

The Kingdom – The Call

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Many of us are comfortable sharing expressions with others like, “God bless you, God is in control, I’ll be praying for you, or keep the faith.” When we share in this way, we’re letting the hearer know we believe in God and we trust Him. These expressions really aren’t threatening.

Turn to Matthew 4. When Jesus began His ministry He spoke these words in verse 17 as His first message: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* What if we shared those words on a daily basis wherever we went? It’s a life-giving promise that people need to hear and embrace, but the fact is, most people would probably think we were a bit crazy!

But, if they fully understood the promise, they might just stop and listen. The promise was part of Jesus’ teaching and actions, which all point to the life-giving and life-saving promise of Him as our Savior. It’s this promise that makes us whole.

In this promise there’s also a command, *“Repent!”* What does it mean to repent? To repent is a change of mind and actions. When we repent, we’re making an active statement that we’re different. The basic proclamation of Jesus and John is identical: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* Jesus will send His disciples to preach the same message. But unfortunately, John will lose his head for his faith in Jesus Christ!

Turn to Luke 17. This emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven, or Kingdom of God can begin to raise an issue. Where exactly is the Kingdom? Look at Jesus’ words in verses 20-21, *“Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”* Another way of saying this is that the Kingdom of God is within you.

William Barkley put it this way, *“The Kingdom of God works in hearts. It produces not new things, but new people.”* It’s not a change in material things that we’re to look for, but a change in hearts. Think of this radical change this way, the kingdom of God can be found in and through your heart.

This whole emphasis on the Kingdom tells us a great deal of how Jesus loves us and what He’s given us. Whether we realize it or not, we speak of the Kingdom often. Each week in the Lord’s Prayer we plead with God asking Him that, *“Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* In just a few chapters in Matthew 6, we hear Jesus’ direction for us as we go through life. Verse 33, *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Steve Harper said it this way about asking for the Kingdom to come, *“When we pray “Thy kingdom come,” it’s an engagement of our will to act in ways that can bring the Kingdom to pass on the earth. Christianity is not a spectator sport. Our thoughts, words and deeds are the means through which the Kingdom comes. A spirituality which expects God to do it all while we watch passively from the sidelines is a false spirituality. We only pray “Thy kingdom come” correctly when we’re in the game.”*

As Christians, we’re called into the game! Jesus gives the game plan, but we’re the ones who execute it. We’re the ones who make sure not only that the game is played correctly, but that the result gives glory to God and builds up not only ourselves but the people around us.

Christians have a great responsibility. They’re to share the Kingdom of God. This doesn’t mean we’re to walk around with an open Bible and spend our time reading verse

after verse out loud to others, but be an example of what the Kingdom of God has done for us! We've seen the Kingdom in action when at some moment of crisis, a strength comes to us that's greater than our own strength. The Kingdom of God is where we belong. It's home, whether we realize it or not!

The sad part is that many times we're uncomfortable sharing the message of the Kingdom with those around us. Charles Stanley said this about the discomfort, *"God's plan for enlarging His kingdom is simple - one person tells another about the Jesus. Yet we're busy and full of excuses. Just remember, someone's eternal destiny is at stake. The joy you'll have when you meet that person in heaven will far exceed any discomfort you felt in sharing the Gospel."* Hear these words, *"God would have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

Listen to what Jesus says in John 7:38, *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* Jesus shouts this great invitation to thirsty sinners. The water's a picture of the Holy Spirit. Believers not only drink the living water, but they become channels of living water to bless a thirsty world. Are you bringing living water to a thirsty, dying world?

Just like Jesus called His first disciples who weren't individuals of great social power or wealth, Jesus calls us to follow Him! Jesus says to us, *"Remember God's Word and believe it with all of your heart and soul and strength. Come, follow me."* Here's an invitation to follow Him in His footsteps from 1 Peter 2:21, *"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps."*

Follow Jesus by walking in His steps no matter what! Believe wholeheartedly in His Word! Come in repentance and willingly answer His call. His call to you is to share the Kingdom with everyone proclaiming Jesus Christ!