellow slaves, but in more trouble with the King if you get it wrong.

25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' 26 "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant

A couple of things strike me in that verse. First is the word Benefactor. A Benefactor is someone who is elevated who can dispense blessing on those underneath him.

Jesus is using that word as polar opposite of what His men are to be. God is our benefactor. God dispenses blessings on His people. If there is some man who is between God and his slaves claiming to be an intermediary between God and men, a benefactor, that's what Jesus is saying; *But not so among you.*

There's God and there's slaves. No benefactors in the middle. No priesthood. Jesus forbids all of that in the Matthew 23 passage I just read, and in these words we're studying this morning. No hierarchy.

but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant

Want to be great? Then be the smallest. Be the most invisible slave who is pointing others to and helping others see the Kings! In that culture, age mattered. The elders were the most wise, the most noble, the most respected. People with my color hair were respected the highest, and then it went down by rank, working men, taking care of families, under the elders, young men who were learners on their way up, and finally children.

Children were not respected for their great wisdom. I had to laugh in derision this week as I listened to a story about a California lawmaker who has introduced a law that makes it illegal for department stores (think Walmart or Sams Club or Costco) to segregate childrens toys as boys toys and girls toys. We need a law against such a horror.

That's pathetic, but then you learn that the wisdom behind his law was based in a ten-year-old girl named Britten, and we are told that the girl's mother worked in the lawmakers office.

So there you have it. IN Jesus culture in that time frame, children were just children and had no wisdom because, well, they were children. But in our elevated time that we live, laws are written because a 10 year old didn't like the fact that there were pink aisles and blue aisles in the toy department. She felt threatened and left out. That California is being run by 10 year olds is not a sign of elevation, it's a sign of God's judgement, but that's another sermon.

OK, back to Jesus. A little terrifying that we have to explain that when Jesus says become children, He isn't saying become as important and influential as 10 year old's, He's saying become as humble and as low in the order of things, as children. Jesus says don't be the top, be the bottom. Don't be the one served, be the server. That's how the kingdom of God rolls. That's distinct in our fallen world.

Jesus illustrates His point by His own example among them. This is the

kingdom of God as opposed to the kingdom of Satan. Watch closely; In the other accounts, right at this point, Jesus has just washed His disciples feet.

27 “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves?”

That's what we call a rhetorical question folks. Even I know that. And I'm as poor at english grammar as anyone who can barely communicate. The answer is obviated by the question. *“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves?”*

In this world, the one who reclines is greater than the one who serves. We all occasionally go to restaurants because mom is tired of serving all the time. So we go out for dinner, and a delightful person comes quickly to meet all of our needs and desires. It's wonderful. It used to be wonderful. Getting hard to find servers these days. But we all know the answer to Jesus question.

Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Paul puts it in succinct simple terms for us that we cannot mis-understand; This is what the church is supposed to look like as opposed to the world. Philippians 2:

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Ppn 2:5 - 10

When I am lucky enough to go to the shepherds conference at Grace Community Church in the springtime of non-covid 19 years, there is a phenomenon at that event that I've never seen duplicated anywhere else.

Out on the patio area where the ladies are knocking themselves out serving yummy treats and snacks and drinks, against a wall, there's a row of old fashioned shoe shine chairs like you used to see in Bus stations and airports.

And there are seminary students who are shining the shoes of bozo's like me! It's an astonishing picture really. A young man who is probably doubly or quadruply gifted intellectually to what I am, is waiting to demean himself by shining my dirty nasty shoes?

It's as close as they could get to what Jesus was doing at this last supper before His death where he was washing the feet of blockheads? It's an illustration of how hierarchy works in God's kingdom. Some kid a whole lot smarter than me wants to shine my shoes.

That's our example, still alive in the true Kingdom of God. The dichotomy, the polar opposite of the fallen sinful world. The world looks at shoe shine chairs as a horror of a world where one class demeaned another class. In the kingdom of God, those young men are living out Jesus words to His disciples in this passage.

The world is at the bottom trying to get to the top. Jesus was at the top, and came down to us, didn't grasp being at the top, came down to us to rescue us out of this world. That's our example. That's the attitude the fellow slaves are to exhibit one to each other.

Then likewise, God will exalt us in due time. Not now. That's Jesus next point. The world is grasping for exaltation now. Glory now. Dog eat dog. Claw your way to glory. That's this world.

In the kingdom of God there will be exaltation for the lowest slave of the other slaves. God will exalt His servants who served, not according to this worlds

rules, but according to lowly serving the other slaves in Christ's name for His glory. Not ours. Those who lowered themselves to glorify Jesus, will be exalted later. Listen to Jesus words;

I'm switching translations here to the new Legacy Standard Bible because it brings out something that is definitely in the greek that we might miss otherwise.

28 “Now you are those who have stood by Me in My trials, 29 and I grant you a kingdom, just as My Father granted one to Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. lsb

The world's default is to try to get to the top. Jesus says, some day, you are going to have awesome authority to reign in my kingdom. God has granted Jesus all authority over this world.

And what this verse is saying is that in that day, Jesus will likewise grant us authority over what is His. We will eat and drink at His table, and in some way, we will rule with Him in His kingdom.

We're at the bottom in this world. Treating each other always as more important than ourselves. But exaltation is coming. We will eat and drink at Jesus table and join with Him in His reign over the nations.

Let's finish with some important questions. As we look around the church today, evangelicalism first, and the broader christendom beyond that, are we seeing anything that looks like what Jesus just described?

Are we polar opposite from how this world rolls? According to Jesus, that would be the normative place to start. Parallel but seperate kingdoms that are polar opposite in how they roll.

At the big yearly Southern Baptist Convention that just finished a few months ago, their big convention attended by all of the messengers sent from local

congregations, they had large banners all over the place with this years logo which said; **The World is Watching.**

In other words, we have to do our business in a way that the onlooking world approves of. We want the world to approve and think well of us. Really?

Evangelicalism is falling all over itself these days trying to win the world's approval. We want the world to love us, so we adopt the world's way of getting stuff done? The way to get the world's approval is to compromise? With the world? They're watching us? The World is Watching.

Satan is watching. Go about your business so that Satan isn't offended? Do Christ's business on earth but don't make Satan mad? Compromise a bit so Satan isn't offended by anything we might say or do. Lord have mercy.

Wait a minute. Didn't Jesus say; This is how the world does it, but it is **not** so among you?

Beloved, the world IS watching. And they're not impressed. The world is watching us to see if we're really anything different from them. The world is watching us to see if Jesus is real. Are we transformed by miracle power in us because Jesus dwells within?

The world is looking at us to see if we are changed. The world is looking to see if we have transformed lives. The world is looking for a church that is distinctly different from them, even if they hate it. The world isn't impressed with a church that is a poor churchified version of the world. That's vomit. That's lukewarm.

We are those who have come out of this world and who have been made distinctly different from this world. Little by little after a real regeneration where our spirits have been made alive at our rebirth, little by little we are being transformed into Christ who was so different from this world, and so in this world's face, they crucified Him.

Last week I finished with these words, looking forward to the realities of what Jesus would be teaching His 11 disciples in this section about the distinctness of His church.

We play by different rules. We're going to look at a different set of rules from a different play book, totally foreign to this world. God's rule in His authority to reign, and how people who dwell in that world act in relation to each other. Kingdom people live with each other by a different set of rules than non-kingdom people. We don't live by this world's rules.

Exciting truths about a world separated from this one. And we are part of that world, not this one, if we know Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. Two distinct kingdoms living together on the same turf. Are we distinct? Are we separated. The lines have never been more blurred.

Those lines between those two kingdoms, according to Jesus, need to be black and white distinct. The Southern Baptists had it right. The World IS watching us. They only see Jesus when we are distinctly different.

You say, yeah, but that's what Got Jesus killed. Exactly.