

LIVING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: KINGDOM CALLING

SERMON DISCUSSION FOR SUNDAY JUNE 07, 2015 | SPEAKER: PASTOR RON GORMONG

SERMON DISCUSSION

Ice Breaker (Everyone):

Pastor Ron begins his message by introducing a new sermon series *Living the Sermon on the Mount*. He explains there is a good chance we will all be stretched, challenged, and convicted—so we ought to prepare ourselves. He suggests a prayer we can make our own “God, I WANT TO GROW where I NEED TO GROW. God, I WANT to CHANGE where I NEED TO CHANGE. If you will HELP ME. If you will PROVIDE THE GRACE. I’m WILLING.”

What do you think about this prayer? Is it easy for you to pray or difficult? Why?

For many Christians today, the need to change does not seem prominent. A great deal of overlap exists between the life of a believer and a non-believer. The bumper sticker “I’m not perfect, just forgiven.” is the mantra of our current culture. But is that all? Dallas Willard tells a story in [The Divine Conspiracy](#) about a once-strong Christian leader who at the age of ten gave his life to Christ and believed God would truly make a difference in the way he and others lived. By the age of fifty however, this man had seen one too many leaders fail and fall and has succumbed to the belief that our outward lives don’t need to look much different than the world. Instead—God is only concerned with our inward hearts. Does Jesus’ teachings agree with this? Pastor Ron encourages us to consider the Sermon on the Mount with fresh eyes and ears.

What do you believe is the difference between the life a Christian and a non-believer lives?

If you have heard a passage of Scripture hundreds of times, how do you continue to let it to speak to you?

After being baptized and then tempted in the wilderness for forty days Jesus begins His public ministry.

“Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt. 4:12-17)

If we are to consider living out the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount we need to understand the context—Jesus’ announcement that the Kingdom of God (or Heaven) is at hand. The idea of kingdom is one that conveys the idea of your sphere of authority and influence. It is likened to a garden. Aside from the weather and animals you choose what to plant, when to plant, how to work the soil, what to prune, and when to pick. Within that fence is your domain. So when we say that God’s Kingdom is at hand, or imminent we are saying God’s rule, reign, and effective will is going forth in our corrupted world. Jesus asks us to pray for this in the Lord’s Prayer—that the Father’s will would be done, and that His Kingdom would come.

Which is why tied to this theme is the word “repent” We need to change, to align ourselves with God’s Kingdom in any way we are not currently doing so. If we take Jesus’ announcement to heart we realize we cannot simply muddle along until we die. Something new is happening—something big! *“...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”* (Matthew 4:16 NIV).

Many are surprised to find that the word Gospel (also translated as Good News) preached by Jesus was not “I am going to die on the cross for your sins” but “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” While the New Testament makes it clear the Gospel includes both truths, why do you think we lean toward the former?

In real, practical terms what does it look like to repent, or align yourself with God’s Kingdom?

When we get into the meat of the Sermon on the Mount over the next several weeks, our tendency will be to water down the truths Jesus expresses. We will say things like “He didn’t really mean it *that way*.” And if we aren’t careful we will rob Jesus’ words of their radical intensity. Now, the difficulty we have is that if we take Jesus seriously we realize the impossibility of living up to such measure. And that is where we realize Jesus provides the grace and help necessary. Apart from God this is not possible, but with Him it is.

“While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” (Mt. 4:18-22)

Immediately following Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom of God and call to repentance we see Him inviting people to follow Him. Jesus invites these men to come and learn from Him by living together for three years. Pastor Ron shares that in seminary he had a job as an assistant pastor. His desk was literally in the senior pastor’s office and so Pastor Ron watched, experienced, and learned from Pastor Bob Murphy in Eau Claire. We here today still have the opportunity to follow Jesus and be led by Him in this new way of life. His Holy Spirit has been sent to dwell inside of us. We also have His teachings recorded in the Holy Bible. By the Spirit and by His Word, along with trials and challenges, we are disciple by Christ Himself.

What do you think about the idea of Jesus’ discipling us still today?

You may be thinking this sounds like Christians have to follow a lot of rules laid down by Jesus to be a Christian. But this way of thinking misses the point. See what happens next.

“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.” (Mt 4:23-25)

Living the way Jesus taught isn’t following rules that are boring or hard. Living the way Jesus taught is living the way we are originally meant to live—a way of living that brings healing and wholeness to our lives and to

the lives of those around us. When we live the Kingdom Way we have God's power and authority blowing over us like wind in a sail. Besides, take a look at your life when you are living by your rules. Pastor Ron asks "How is that working out for you?"

Do you find the teachings of Jesus difficult? Do you find them easy? Why or why not?

Have you seen "healing" or "wholeness" in your life or the lives of those around you when living out Jesus' teachings? How so?

Pastor Ron closes with two applications:

1. Take the blue insert from your bulletin home, slowly read the scripture on it, and journal what God is speaking to you regarding that passage before next week's message.
2. Pray this prayer:

"FATHER, whatever there is in my life that would hold me back for ALL YOU HAVE FOR ME . . . for WHATEVER LIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD means in MY LIFE and the ETERNAL LIFE You want me to HAVE NOW. I just want You to know I'm OPEN. And I GIVE YOU PERMISSION to "mess with my life." To work in my life. And in WHATEVER WAYS YOU MAY CALL ME to REPENT . . . to REALIGN MY LIFE . . . by Your grace, I am WILLING. If there are SOME DEEPLY HELD BELIEFS which are NOT TRUE, show me . . . and with Your help, I WILL REPLACE THEM with TRUE BELIEFS. And if there are DEEPLY HELD ASSUMPTIONS or ATTITUDES or ACTIONS which are NOT SERVING ME WELL, I invite You to ADDRESS THESE AS WELL. There is NOTHING IN MY LIFE which is OFF-LIMITS to YOU. This I pray in the NAME OF JESUS, the ONE who CAME ANNOUNCING AND BRINGING THE KINGDOM HERE. The ONE WHOM I FOLLOW AND SHOWS ME HOW TO LIVE IN THE KINGDOM. The ONE who BRINGS GOOD NEWS in WORD and DEED. Amen."

PRAYER

- Be sure to pray the above prayer
- Ask the Lord to open the hearts and minds of SWC to receive all He has to say through this sermon series