

Kingdom of God

Kirk is speaking at New Zion Baptist Church today. Let's pray for him right now.

When John the Baptist started his ministry he said: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2

When Jesus started his ministry he began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17

When Jesus sent out the twelve he told them: "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Matthew 10:7

When Jesus sent out the seventy-two he told them: "Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" Luke 10:9

What did he mean?

1.) What is the kingdom of God?

There was a movie made called the Kingdom of God. It was about the crusades. That is also not what the kingdom of God is all about.

Bill O'Reilly in his book Killing Kennedy incorrectly assumes that when Jesus said the Kingdom of God He was talking about the end of the world.

Not an end of the world but a transformation of the world to a new world. Not an end but a beginning!

The Kingdom of God is one of those concepts that if you get it will transform your thinking and change your life.

So what is the Kingdom of God all about? If you don't know you are in good company, the disciples struggled in this as well.

If you have your Bible turn with me if you will Matthew 6:9-13

It is interesting to me that when the disciples ask Jesus to teach them something, they did not ask him to teach them walk on water, or how to heal people, or how to cast out demons, or how to feed 5000 people. They asked Jesus to teach them how to pray:

Mat 6:9-13 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

PRAY

We could cover a lot of things in this prayer, but I want to focus on the second line:

Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus asked his disciples to pray that God's kingdom comes here on Earth. God's Kingdom is well established in heaven. But it is expanding here on earth. So since the Holy Spirit saw fit to record this scripture for us to day, and he called you to be here today, God is asking us to pray that His kingdom comes right here where I live, just like it exists in heaven. So what are we praying for?

A Kingdom is the area where the rule and influence is controlled by a King. So the Kingdom of God is where God's rule and influence happens. The Kingdom of God is not a geographical area. It increases every time someone becomes a Christian. Most of the people in this room consider themselves Americans. But if you are a Christ follower you are part of a far greater Kingdom.

In fact, there are only two kingdoms, The kingdom of light and the Kingdom of Darkness. Which Kingdom do you suppose leads you to heaven? I have a hint, it is not the kingdom of darkness.

Point 1: The Kingdom of God is where God's rule and influence happens

2.) How do you become part of the Kingdom of God?

Check this out: Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, who comes to Jesus at night. Although he starts with a complimentary statement, Jesus cuts to the chase:

John 3:3-7 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and

the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

To enter the Kingdom of God you must be born again. So, my question is which Kingdom are you of? It would be wrong of me to just assume everyone in this room is a Christ follower. You may or may not know my story, but I was raised in a Christian home and for years I considered myself a Christian. Went to church every Sunday, even taught Sunday school. But I had not accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior. I was not born again. *Mat 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

If I were to look at my life back then, I would have to admit, as much as I did Christian things, I was living very much in the Kingdom of Darkness.

I ask you again, which Kingdom are you of. When I finally became a Christ follower in college, I had believed that Jesus died for my sins and received him into my life. There is a person to receive. And God immediately began to change me from the inside out.

A lot of People approach religion externally. Just tell me what to do. Look at Saul of Tausus. When he finally encountered Jesus Christ, Jesus said to *'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'* Acts 28:14. Can anyone hear relate. Your trying to do things your own way, and God won't have it, so it stings.

But God wants to change us from the inside out. But to do that he wants us to surrender all to him. All. How many here know if the police come to your door with a warrant come to your door with a warrant, and you say you can search my house anywhere, except my sock drawer, guess which is the first place they are going to look? Yup, the sock drawer. Its got to be a total surrender. You got to be all in.

So in a room full of people I have to ask, are you born again, because if you are not everything you try to do for God will be externals without the power of the Holy Spirit working in you to will and to do according to God's good purpose. In

short you won't be able to live the Christian life because quite simply, you won't have the power to do so. And ultimately you are in the wrong Kingdom.

So if that is you, or even if you are not sure, why not make that step right now. In fact, instead of waiting until the end of the service, Why don't we pray right now.

Lord I acknowledge I am a sinner and I have broken your laws time and time again.

Lord I thank you Jesus died on the cross so that my sins might be covered.

Lord I invite you into my life. Please change me from the inside out.

If you received Jesus today, you are born again, you are a new creation in Jesus Christ the old has passed away and the new has come. The angels in heaven are rejoicing, and the kingdom of God has just increased by one!

Point 2: To enter the Kingdom of Heaven you must be born again.

3.) What happens when you enter the Kingdom of God?

Everything changes.

This is the hard part. Everything must change. This is the part where a lot of people who don't want to wind up in hell, but also don't want their current lifestyle to change, have a problem. They would much rather continue to be what they are about than change and be about God's Kingdom. But the problem is in doing so they have chosen to remain in the Kingdom of darkness. So instead of being a part of the Kingdom of God and all the blessings and benefits therein they are contributors to the other Kingdom and reap destruction in our own lives.

The last time I preached I talked about Jonathan in the old Testament, and how as the Kingdom of Israel was forming there were some Israelites that actually were in the Philistine army working to the destruction of Israel.

Being in the Kingdom of God should change our perspective about everything. We are now under the rule of King Jesus and submitted to his lordship. Motivations must change. Activities must change. God can even redeem the consequences of a formal sinful life.

Mat 6:31-33 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these

things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Anxiety is a call to prayer. It is an opportunity to see how God works in your life. It is an opportunity to see how God works in your problems. Even if your problems are the consequences of poor choices you have made in the past. Bring them before God in prayer.

Point 3 When you enter the Kingdom of God everything changes.

4.) The Kingdom of God doesn't always operate the way we think.

Mar 1:32-39 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

They brought all, but Jesus only healed many. Not everyone.

Jesus had bigger fish to fry: "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

We like to boil things down to common denominator. God doesn't work that way. God is interested in expanding His kingdom.

To illustrate this Jesus used parables to describe the Kingdom of God.

- Mat_13:24 "The kingdom of heaven is like to a man who sowed good seed
- Mat_13:31 "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed
- Mat_13:33 "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven
- Mat_13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,
- Mat_13:45 " The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

- Mat_13:47 The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea
- Mat_18:23 "The kingdom of heaven like a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
- Mat_20:1 the kingdom of heaven is like a master who went out to hire laborers
- Mat_22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who gave a wedding feast
- Mat_25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins

We would like to pick one or two, but Jesus is saying the kingdom is like all of these. So, let us have another thought.

Point 4: The Kingdom of God doesn't always operate the way we think.

5.) The Expanding Kingdom

Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It starts small, but it grows big.

Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

What does that even mean? That means there is a rush of people wanting to enter the Kingdom of God.

In 1900 there were 9 million Christians in Africa.

In 2000 there were 335 Million.

Today in China, 10,000 people become Christians every day. It is estimated that by 2030, China will be the largest Christian Nation.

Matthew 21:43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

We have seen in our life time what has happened in Europe, where less than 5% of the people attend church. Do you know there are communities in America where there are more mosques than churches? (Hamtramck, MI)

We have to be engaged in what God is doing. That means we can not afford to be comfortable.

Some of my buddies are retiring. Retiring. I kid you not. And I am not that old.
We can not afford to get sleepy. The message is too important.

Point 5: We can not afford to get comfortable.

Amen?