Hi,

Not much in the way of updates today. The ship just keeps sailing on.

* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.

Yesterday, we saw that a servant leader must lead with a servant’s heart; today, we turn to the servant’s hands.

***Matthew 4:19-22***

**As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.**

***Matthew 9:35-38***

**Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”**

***John 17:1-4***

**After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.**

People are surprised when they find out that I recommend against using a red-letter Bible, in which Jesus’ words, and nothing else, are in red. It’s not that I’m against Jesus’ teachings; the problem is that a red-letter Bible makes it seem that what Jesus did was less important than what he said. Yet, we know from our own experiences that what we do often reveals more about who we are than what we say. Even our children know that the ole’ “Do as I say, not as I do” doesn’t really cut it. Jesus had the wisdom to both say it and do it.

And what did Jesus do? He traveled and he taught and he proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God and he invited and he welcomed . . . and he healed. All of this was focused on Jesus’ astonishing claim that in him, the long-awaited dawning of God’s kingdom had arrived. As Jesus puts it in the opening of Mark’s gospel, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news” (1:15).

It is pretty easy for us to grasp that Jesus taught about the kingdom of God. Many of Jesus’ parables begin with the phrase, “The kingdom of God is like this . . . .” The Sermon of the Mount is an extended teaching of what the kingdom of God is like. But what about Jesus’ actions? His dining with tax collectors and prostitutes. His healing of the lame and the blind and the sick. Yes, these were acts of compassion, but they were far more: they were enactments of the kingdom of God. Not just mini-dramas to make a point, but the genuine bursting forth of God’s kingdom.

Consider Jesus’ announcement of his ministry in Luke 4. Jesus rises to speak in the Nazareth synagogue and reads from the scroll of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

When Jesus fed the poor, healed the sick, made the blind see and the rest, he was showing people that God’s kingdom had arrived, for in God’s kingdom there is no hunger and no sickness and no blindness. Again, these were not merely live-action parables. It was more like Jesus was opening a portal into the kingdom of God when he cured each sick person.

The kingdom of God is not merely a conception of our heads or hearts. It is real; every bit as real as the pavement you and I walk on each day. The best way to think about God’s kingdom is as a parallel reality that will one day fully wash over our own. The coming of the kingdom is not about our going somewhere, it is about that somewhere being fully here. One of the things I like about the Harry Potter series is that it opens its readers to the possibility of two parallel realities, the world of wizards and the world of muggles, which somehow coexist in the same “space;” one world fully aware of the other, while one lives in near ignorance.

The reality of God’s kingdom and its arrival 2,000 years ago is what makes Christian mission work different than it appears to some. Whether it is feeding the hungry, providing malaria nets, or proclaiming the Good News, all these are also enactments of God’s kingdom, portals into a world without hunger, malaria, or ignorance.

A full belly may look like no more than a full belly to some – but there is far more going on. It is a bit like seeing a Bible sitting on a table. For many, the Bible is no more than a marginally interesting collection of ancient writings. But, in truth, the Bible is much more than that. It is the “God-breathed” revelation of God’s self. It is the God-given testimony to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. As the cliché goes, there is more to the Bible than meets the eye. And there is more to each act of compassion.

*A leader’s hands*

As we saw yesterday, in the kingdom of God, leaders serve. Each time we put the interests of others ahead of our own, each time we help those who need, each time we set aside our prideful ambition, we are building for the kingdom of God. This is not only what servant leaders say, it is what they do. It is what Jesus did. But how do we learn to be a serving leader? How do we set aside the world’s conceptions of what it means to be a leader?

Blanchard and Hodges remind us that Jesus took his disciples from complete novices when he first called to them at the seaside to teachers and leaders in their own right, able with the help of God’s Holy Spirit to build a church that endures to this day.

Likewise, we have to learn to be servant leaders. Each of us begins as a novice, or as Peter puts it, a newborn infant feeding on the pure, spiritual milk, so that we might grow into salvation (1 Peter 2:2). We learn to be trustworthy apprentices, eager for, as Paul puts it this time, “solid food,” (1 Corinthians 3:2). We strive to be maturing and ever-growing disciples of Jesus Christ.

But of course, God doesn’t stop with us there. We are to be disciples with a purpose, modeling Christ with our heart, hands, head, and habits. In this sense, we are all missionaries. It this outward focus that is so easy for us to forget. It is not just about helping out or doing good for others. It is about proclaiming the Good News in all that we say and do. Freeing the oppressed, healing the sick, feeding the poor . . . this is not just Jesus’ work, it is our work too. And every moment spent doing such work is a moment lived in the kingdom of God.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott