

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

10. The Righteous Shine in the Kingdom of Their Father

“MY KINGDOM GROWS IMPERCEPTIBLY
LIKE A MUSTARD SEED. OVER TIME
ITS MANY AND EVER-INCREASING
BRANCHES BEAR FRUIT THAT BLESSES
MORE AND MORE PEOPLE.”

The door to the hospital room opened quietly as a smiling face peeked in.

“Harry! You’re the last person I ever thought I’d see at a time like this,” blurted Frank, stretched out on his bed with tubes and wires sprouting from his arms and chest. A monitor next to the bed flickered as it kept track of his vital signs.

Harry reached out toward his old friend with a grin, wrapping both hands around Frank’s hand. “I’m here because you’re my friend, and always will be!”

Tears welled up in Frank’s eyes. “Harry, I betrayed you just like a Judas!(Matthew 26:25) When you refused to falsify those specifications and Gene fired you, I was on his side. [See *Kingdom Living Today* story #5.] I even made fun of you after your “religious experience”, and chewed you out for not drinking with us guys any more.” Suddenly he choked up. “How can you come to me as a friend after what I’ve done to you?”

Harry pulled a chair up next to the bed and spoke softly as he looked into Frank’s eyes. “I have to confess that I was pretty hurt by how I was fired. It took me a couple days until my God opened my eyes that it was His will that I be let go.”

“God wanted you *fired*?” declared the amazed man. “This I’ve got to hear!”

“Well, that’s why I wanted to come to see you, Frank. Right after I got fired, I was almost in shock. But as I was driving away from the company, I sensed that God didn’t want me to get angry or hold a grudge or panic over not having a job. He wanted me to use some time to get to know Him more.” He shook his head at the memory as Frank stared at him wide-eyed.

Harry continued, “What helped too was Jan’s response. She wasn’t upset or worried — in fact, she just about dragged me to our friends Brett and Lacie so they could pray with us. So getting to know God in a deeper way is what I did for several weeks.”

“Well, that’s pretty interesting in a strange sort of way, I guess,” remarked Frank slowly. “But why did you come here to see *me*?”

Harry chuckled softly. “Someone Brett had met, an older man named Jack, encouraged Jan and me to go to a website called *Restorationministries.org* to help us grow in our spiritual development. Since we’d prayed earlier with Brett and Lacie about discerning God’s will, I figured this was part of His answer so I checked it out.”

Frank had spent a lot of time surfing the web before his heart attack, so his ears perked up that his friend would have found something besides entertainment in cyberspace. “So, what did you find there?”

“Something that changed my life, Frank. One day I was browsing through a book on the website, *Restoring the Early Church*. One sentence in particular almost jumped off the page. The author had been told by a friend, “You can never walk in the fullness of Jesus until you can wash the feet of Jesus.” (See *Restoring the Early Church*, Chapter 8, “Your

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Relationship With Jesus".) Those words dug into my heart — I mean, I just kept reading them over and over! Then I heard a voice inside me say, "Harry, you can never walk in the fullness of Jesus until you can wash the feet of Judas." (John 13:5)

Frank's jaw dropped. Finally he said, "That's powerful stuff! I can't say I really understand it though. Please, keep going!" He pushed the button to prop the back of his bed up higher.

"Well, the more I read, the more I was convicted in my heart that I needed to forgive you, and Gene too. Let me see if I can describe it the way it was presented in that chapter as they depicted the Last Supper. This was a Passover meal, and Jesus was the Host. (Matthew 26:17-30) Even though He knew Judas was about to betray Him, He put the guy at the place of honor at the table, right next to Him. (John 13:26) That's what I call forgiveness!"

Frank nodded. "I recall some of that from Sunday School when I was a kid, but it didn't mean much to me back then."

Harry smiled. "I know what you mean. But then I remembered the words of Jesus that I'd been reading that same morning: '*If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*' (Matthew 6:15) That sealed it for me. I knew what I had to do."

"So because of this, you came here to see me?" asked Frank, puzzled.

"Not quite," laughed Harry. "Actually, I didn't even know you'd had a heart attack. I went to the office to see you and Gene. In fact, I'd just left his office after asking him forgiveness for any wrong attitude I'd held. One of the guys told me you were in the hospital. So I want to ask you the same thing I asked Gene. Would you forgive me for any wrong attitude I had against you?"

"YOU'RE asking *me* for forgiveness...." stammered the surprised man. Tears again emerged. "I need to be asking *you* to forgive me."

"I'm glad to forgive you, Frank. Will you forgive me?"

Frank sniffled a reply as Harry gently reached across the wires to hug his friend. When a couple minutes passed, Frank cleared his throat and said, "Now let me tell you how I ended up in the hospital. You may notice that my wife isn't here. She left me two weeks ago to think things through."

"Think things through?" asked Harry. "What do you mean?"

"So Gene didn't tell you what's been going on?" Frank looked surprised.

Harry shook his head. "No. It was all he could do to say he forgave me for my attitude!"

Frank nodded grimly. "About three weeks ago the FBI showed up at our office. Some of the contracts we falsified data on were government contracts. Gene is waiting to be indicted. I'm not sure what'll happen to me." He sighed. "When Becky found out I was involved in illegal stuff she went through the roof. I guess that was the last straw. She was fed up with all the time I spent on the Internet too. Anyway, she packed her bags and told me she needed time to think about everything. She's at her mother's."

Harry could tell how painful this was for his old friend and waited for him to go on.

"I managed to hang on for a few days, but I could just feel the pressure building inside me. Then yesterday I woke up with chest pains and was admitted here. They told me it was a good thing I came when I did, as my blood pressure is sky high and I really haven't taken care of myself these past few years."

"Frank, I'm really sorry all this has happened. I never even thought about the legal ramifications of what the company was doing. I only focused on what, in good conscience, I couldn't be part of."

“Well,” added Frank wryly, “if no one’s told you, you did the *right thing* and you left at the *right time*! I guess the FBI will find out why you were fired and will want to talk to you.”

Harry responded soberly, “I can only tell them the truth.”(Psalms 15:2)

His friend grimaced as he shifted his position. “Do you know, until you showed up here today I was afraid that your testimony might fry me. But now, I really want you to tell them everything you know. This dark cloud will never leave me until everything comes out in the open.”

“I’m glad you said that,” Harry responded with a slight smile. “I think God wants me to tell you what I’ve learned these past few weeks to give you hope.”

Frank was so grateful Harry had come. “I’d like that, buddy.”

“It’s no small thing that I’m here today of all days,” Harry noted with a grin.

“You mean today wasn’t an accident that you came in?” Frank wondered.

“Nope,” chortled Harry. “Tomorrow Jan and I leave for three weeks vacation in Huddinge, Sweden where we were going on vacation before I got fired.” He beamed with thanks again in His heart to the One Who’d made it happen.(Romans 8:28)

Frank cackled with disbelief. “So how’d you land a job that starts you out with a vacation?”

Harry was delighted to relate the amazing details. “The company I’m working for called me after they’d heard over the grapevine why I’d been fired. They wanted me because, as they said, they were ‘looking for a person of integrity.’ When I accepted the position, they told me they wanted me to visit their European headquarters first. When they mentioned it was in Huddinge, I began to cry — boy, were they startled!”

Both men chuckled over that.

“Anyway,” Harry went on, shaking his head at the memory, “I told them how Jan and I had been planning to visit her family in Huddinge before I’d been fired. On the spot they gave me three weeks vacation there before I report to their headquarters!”

Frank was silent as he took in what his friend had just shared. “I’m so happy for you, Harry. And so glad you’re still my friend. Though I’m not sure you want a potential felon with a broken marriage as your buddy.”

Harry gently jabbed his friend on the shoulder. “Hey,” he laughed, “even more so now.” He paused as his voice turned earnest. “I *know* the power of my Father in heaven to take the worst circumstances and make something beautiful out of them. Wait til you see what He’s done in my marriage and family! And, I *know* He can make yours even better if you’ll turn to Him the way He wants for you.”(Romans 8:31,32)

Hope began to flicker in Frank’s heart as Harry added, “If you give me Becky’s number, Jan will call her tonight. I’ve brought some things for you to read — since you’re just laying around here doing nothing,” he grinned. “The most important book to me is the Bible. That’s how our Father makes Himself known and how we can be right with Him through Jesus.”(Hebrews 4:12-16)

Frank nodded thoughtfully, knowing how much he needed to find out more about this God Who had so changed his longtime friend. Harry went on, “I also have a workbook, *Demolishing Strongholds*, for you to go through. Jan will recommend it to Becky when she talks to her. And I’ve brought an article, *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation.*’ You need to see what my Lord Jesus can do on behalf of a repentant heart!”

“I want to get into the Bible like you and Jan have, Harry. I really hope Becky will want to come back and do this with me too,” he said, his eyes wet once again.”

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Harry grasped Frank's hands and looked straight into his eyes. "Remember this, Frank, when everything looks bad: God doesn't close one door without opening another. What my Lord has done for me, He can do for you." With that Harry prayed for both Frank and for his wife, committing everything into His hands.

Then Frank prayed, his heart aching to leave behind his old ways.^(Isaiah 57:15) He confessed to God the wrongs he knew he'd done and the darkness and selfishness of his own heart. He cried out to God, humbly wanting to turn away from that self-serving way of life and to know and trust Jesus as the Way to be right with God.^(Acts 26:18)

Harry gently embraced his old friend, assuring him of the forgiveness found at the Cross, and the new life in the Spirit that is given to the one who repents and trusts Jesus in grateful love, determined to walk as God wants him to.

As he turned to leave, Harry smiled at Frank. "Our flight for Sweden doesn't leave until 5PM tomorrow. I'll stop by as soon as Jan and I have everything ready." A BIG grin lit Frank's face. "Thanks, buddy, for everything! You'll be seeing a new man!"

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Just after noon the next day Harry and Jan turned the corner to enter Frank's room—and stopped in their tracks. There was Becky, arms wrapped around her husband. Through tears both of them were affirming how much they loved each other. As soon as Becky saw Jan she broke loose and ran to hug the woman who'd so recently opened her eyes to the darkness that had held her in bondage all her life.

"Jan, how can I thank you? I downloaded that workbook last night and didn't sleep until I went through pages 36 through 53 as you told me to. By 2 AM I could feel a host of angels all around me, and Lord Jesus was real to me for the first time in my life. I'M FREE AND I'M HIS!!!"

"Becky, I'm absolutely ecstatic!" cried Jan. "You don't know how much this means to me right now. I love my family and relatives, but I was really concerned about how Harry and I were going to share our newfound faith with them. They're really "religious" but they'll have no idea what's been happening in us through the Holy Spirit. Now with you and Frank, I've seen how quickly God can move, and I praise Him with all my heart!"

"I'm so happy for you, Jan. Frank told me how Jesus has blessed you with this vacation, and we'll be praying for you. But we have another blessing to share with you. Tell them, Frank!"

Harry and Jan were waiting eagerly.

"Well, an FBI agent came by to speak with me today. He offered me immunity from prosecution if I'd be a witness against Gene."

"Wow! Did you accept his offer?"

"No, I didn't." It was Harry's turn to look surprised. "But it's because I want to pay for what I did wrong. They're going to propose 2,000 hours of community service in exchange for my testimony. That's the deal."

Four grateful people joined hands in that hospital room praising God. What they didn't see was the host of angels joining them in worship.^(Hebrews 12:22) But someday they'll join the great cloud of witnesses who root for the saints of God.^(Hebrews 12:1)

Just before Harry and Jan left the room, they gave their new brother and sister Lord Jesus the phone numbers of Jack and Dee as well as Brett and Lacie. These two couples would delight in getting together with these new family members in Christ.

The Kingdom is like a mustard seed.....