

Your Kingdom Come

PART 6: 'KINGDOM LIVING'

A man by the name of Witness Lee wrote a hymn back in the 1930's which we don't hear much anymore but I can still remember the opening words. His hymn begins:

*"What miracle, what mystery, that God and man should blended be.
God became man to make man God, untraceable economy!"*

As we continue examining the Kingdom of Heaven and explore what it means to live on earth as it is in heaven, we are constantly confronted with the miracle of salvation and God's purposes. It is miraculous how God made a way for us to be transformed into the image of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to dwell with Him for eternity. But how this plan of God plays out on a day-to-day basis in this broken, earthly kingdom is a mystery to us most days and the longer I live, the more I realise that this mystery is actually part of God's plan. This walk of faith that we have with the Lord has to have mystery.

If you understand everything that's going on in your Christian life then I think you have an inferior Christian life and you have a god reduced to your size. Mystery is as important as understanding. What you don't know is as important as what you do know. In fact, what we don't know that still brings us to a place of trust and abandonment is really the measure of the course of faith that we've chosen to take in our life. Faith doesn't deny a problem's existence - it just denies it a place of influence. Faith refuses to have issues dictate our mood, our focus or our values. All of those things are inferior to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In my last sermon we explored the primary or over-arching reason why Jesus came to earth and that was to reveal the Father. So I want us to remember that as we move on now and look at one of the initial commissions which Jesus gave the disciples. It also happens to be the most confronting and we find it in Matthew 10.

"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give (v.11) Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet." (Matthew 10: 7-8,11-14)

So Jesus gives this amazing commission to these rookie disciples when He tells them to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons and raise the dead! Notice what He doesn't say here. He doesn't tell them to pray for the sick, the lepers and the oppressed. He doesn't say to pray for the dead to be raised. He tells them to heal the sick, cast out demons and actually raise people from the dead. Now that is an intimidating commission because it's something we just can't do without the supernatural power of God. The real problem is we think the rest of the Christian life is something we can do ourselves. That's not true.

We have been called into a lifestyle that is absolutely impossible.

It's impossible apart from the empowering presence of God. Now if that term seems familiar to you, then you will have heard it many times in our *Amazing Grace* teaching series last year because that is the most accurate definition of the word grace: the empowering presence of God. Without it, we are lost. Without God's empowering presence in our lives, the whole kingdom of heaven is impossible to embrace or even understand. So this command of Jesus is designed to put us into a place of utter dependency. He requires us to do something He knows we can't do - not because He's cruel - but because when He spoke it, He made it possible.

In Luke 1:37 we have that great verse which reads, *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* That's the RSV translation, but the NIV translates the same verse as, *"No word of God will ever fail."* This is actually a better translation because the word translated as 'nothing' is actually two words: the word 'no' and 'thing' and the word 'thing' here is *rhema* – the freshly spoken word of God. So it can actually be translated like this: *"No freshly spoken word of God will ever come to you that does not contain its own ability to perform itself."* Or in short, *'God's bidding is God's enabling.'* When the Lord gives a command, He enables what He commands. Law requires - grace enables.

So the very fact that He speaks something which was completely impossible a moment earlier – now it becomes possible, because God spoke it. That's why God's commands and degrees under grace are far more difficult than the commands under the law. Under the law we are told don't murder - under grace we are told don't even call anyone a name. Under the law we are told not to commit adultery. Under grace Jesus tells us not to even think about it. Under grace the standard is far higher. Why? Because the enablement of grace makes it possible. God's empowering presence gives us the supernatural ability we need to reach that higher level of obedience and kingdom living.

So when Jesus says, 'heal the sick' He is actually commanding us to do what is impossible. We may try to explain this away in order to feel more comfortable. We say that we don't heal the sick, Jesus heals the sick and calls us to be part of that. That is probably true in one sense but the problem we have here is the text itself. Jesus didn't say *"I am going to heal the sick with you."* We'd feel better if He had said that. Or perhaps He could have said *"You just do your best and I'll back you up."* He didn't say that. He said, *"You do it."* He said that, knowing that the power to achieve it just doesn't exist in us as humans. The power to fulfill this commission must be imparted to us from God. We must receive from God before we can give to others – which is exactly what Jesus says right here.

Jesus says, *"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."* Remember Luke 1:37 that I explained earlier? *"No freshly spoken word of God will ever come to you that does not contain its own ability to perform itself."* God spoke through Jesus and commanded the disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons. With that Word comes the power to respond to that Word.

As always, Jesus is our primary example here. You will remember when Jesus was baptised, heaven was torn open and the Spirit of God descended and rested on Jesus and remained on Him and in Him throughout His whole ministry. From that point on, Jesus began His ministry on earth and everything He said and did was in response to what the Father was saying and doing. Jesus' mission on earth was only possible because He freely gave what He had freely received first. He was so conscious of the Spirit's presence that He could say, *"I only do what I see the Father doing"* and *"I only speak the words the Father gives me to speak."*

So once again we come back to the overwhelming greatest reality of the kingdom of heaven and that is the presence of God. Everywhere Jesus went, the presence of God went with Him, before Him and worked through Him. His entire mission on earth was impossible for a human being to achieve – but it became possible because Jesus was full of grace – full of the empowering presence of God.

I'm reminded of a verse tucked away in Judges 6:34 which simply says, *"Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon."* When you dig down into the Hebrew behind this verse it literally says, *"The Spirit of God clothed Himself with Gideon."* It describes a man putting on his clothes, or a warrior putting on a suit of armour. It's like putting on a glove. So this verse could be paraphrased: *"The Spirit of the Lord put Gideon on like a glove."* What a powerful picture - and what a difference it made in the life of Gideon when the Spirit of the Lord 'put him on like a glove.' For seven straight years when the Midianites came, Gideon, along with other Israelites, ran to their hideouts in fear. But not this time. Now, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Gideon put the war trumpet to his lips and gave it a mighty blast and everything was different. The same thing happens today when God calls His people into His service and empowers them with His Holy Spirit to do the work He has called them to do.

Ok. Let's look at verse 12 of our passage in Matthew 10. It's an obscure verse at face value, but it comes alive when you know the context. Jesus said, *"...when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it."* Ok just hold that thought for a moment while I take you all the way back to Noah:

"He (Noah) sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore." (Genesis 8:8-12)

What is the international sign of peace? A dove with an olive branch in its mouth, right? Fascinating. In what form did the Holy Spirit descend and rest upon Jesus at His baptism? A dove, right? So the Old Testament story of Noah and the dove is a prophetic picture of New Testament – New Covenant ministry. Jesus said we are to go into a house and release peace there. Luke's gospel says that if there's nobody in that house worthy to receive that peace, then that dove, that peace will return to you like it did to Noah. Now if you remember nothing else from this sermon, remember this:

You and I are ministers of a Person. We have more than words, more than a message, more than a concept, more than a spiritual argument to give to people. We have a Person resting upon us and residing within us Who longs to be released into the environment in which God has placed us.

What was it that was drawn from Jesus when the woman touched His garment and He felt power move from Him? What was it that was drawn from Jesus in town after town over those three and half years of intense ministry? It was the person of the Holy Spirit – given to us without measure, without limitation to impart to any and all who receive Him. That is the normal Christian life! That is why we are here: to advance the kingdom of heaven, by God's grace, for God's glory and through God's Spirit. That is what being the Church is all about. That is kingdom living. Now look at John 20:19-22. We keep coming back to this passage – and for good reason. This is after the resurrection.

"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Remember what Jesus taught them to do when they entered a house? *'Let your peace come upon it.'* Well this is where I think they finally understood what He was talking about.

“When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

What happened here? Jesus walked into a room full of fearful believers and released the peace of another world, another kingdom, in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, you and I are called to walk into a world full of fearful people and bring that same peace. Right now we need a generation of people who can walk into a room, into a community, into a city and a nation and bring the hope, healing and reality of another world through the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus walked into that room and said “Peace” and they didn’t receive it at first because they were fearful – and understandably - some guy who was dead just walked through a closed door!

So Jesus said it again and His words became Spirit and He imparted a Person to them ... not a hollow platitude or a powerless blessing ... but a Person. He breathed on them and said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit.”* This is so important for us to understand because living in and manifesting the reality of the kingdom of heaven involves us learning to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and then imparting Him to others.

Do you remember in Noah’s story that the dove flew around looking for a place to land? Do you understand that the Holy Spirit is always looking for a resting place in another person? He is always looking for someone to rest upon and help bring that person to their purpose in life.

The Christian life is really not that complicated. It has always been about the partnership between heaven and earth so that the purposes and will of heaven would be displayed and manifested on earth. *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* Our purpose as a Church has always been to advance the Kingdom of heaven, by God’s grace, for God’s glory and through God’s Spirit – and that Spirit has been given to every single believer - freely and without measure or limitation.

Every morning as you rise from your slumber you have a choice: You can ignore, quench or grieve the Holy Spirit within you ... or you can submit to Him, walk in His power and impart Him to those around you throughout that day – wherever you go. It will be that choice, made each and every day by each and every one of us which will determine if we are living ‘*on earth as it is in heaven.*’ If you want to be part of the mission of Christ to bring heaven to earth; if you want to know what kingdom living really looks like this side of the grace, then what I have shared with you here today is not negotiable. I shall let God have the last word now, as spoken thousands of years ago through the prophet Zechariah:

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)