

THY KINGDOM COME

Pt 6: Kingdom Value

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God; not a political regime to wrest power from human sovereignty; the kingdom of God was not about political domination, it was about human transformation.

Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. [15] "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Repentance means to turn, it begins with a decision, a change of mind, a transformation of the mind which shapes a turning of behavior or lifestyle. Life is made up of decisions. You make your choices and then your choices make you. The difference between the success of two equally talented individuals is determined by the decisions they make. We see it all the time in the world politics, in the world of sports, in the world of entertainment; unfulfilled potential or loss of opportunity and influence due to poor decision making. You may remember Lindsey Lohan in the "Parent Trap." She was incredible. "Freaky Friday," very entertaining. I looked forward to any movie that might star this young, freckled face, redheaded adorable teenager. I hear her name mentioned in the media today and at times I'm angry and at other times I'm incredibly sad at such wasted potential. Politicians looking for an advantage through shady deals behind closed doors, athletes gaining the upper hand by illegally enhancing their performance; all the way down to regular intelligent and talented individuals who simply don't apply themselves. Some people go through life vacillating, wavering, unsure of themselves, fearful of consequence to any decision they make so they make no decision at all. They are never able to express a distinct 'yes' or 'no.' In their attempt to please everyone or keep all of their options open, they've pleased no one and lost out on all their options. What you decide and how you decide is the deciding factor between success and failure. Jesus came calling for decision; repent and believe the good news. In the Sermon on the Mount, a sermon describing life in the kingdom, ^{24(A)} "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and ^(B) money.^(a)

You have to make a choice. Now, Jesus isn't saying that money is evil, he's just saying money can't be first. The point of the kingdom is not to bring men to poverty, there's no virtue in poverty. Are there anxieties in being poor? Are there anxieties in being rich? The difference between a rich man and a poor man is the nature of their worries. The kingdom of God demands the removal of any barrier to following Jesus. Possessions, either the abundance of them or the lack of them commands an affection. And Jesus is

calling us to a greater affection. Jesus came calling for decision; repent and believe the good news. The essence of repentance is decision.

³⁴(AZ) "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. ^(BA) I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵(BB) For I have come ^(BC) to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶(BD) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷(BE) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Does this mean that family and friends have no place in the life of a Christ follower? In choosing the kingdom of God do you sever all relational ties with the world?

Relationships command affection. Do you want to be a good husband? Love Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. You want to be the best parent? Put Jesus first in everything you do. The way to love your family more is to love Jesus most. You want to build a business or pursue a career worth having? Surrender your ambitions to Jesus. Seek first his kingdom: Jesus is calling us to a greater affection.

³⁸And ^(BF) whoever does not take his cross and ^(BG) follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹(BH) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

The cross was an instrument of death; to deny yourself, take up your cross, to follow Jesus means to die to yourself. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, Jesus lives in me, or the life of Jesus is the life I live. The essence of repentance a decision that determines not only the direction of life and the destiny of life, but the quality of life, the level of abundant life Jesus promised. And I can't possess that life if money or human relationship or anything other than Jesus has my heart. What value do you place on the kingdom of God?' Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God by telling stories, parables, we've looked at a couple of those parables in this series. Matthew 13 is a chapter devoted to kingdom stories.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding ^(A) one pearl of great value, ^(B) went and sold all that he had and ^(C) bought it.

The kingdom of God commands all that you have. Don't miss the point, this is not about buying salvation, this is about surrendering whatever it is that's keeping you from embracing the one thing whose value is beyond measure. When confronted with the kingdom you will be faced with a choice Like standing at a cross roads; there will come a point of decision when life itself hangs in the balance.

Luke 14:33 (ESV)

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus is not shy or reticent, he is uncompromisingly clear and assertive – the kingdom of God merits any cost. The kingdom of God is only for those who forsake everything.

How to Buy a Pearl:

Matthew 19:16-24

As was often the case, Jesus finds himself in a mixed crowd of people listening to his words. The pearl of great price is on display it has been presented in the message and ministry of Jesus. And in the midst of it all a man comes to Jesus interested in making a kingdom transaction.

^{16(V)} And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to^(W) have^(X) eternal life?"

The first step in purchasing a pearl is to sense the need.

1. Sense the Need

Verse 16 doesn't tell us much about him. But down in verse 20 we discover that he's young. In verse 22, we find out he's rich. And in the parallel passage of Luke 18 we learn that he's a 'ruler.' In the gospel of Mark, Mark tells us he came running to Jesus. There was an urgency in this man to get the answer he was looking for. This is a young, successful, up and coming, full of potential, influential guy – probably his class voted him most likely to succeed. He had a good head on his shoulders and a significant hole in his heart. He had a lot but it wasn't enough. Verse 17 Jesus tells him to keep the commandments. And look at the audacity of this man, verse 20. Jesus gives him the list and the man says, he actually says to Jesus:

²⁰The young man said to him,^(AB) "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?"

I don't know if this man is steeped in denial or blatant dishonesty, we'll get into that in a moment. But what he lacked was what Paul talked about in Romans 14.

Romans 14:17 (NIV)

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This man thought he had righteousness, what he lacked was peace and joy. And Jesus sets out to help him understand that the reason you lack peace and joy is because at the heart of it you lack righteousness. You want to have righteousness, then break down the barrier, give up what's keeping you from the kingdom. Matthew 6: Is money a problem? Only if you love money more than Jesus. Matthew 10: Are human relationships a problem? Only if you put them ahead of Jesus. Jesus said I have come that you might have abundant life. This man had abundance but his life was not abundant. He sensed the need, so he went to the right source.

2. Acknowledge the Source

Verse 16 – he calls him 'teacher.' He had a significant problem and he needed a significant answer. In the Mark passage he calls Jesus, "good" teacher. I'll put it up on the screen for you.

Mark 10:17 (ESV)

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Much like Nicodemus who was objective enough to honestly consider the claims of this man who taught like no one else taught and did what no one else could do.

This man goes to the right person. We have no idea, there's no indication that this man believed Jesus was the Messiah. What he believed, or at least considered, was that Jesus, by virtue of his message and ministry had the solution to his problem. And so from the very start Jesus is establishing reality. "Why are you calling me good?" Why are you coming to me for the answer to your problem? There's no one good except God. If I was a movie director I think I would establish a pregnant pause after that statement.

Just stand there for a moment and let that sink into the mind of this man looking for something to ease his angst. Would he pick up on the reality that he's standing in front of deity?

1 John 5:11 (NIV)

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

There's a lot of people willing to consider Christianity, even embrace Christianity, not so much because Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by repenting and believing they might enter into the rule and reign of God, both in this life and in the life to come. No. They just want an solution to their problem. Christianity isn't about soothing a psychological felt need. It's about resolving the problem of sin. The Church has often been guilty of selling Jesus with the promise of a better self-esteem. Let me tell you, I'm all for a better self-esteem. No body should feel better about themselves or about life in general than a sinner saved by grace. No body should be happier than a Christian. But friends, that's a consequence of the gospel, not the objective. Jesus came to rescue you from the dominion of darkness. Jesus didn't die so you could feel better about yourself. He died because you were lost in sin. What this man wanted was to ease his insecurity. When confronted with the cost, this rich, young ruler refused to pay.

3. Consider the Cost

Romans 3 tells us all have sinned. Romans 6 tells us the wages of sin is death. Jesus gives this man the list. The man says, I've got it covered and yet there's something missing, verse 20, what do I still lack? And Jesus says, I'll tell you what you still lack, go sell everything you have give it to people who have nothing and then come follow me. Don't misunderstand the approach Jesus takes with this man. Jesus does what the gospel does. This guy thought he was ok, all he needed was a tune up, Jesus tries to get him to see that he needs a complete overhaul. The guy was clueless: He had no sense that he had violated the God of heaven with his sin. Was he in denial that a well trained, successful guy like him could ever be associated with tax collectors and sinners? Was he too proud to admit his spiritual inadequacy?

Jesus confronted him with a command he could not, rather, would not adhere too. In either case, he so blinded by his own self-righteousness, he missed the kingdom. Jesus takes the focus off of his felt need and puts it on his life as a violation of a holy God. This is the only time in scripture where Jesus tells someone to sell all their stuff.

This man could have been a pauper and still have remained outside of the kingdom. The issue wasn't his net worth, the issue was, "Is the kingdom of God worth everything you've got?" You've seen the signs in yards, tacked to light poles, in grocery stores: Free Puppies. "Oh, look, they're giving away free puppies." Don't believe it. There's no such thing as a free puppy. They will eat you out of house and home, they will chew up your furniture, they will dig holes in your yard, they will deplete your medical savings and they will rend your heart when they die. This is the paradox of the kingdom: Christianity is a free gift that will cost you everything you have. The question you have to answer is: Is possessing the kingdom worth the price?

4. Pay the Price

Verse 22: ^{22(A)} When the young man heard this In other words, when confronted by the price he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

The kingdom of God demands the removal of any barrier, any distraction, any affection that competes with Jesus. At the age of 44, Bob Buford found himself at a cross roads. Having built a successful telecommunications business and enjoying everything money could buy he felt empty and unfulfilled. He writes in his book, "Halftime," All my life, I had been great at developing strategic plans for business. Now, I needed a strategic plan for me. . .What is the overarching vision that shapes me? Who am I? Where am I going?" In the midst of this confusion, Buford hired Mike Kami to help him figure this out. Do you remember back in the 80's when Coca-Cola decided to change its formula? Everyone who loved Coke had an emotional meltdown. Mike Kami was the management and marketing consultant that pulled Coca-Cola out of one the greatest marketing blunders in corporate America. Bob met with Mike Kami for advice in sorting out the purpose and direction of his life. Now, Mike Kami is not a Christian. But after several hours of listening to Bob talk about his passions and dreams and life experience here was Mike's assessment. He said: Bob, you can't keep your options open and live a significant life; for you, it comes down to this: it's either money or Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter to me which one you choose. If you can decide I can tell you the strategic implications of that choice. Failing to decide will keep you in confusion and limit your success and fulfillment in either option. Bob choose Jesus. And it made all the difference in the world. Two thousand years ago a man stood in front of Jesus wondering why he had everything in the world and felt so empty. The reason he walked away sad was because he wanted to keep his options open.

Bottom Line: There's a Difference Between ADMIRING AND FOLLOWING

An admirer is impressed but a follower is committed. Do you ever walk into a store and tell the clerk, "Just looking." Not interested in buying anything, just want to know what you've got to offer. An admirer is a shopper but a follower is a buyer. A buyer is willing to pay the price. Jim Elliot was a Christian missionary who was killed while trying to reach the people of Ecuador with the gospel of the kingdom. He penned this statement and then demonstrated its truth with his own life: He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.