

Weaving the Word

Line Upon Line

Part 1 – September 29, 2013

I want to talk to you about the new series before we start the new series. It's called Weaving the Word. And it's *not* a series. It's a *group* of stand-alone sermons based on the overlapping stories in the gospels, mostly the synoptic (i.e. similar) gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, because they're so ... *synoptic*. We'll weave in John's Gospel too; it's complementary, but not so *synoptic*. John tells unique stories, like Jesus' first public miracle, at a wedding, turning water into wine for drunk people!



Khirbet Cana, a likely site for the wedding

... the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." – John 2:9-10 NIV

Why would He *do* that? First miracle: booze for drunk Jews!

It's like everything He does is *calculated* to raise questions. I grew up in a church of what you might call *very sober believers*. No nonsense. Solemn. No laughing. No clapping. Not even when someone did special music. Very awkward. Uneasy. If that's sober, I prefer my believers a little ... 'tipsy' ... *if* that's sober.

Because, by that standard, four muddled gospels with divergent details, seems ... *un-sober!* Untidy. Scattered. Little here. Little there. So, why not one perfectly tempered, integrated resource? Well, the answer has a lot to do with that wine!

The Gospels are like a four-part harmony. Soprano. Alto. Tenor. Bass. In four-part harmony, **four distinct notes create a chord**, and **linked chords create a song that no single voice can produce**. And, **one voice carries a distinct melody**, while the other three provide the supporting harmony.

Have you heard the term: "Harmony of the Gospels"? That's where the parallel stories are woven together into one. That's what we're going to do. Harmonizing the Gospels, story by story. I'll give you the verses the Sunday before, so you can cut and paste the pieces together like a puzzle. But be warned, it feels more like *playing* than *studying* the Bible. It's very childlike.

Why do you think Jesus tells us to call God, Abba/Daddy? Do you?

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." – Matthew 19:14 NIV

Are you “such as these”? Jesus became a child to come to *us*, are we supposed to become like children to come to Him?



At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [Do you hear what He’s saying?!] Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.” – Matthew 18:1-5 NIV

Jesus says that **true childhood isn’t something to grow out of, but into**. If I don’t become like a child, I won’t see God as my Abba.

17 years before Israel’s¹ captivity, (c. 722^{BC}) Isaiah’s prophecy, in chapter 28, simultaneously served as a warning of God’s soon-coming wrath, and a herald of the Messiah’s later-coming glory.² Isaiah links *pride* with drunkenness, (28:1) and contrasts the un-teachable drunkards to little children. (28:9) Turns out, **humility is true sobriety**. So, **if you’re not childlike, you’re not sober!**

The enemy has deceived so many churches into equating soberness with somberness, thus squeezing out so much joy and gladness. But, Jesus doesn’t showcase a scholar, a soldier, or a scribe. **His primary metaphor for a model disciple is a child**. Yet, even after this, the disciples try to chase the kids away from Jesus. Let’s harmonize the synoptic accounts. I’ll put Matthew in black, **Mark in red**, and **Luke in blue**.

Then little children were brought to Jesus ... **People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them ...** for him to *place his hands on them and pray for them ...* **People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them ... but the disciples rebuked them ...** But the disciples rebuked *those who brought them ...* **When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them ...** **When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me ...”** But Jesus *called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me ...”* Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me *and do not hinder them ... and do not hinder them ... and do not hinder them ...* for the kingdom of *heaven* belongs to such as these ... **for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these ... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these ... I tell you the truth ... I tell you the truth ... anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it ... anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ...** **And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them ...** When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there. – Matthew 19:13-15; **Mark 10:13-16**; **Luke 18:15-17** NIV

¹ When the nation split after Solomon’s death, *Israel* refers to the Northern Kingdom and Judah to the Southern

² Isaiah 28:11-12 is quoted in 1 Corinthians 14:21; and Isaiah 28:16 in Romans 9:33 and 10:11, and in 1 Peter 2:6

Now let's add the melody line to that chord of three strands.³

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. — John 1:10-13 NIV



How do you *become* a child? You work at it. Playful isn't for the faint of heart! Ever play with kids?! Easy? Yes! Enjoyable? Yes! Exhausting? Oh, yes! Absolutely. It's: Go! Go! Go! Stop. Unconscious. But oh, what sleep that *is!* Ever envy the rest of a pooped out preschooler?! Jesus warned about the typical teachers of the law.

“They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders ...” — Matthew 23:4a NIV

And, in contrast to *their* teaching yoke, Jesus offers His own.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” [Because it's fun and exciting, not effortless] — Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

If God's Word is a burden, you're doing it wrong! His yoke is easy, enjoyable, and invigorating, unless you treat it as a heavy, somber set of religious rules. *Barf!* I quote Isaiah.

In that day the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people ... But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; [They turn to wine for relief, because they think God is a heavy load] the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean. [Vivid, ain't it!] Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? [Now, here's where it really gets good] Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? — Isaiah 28:5-9 NKJV

Well? Yes! Isaiah doesn't offer the answer; but, Jesus does!

At that time [just before He talks about His rest and His yoke] Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things [Who's ready for a treasure hunt?] from the wise and learned, [who are independent and self-sufficient] and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” — Matthew 11:25-26 NIV

³ “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12b)

And, what was being revealed? That righteousness doesn't come from independent, self-sufficient devotion to rites and rules, but through a childlike relationship with Righteousness *itself!* Observation: **a mother loves to nurse; a father longs to play!** And, God is perfectly both. He nurtures us in the foundational milk; while waiting till we're childlike enough to play. Listen to His Daddy-disappointment in Hebrews ...

... though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, [What comes next is incredible; the definition of the "milk"/"elementary teachings"] not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [That's the milk?! Yep] – Hebrews 5:12-6:2 NIV

Let's get to that relational, playful, solid food, "righteousness"! Isaiah compares the righteousness of the Cornerstone to a plumb line. (Is 28:16-17) And, he explains how the Messiah will teach His knowledge, His principles, His precepts.

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, [Hmm. Four precepts. Four gospels] line upon line, line upon line, [measuring line or cord (Strong's H6957); connecting the pieces, perhaps?] here a little, there a little. [Sure sounds like the gospels] For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, [it'll sound foolish and foreign; the very point Paul makes when he quotes this verse (1 Cor 14:21)] to whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," [TMOT says, "Blah, blah, blah, blah"] ... – Isaiah 28:10-13 NKJV

It's the foolishness that confounds the wise-in-their-own-eyes.

In Jesus' first miracle, He not only revealed himself as the True Vine, but the very fulfillment of Isaiah 28, pouring himself out for those too drunk and distracted to appreciate or recognize that the source of joy was in their midst.

I'd like to give you the verses to piece together for next week, but, you'll have to wait, because ... why water into *wine*? I think we need to cast our lines and connect the grapes!

What do you suppose He'll teach us if we go through His Word and gather up all the grapes, or the almonds, or the olives, or the dozens of other prominent symbols He uses to teach us about Him? Next week, I'll introduce the series (that's also not a series) that we're simultaneously starting with the one today.