

See the Big Picture of God's Kingdom

1. Among Others
2. For Yourself

Don't Be Myopic

- Know what word myopic means? Tech/med term for nearsightedness: when eyes can't see objects in distance clearly; can only focus on what's up close. I have this condition; I've worn contacts, glasses since grade school. If didn't have contacts in, wouldn't be able read words on this paper! That's being nearsighted, myopic.
- Sometimes people use word myopic in fig sense, to mean: you're shortsighted in thinking, narrow minded, only focus on what's right in front of you, can't see big picture. Famous story told of 3 stonecutters working in quarry. Someone came, asked each "What doing?" 1st: cutting stone. 2nd: trying become best stonecutter in quarry. 3rd: building cathedral. See how 1st myopic, shortsighted. But by time get to 3rd: he understood his mission/purpose, saw big picture (BP).
- When comes to our rel with God, our understanding of his kingdom, we sometimes are myopic – so shortsighted, narrow minded, that we miss BP of kingdom of God. That's why today in Gospel Jesus encs discs, me, you: to see BP of GK, first among others, and then for yourself.

Among Others

- First, you've got to see BP of GK among others. Today we hear how John came to Jesus, said vs. 38. But thing is: this guy was Xian, follower of Jesus, (not one of 12), but performing miracle that Jesus gave power to do; probably preaching gospel at same time, all in Jesus' name, for glory of God – John tells stop; Jesus, NO. Vs. 39. Believer! Don't stop him fr sharing GK! Vs. 40. Not vs, but for us!
- Big lesson for us here: we need not be myopic, so narrowly focused on ourselves, here at SJ, or even in our Wisc Synod. We need see BP of GK among others, bec there are many other Xians, believers in Jesus, around world, in diff churches and denoms, who are driving out demons of unbelief, sharing gospel, all in Jesus' name, for glory of God. They're not vs Jesus; for Jesus. Not like we Luths only ones going be saved, or that only WELS people going to heaven. That's not seeing the BP.
- Really, what Jesus teaching here is same thing we conf in creed: "*I believe HS, HCC, CS;*" "*We believe in one H, Xp, Ap Church.*" One Xian church, one body of believers, one Savior, one heaven. Vs. 41, reward of heaven. And heaven will not subdivided into pockets of Luths, Caths, Bapts, Meths, Presbs. There's one Xian church.
- Does that mean we're going to ignore the false teachings of some people within that Xian church? Not a chance! We Luths are fiercely defensive of pure doctrine; rightly so! Jesus said, "**If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free**" (Jn 8:31-32). Everything Jesus teaches is truth; and we will defend, proclaim that truth – esp that central truth of Xianity: that our Savior Christ has paid for all our sins by death on cross, res from dead; and that eternal life in heaven is God's gracious gift to us, through faith in Jesus, apart from any works of our own. That's what we will defend, proclaim. And when necessary, we will testify against the false teachings of Xians around us.
- But know what: that's a diff sermon for diff day; that's an imp sermon, but it's not today's sermon. Today Jesus says: don't be myopic; you're not only Xians out there. See BP of GK at work, not only among yourselves, but also among many others.

For Yourself

- But also, see BP of GK for yourself, as individual. 3x in this reading, Jesus: "**It is better for you**" (as indiv) to not end up in hell. Hell? Harsh concept. 2nd half this reading much harsher than 1st. Jesus talks re going to hell, cutting off body parts, being drowned with millstone. Clearly Jesus making

strong point: that the BP of GK, for you yourself, is that you get into it – that you get into heaven. And if anything gets in way you getting heaven, you've got to cut that out of your life.

- Why Jesus says: **vs. 42-47**. At first, sounds horrible, like sharia law in Muslim country, where they lit will cut off your hand. But Jesus' point here: not that we should all be lit amputating body parts whenever we sin. And I know that's the case, bec if that were his point: we would all quickly run out of eyes to pluck out and limbs to lop off. We'd all be coming to church (I know I would!) missing body parts. And on top of that, it's really not our hands, feet, eyes that cause us to sin anyway. Remem what Jesus said in Mk 7 (4 sermons ago, from this pulpit): **"It is from within, out of a person's heart" (Mk 7:21)** that all kinds of sins come from. The heart is source of sin.
- So what Jesus really saying here, his point: don't be myopic, shortsighted re the sin in your life. Don't think your sin is no big deal, or that if it's fun or if what want to do, then must be okay. See BP of GK for yourself, for your own eternity. Sin is very serious! Leads to hell! Living in sinful situation, without repenting of your sins, will eventually kill your faith, drag you to hell. When you purposefully plan on sinning; or when you enjoy living in sin, without repenting, and without any plans of changing – that is the death-spiral that lands a person in hell.
- So yes, Jesus is serious about this warning – that's why all the graphic language. It is better for you to cut off your hand/foot, pluck out eye, than go to hell, where **vs. 48**. We have to cut sin out of our lives! The eye (looks at porn); hand (strikes spouse, child in rage); fingers (send text msgs of terrible slander, gossip); tongue (vomits vulgarity, defames name of God); feet (walk comfortably into premedit sin) – all these must be cut out of our lives. Otherwise God will cut us out of his kingdom.
- But that, of course, not God's BP for you. No, God's BP of his kingdom includes you in it! He wants you in heaven! That is why God sent Son Jesus in first place: to take away the guilt of everything sinful you've ever done, pay for that guilt on cross. Jesus died to forgive you, to rescue you from hell, to bring you to heaven. That's God's BP for you.

Conclusion – See the Big Picture

- So don't be myopic. Don't think we here at SJ or in WELS: only Xians in world. See BP of GK among others. And also see BP of GK for you yourself. Don't be shortsighted re the sin in your life, or let your sinful heart's desires spiral you down into unbelief and hell. Cut out of your life whatever is cutting you off from Jesus. Repent of your sins, and trust in your Savior. That is God's BP of his kingdom, for you, and for all people.

Mark 9:38-50

³⁸ "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." ³⁹ "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, *anyone* who gives you a cup of water in my name [*as Xian*] because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

⁴² "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched."

⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."