

# Ethics in the Bible (OT)

- It all starts with God.
- There is an emphasis on the dignity of human beings.
- The view of humanity is realistic.
- Key values are protected (The Ten Commandments).
- Salvation is even more important than ethics.
- Social transformation through personal transformation.
- We are responsible before God with our lives.

# The Moral and Ethical Teachings of Jesus Christ

Understanding Ethics: A Christian Perspective

# The popularity of «the ethics of Jesus»

*Most people seem to be attracted towards*

## 1) the goodness of Jesus

- His love towards and his affirmation of different people

## 2) the righteousness of Jesus

- His rejection of hypocrisy; his commitment to purity and justice

## 3) (some of) the ethical sayings of Jesus

- e.g. "Do to others what you want them to do to you." (Matthew 7:12)

*But often these elements are taken out of context...*

# Jesus the Teacher

- Jesus was a highly gifted teacher
  - His teachings were *attractive*
  - His teachings were *challenging*
- Christ introduced himself as a Teacher (Matthew 11:25-30)
  - Teacher – «Rabbi»
  - Two assertions: Son of God – also gentle and humble
  - Two descriptions: a yoke – but easy
  - Two invitations (with promises): come to me / rest – take my yoke / rest

# The two greatest commandments

- 1) The greatest commandment: «You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.»  
(Matthew 22:37-38)
  - Humanity's greatest wrong
  - The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
- 2) The second greatest commandment: «You shall love your neighbour as yourself.» (Matthew 22:39)
  - The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10)

Love as the fundamental motivation

# The Christian attitude to work

- The prime motivation: *seek God first*
- The prime reward: *work builds character*

*The rich farmer's two mistakes* (Luke 12).

He forgot

- 1) Getting maximum benefit, i.e. working with a responsibility both for this life and for the coming life
- 2) The danger of work crowding God out of life

# Why belief in heaven is not escapism

- Belief in the reality of the life to come («heaven») provides powerful motivation for life here and now
- The New Testament:
  - By faith in Jesus Christ someone is accepted and assured of Christ's permanent friendship – both in this life and in the life to come.
  - This motivates a Christian believer to grateful service

The blind beggar and the tax collector

# Human personality and human relationships

- How Jesus Christ valued other people
- Christ's concern for damaged personalities
  - The healing of the demoniac (Mark 5)
- The value of human beings
  - We must learn to value others and ourselves as God values both them and us.



# Christian ethics in an evil world

- Jesus brought «the kingdom of God»
- The ethical requirements of God's kingdom:
  - Often counter-cultural
  - Must be practiced
  - Both outward (actions) and inward (thoughts & motives)
- Humanity's inability to keep God's law
  - Humanity is evil
- Humans are rebels against God

The parable of «the wicked tenants».

# The answer to humanity's fundamental flaw

- Humans need a change of heart
- The conversion of a criminal (Luke 23)
- The conversion of a professor of theology (John 3)
- Moses and the serpent (Numbers 21:4-9)

# The very heart of Christian ethics

- The parable of the sower
- Jesus did not primarily preach ethics but salvation
  - Conversion, forgiveness, new life, a new start
- Humans do not primarily need ethics but salvation
  - Conversion, forgiveness, new life, a new start
- Salvation is through faith in Christ. This leads to transformed lives and a wish to serve others.

# The key: who the Teacher (Jesus) is

- Jesus makes loyalty to himself the ultimate criterion of true morality
- Jesus declares that he himself will be the judge at the final judgment
- The surprising claims of Jesus:
  - To have personal authority to forgive humanity's sins even against God
  - That his own death would be the basis for just forgiveness of sins against God
  - That after his crucifixion, he would rise from the dead
  - That after his resurrection and ascension, he would come again

# Why Jesus was crucified

- *First reason:* He claimed to be the Son of God («blasphemy»)
- *Second reason:* He claimed to be the Messiah
- *Third reason:* He claimed that his own sacrifice was the only way to save the world
  
- Jesus:
  - «the Lamb of God» (John 1)
  - «the Suffering Servant» (Isaiah 53)

# Reflection / discussion

- p. 117
- p. 134
- p. 168
- p. 182
- p. 225