

I received an invitation to a breakfast laid on by a Christian business group; the title of the presentation to be given is “How to Lead a High Performance, Kingdom Building Company.”

“Kingdom Building Company:” this seems a basic conflict in terms.

The message of John the Baptist was radical equality: if you have two coats, give one away. If someone compels you to do something, do that much again voluntarily.

The message of Jesus is yet more radical: following me means that you must be ready to give up all that you have, including your life. The message of Matthew 25 has not changed; when we give to those in need, we give to him.

The message of Paul was consistent; writing to Corinth, he challenged them to live in equality within the larger community (II Corinthians 8.) That is not a message one hears today.

I John 3 is unequivocal: if you see someone in need and do not respond, how can the love of God be in you?

So what do these ethics have to do with companies and the kingdom of God? Running a company does not necessarily preclude that one can live consistently with the Gospel.

It seems to be one of the convenient contemporary evangelical doctrines that generating wealth builds the kingdom. I have seen this in multi-level marketing companies that claim to be Christian. As a business owner I understand the need to earn a living; I understand that we give out of what we earn. I understand that God can give wealth, and that it can be used to aid others in need.

I also know that companies do not build the kingdom of God. I see nothing in Jesus to indicate that; what I do see is a strong warning against the desire for wealth. I see in Paul a strong warning to Timothy about those that want to make a profit from the Gospel. I see strong warnings in James to the wealthy about the abuses of others. The kingdom of God is about lives transformed by the Spirit of God, not about the economic power of this world.

This is not a topic with clear right/wrong practical demarcations, and I risk a facile comment in such a brief post. In general though I suppose I might trust the teachers of such “kingdom building company” doctrines if they were as committed to the consistent message of equality in the Church in their teaching and in practice. The critical question seems to be; why is it not taught as co-equal? What would change in the message of the “kingdom building companies”, and the lifestyles of their owners and managers, if these ethics of the kingdom of God were practiced? Having gained this wealth for the kingdom, on whom and for what is it spent? One might also ask what is their *direct* involvement with the poor and those in need?