

**The Character of the King's Kingdom – Part II**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 18:33-37**  
**November 15, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 18:33. We are looking at this passage a second time today. Last week, we looked at these five verses, John 18:33-37, and we titled our message 'The Character of the King's Kingdom' because this is all about the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. He is the King. It is emphasized quite dramatically, really from this verse all the way through the rest of our passage, which we looked at a couple of weeks ago. We looked at the larger passage of John 18:28 to John 19:16 for a couple of weeks, and in that passage what you see is the emphasis on His Kingship. Eleven times the word 'king' appears. Jesus is called 'The King of the Jews' five times. And three times in the passage we are about to read, we are going to read the word 'kingdom'. 'King', 'Kingdom', that is the emphasis, 'The Kingdom of God'. The question we are looking at is: *How does the Kingdom of God come?*

We are taught in another couple of places in Scripture that when we pray we are to pray, *Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come...* and the guide that Jesus gives us for prayer. We've been looking at this on Wednesday nights actually, for a number of weeks, we've been looking at prayer for several months on our Wednesday evening studies, and one of the things we've seen is that the Lord's Prayer teaches us how to pray, and it is not a script to be recited, it is a guide to be followed. That is that it gives you the outline for prayer, but a major outline point in our prayer life should be asking God for the Kingdom to come. What does that mean? What does it really mean for the Kingdom to come? That is what we want to talk about again this morning.

We began looking at this last time under the title 'The Character of the King's Kingdom' and this morning I want to look at two important aspects of the King's Kingdom, two major points this morning. Really the question we are looking at is: *How does the Kingdom come into this world? How does it come into our lives?* I'm going to give you the two major points now. I'm going to give you two major points, and then I'm going to tell you we are going to do some preliminary work, and come back to those two major points. Do you follow what I am saying? So the two major points are going to be *The Arrival of the Kingdom* and *The Advancement of the Kingdom*. That is where we want to get to the Kingdom's arrival and its advancement, and the question is: *How does it come? How does it advance?* That is what we want to look at, but before we look at that, we need to deal with some



preliminary matters. We are going to look at a couple of preliminary matters after we read the Scripture and pray. So let's look at Verses 33-37 of John 18.

***John 18:33-37 ~ Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."***

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we ask that You might shower grace upon each one of us, and that Your Spirit might take the word of God, the written word of God, and reveal to us the living word of God. We pray this in His name, Amen.*

We're looking at 'The Character of the King's Kingdom'. We are going to look at *The Arrival of the Kingdom* and *The Advancement of the Kingdom*, but before we do, it is important for us to, in a sense, try to define our terms a little bit. So what we're going to do, I have two preliminary things that I want to talk about. The first is *God's Good Design* and then secondly, the second preliminary observation is *Man's Present Need*. So really *God's Original Design for the Kingdom*, and secondly, *Man's Present Need of the Kingdom*. I think this helps us again to be reminded of what we are talking about when we talk about the Kingdom of God. Simply speaking, the Kingdom of God is the rule of God, it is the reign of God, and when the Kingdom of God is realized is when everyone is submitting to the reign of God gladly, joyfully.

### 1) God's Original Design for the Kingdom:

This is why God, this first preliminary matter, *God's Original Design for the Kingdom*, this is how God designed the world to be. He designed the world, all people, and all creation, to be in glad submission to His loving, kingly rule. He created the angels, He created mankind, He created all that we see to be in

subjection to Him. And in subjection to Him, to be glad, to be joyful, to have peace, to have fulfillment, to be everything we were created to be. I mean, the wonder of this, the beauty of this is seen when you really look carefully at Genesis 1 and 2. You see that the Lord created man with an incredibly noble calling. He created man, male and female, to reign, to rule, to be God's vice regents. He put us over all of creation, that's what He says in Genesis 1 when He says, ...***“Let Us make man in Our image,...***

***Genesis 1:27 ~ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***

And what does He say? He says:

***Genesis 1:28 ~ “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and reign over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over everything that creeps along the earth.”***

You are to reign, you are to rule, you are created to reign, you are created to rule, to be kings and queens. Every single human being has in their intrinsic wiring, that goes even deeper than DNA, this sense that we are created for something noble, for something great, for something larger than our mundane lives. And it is because God has built into the fabric of humanity His image, and that is to reflect Him, and to reflect His glorious reign on the earth, to reign. We are created to rule, to be kings and queens. The problem is that that is *God's Original Design for the Kingdom of God*, was for us to dwell in glad submission to Him, and to then reign as His regents, His vice regents. But the problem is that it didn't remain that way, and that brings us to the second preliminary matter, *Man's Present Need of the Kingdom*.

## 2) Man's Present Need of the Kingdom:

We talked about this some last time, but it is important again to set context to remind us of a few things. There was a cosmic rebellion against God's Kingship. It started with Lucifer, His highest created angel. The Scriptures unfold this for us when you look at Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, Revelation 12, you see that Lucifer rebelled against God in that he wanted to be equal to God. He did not want to be in submission to God, and because of that, he wanted to be like God, that was the rebellion, and that broke the harmony in the spiritual realm. And then that cosmic rebellion came into the physical realm when Satan, that is Lucifer's name now that he is in rebellion, when Satan deceived Eve and Adam in the garden, and what was

his tempting line? “You will be like God if you eat of this fruit. Ironically, you will reach your full destiny, you will have self-realization.”

You know, that is a buzz word that is part of this fallen order now. Man wants to be realized and the irony is that the way that you really realize your full potential is you get on your knees before Jesus Christ. When you exalt yourself, you lose yourself. When you lose yourself, you find yourself. But this is what has happened, when Adam and Eve rebelled, Adam gave birth to a race of rebels, and all of us come into the world in rebellion against God. That is why you don’t have to teach your toddler to disobey. You don’t take him to preschool class to learn how to disobey. You don’t have to teach them. Isn’t it amazing how quickly they say, “No!” to you because you’ve said, “No,” to them, so they think they can just turn it around. “I rule over you, Dad.” That is what that little toddler is saying. John Street calls them ‘*vipers in diapers*’.

I mean, think about it, who is the most selfish person you know? It is a little baby. Never thinks, “You know, I’m hungry right now, but you know, Mom really needs her sleep.” No, as soon as he is hungry, it doesn’t matter what it costs anyone else, he wants what he wants, and the reality is it remains that way, it is just we get a little more clever about how we reveal our hearts. We learn that you don’t get what you want if you keep acting like a child. You have to play the game, learn how to push the buttons, but the root issue is we still want what we want, we want to be king of our lives. This is the rebellion that man has been brought into.

It is celebrated in that poem, I forget the author’s name (Invictus, William Ernest Henley), but *I am the captain of my fate / I am the master of my soul*. Do you hear the rebellion in that? *I am the captain of my fate / I am the master of my soul*. That’s why Jesus said in John 8:44, “You are of your father, the devil.” We all were of our father, the devil. We were like him. We want to be our own god, we don’t want God telling us how to live our lives. We are okay with a God who lets us do what we want. Many people think they love the Lord Jesus Christ because they have refashioned Him in their image, and He doesn’t tell them anything they don’t want Him to tell them because they are really worshiping an idol. But the true Savior Jesus Christ is truly Lord, and when He comes He comes to take charge, and so we need desperately the Kingdom of God.

Everything that we see around us, as I said earlier, what we see in Paris is a reflection of the fact that the Kingdom of God is not a present reality. Everything in our lives that is ugly, and painful, is in some way a reflection of the fact that Jesus Christ’s Kingship is not being honored. Even the physical problems we have,



the fact that we age, the reason that we get disease, is a reflection of the fact that the natural realm, our physical bodies, all that exists in this earth is under decay, and under bondage, and it is not in submission to Jesus Christ. So we need the Kingdom. Now with that said, let's move to the points that we want to look at today to finish our examination of 'The Character of the King's Kingdom', John 18:33-37. Now we come to our two main points, *The Arrival of the Kingdom*, and *The Advancement of the Kingdom*.

### I) The Arrival of the Kingdom:

Now we see it first of all here of course in our text, in Verse 37.

***John 18:37 ~ Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world,..."***

That is the arrival of the Kingdom. When did the Kingdom arrive? The Kingdom arrived when Jesus Christ came into the world. How does the Kingdom arrive in your life? It is when you accept Jesus Christ, when He comes into your life. The Kingdom comes in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now what is interesting about this is that *The Arrival of the Kingdom*, and *The Advancement of the Kingdom*, are paradoxical in this way—the way the Kingdom arrives, and the way the Kingdom advances is very unimpressive outwardly. It is counterintuitive. We think there ought to be a little more bells and whistles about it, there ought to be a little more pizzazz. But the reality is, when the Kingdom comes, it comes in an unimpressive way outwardly, but inwardly it is dynamite, it is power. I mean, think about what Pilate, you see this even in this context, look at Verse 33.

***John 18:33 ~ Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"***

You can't really see this in the English like you can in the Greek. In the Greek word order, and in the phrasing of the sentence, there is additional emphasis on the word 'You'. There is an extra pronoun in there basically, saying, "Are You Yourself the King of the Jews?" Now think about that, Pilate is looking at a man who has been up all night, who is bound, and who has been beaten. When you look at the other Gospel accounts, we know that the Sanhedrin, those Jewish leaders, after they had questioned Jesus, they spat in His face, they covered His face and

punched Him, and taunted Him, saying, “If You are the prophet, tell me who struck You.” So here a man beaten and bruised, exhausted physically, bound, Pilate says, “Are You the King of the Jews? Really? You don’t look like a king. You look like anything but a king,” and the reality is, that is exactly how it all started, isn’t it? Turn over to Luke 2, because in Luke 2 you have *The Arrival of the Kingdom* proper, and you see this paradox in such an extraordinary way in the account that Luke gives us.

***Luke 2:1-4 ~ Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,***

Those are words we hear so often, don’t we? Because of Christmas, and our celebration of that.

***Luke 2:5-7 ~ in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.***

The Kingdom of God has come. The King has come. Look at the apparent weakness of the King. His parents, His dad, and His mom, who live in Galilee, in Nazareth, aren’t looking for a vacation to Bethlehem. I mean, I’m sure when Joseph got the word, “We’ve got to go to Bethlehem,” he wasn’t aware of what Micah 5:2 said. He wasn’t thinking through all of this. He thought, “I’ve got to take a woman that is more than eight months pregnant on a donkey ride up the mountains to Bethlehem? Man, that is terrible!” Those of us who have had the joy of being fathers know that one of the things is there is a point in the pregnancy where it becomes so important just to keep Momma happy. “What can I do to lighten your load? What can I do to take care of you?” You know, rubbing the feet. I mean, it is a very tough time, those last weeks, and so Joseph has to take a woman who is on the verge of delivering a child on a donkey, up into the mountains, for days, a several-day journey. It seems that their lives are just subject to the whim because it just happened that Caesar Augustus wants a census. He wants more money and so they are the subject of this great political forces outside

of their control. But in reality, we know that God is controlling Caesar Augustus. The reason Caesar wants a census is because God has an appointment for His Son to be born in Bethlehem. So appearance and reality is already showing itself to be apparently disconnected.

***Luke 2:7 ~ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.***

A manger is a feeding trough. She lays Him in a wooden feeding trough that cattle or sheep eat out of, or horses or donkeys eat out of. I mean, think about that. You know most of the time my son Jonathon feeds our dogs, but occasionally I do if he is out or something. You know, the feeding of the animals isn't the most pleasant thing in the world, and dogs, you know, it is not as bad as going into a barn to feed the cows. Jesus was born in a barn, He was laid in a manger, and here the King of kings is a baby. He doesn't even have a house, it's like this is terrible trip planning by the Father, by God the Father. It looks like, doesn't it? Of course it is not terrible planning at all, it is exactly the way He has determined for His Son to be born, in absolute lowliness, the most unimpressive birthplace. But what you see is, it appears to be just an ordinary child, but Verses 8-14 tell us it is no ordinary child.

***Luke 2:8-9 ~ In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.***

This one angel terrifies the shepherds. The King James says they were '*sore afraid*'. It kind of sounds like really afraid, doesn't it? Sore afraid.

***Luke 2:10-11 ~ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***

'Who is the King', that is what Christ means. He is the anointed King. "I've got good news, the King has been born," and then after this, suddenly the sky is filled with the heavenly hosts, a multitude of them praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest on earth, peace, good will toward men." What has happened is that little baby born in Bethlehem, laid in the manger, a picture of the, I mean,

think about an infant baby. Is there anything weaker than a human infant child? Completely dependent, can't do anything for itself. It must be fed, it must be warmed, it must be changed. It is such a picture of weakness, and then you think about poverty of the situation, they don't have the resources to buy their way into someone's home. And yet, in reality, what has happened is, in this apparent weakness, the King of kings has come into the world, and His power is testified to by the angels. That one angel terrifies the shepherds, and then a multitude of the heavenly, what's happened is the invasion has happened. The Kingdom of God has come into the world.

It is like the same, it is a million times more transforming than D-Day was. Can you imagine what it was like, if you lived in France, or Holland, under the tyranny of Nazism? Living in fear every moment that something, that you would cross them in some way, they would kill you, or those that you were trying to rescue from the gas chambers. And to hear that the allies have landed, they have a beachhead in Normandy, deliverance is coming. What a tremendous day, D-Day, June 6, 1944. But the ultimate D-Day was the birth of the Son of God. When He comes into the world, when He arrives, the King has come, and yet appearance and reality, it doesn't appear that impressive. But the reality is, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, He is the great I AM, He is God Himself.

And you think about that as how it goes throughout His ministry. John even points this out in several places in His Gospel as we go along. In John 7:52, after Jesus has had some confrontation with the Pharisees, they set out to try to arrest Him, and they send their guards to get Him, and the guards come back, and they say basically, the guards come in and they say, "Where is He? Where is Jesus?" And they say, "We don't have Him." And they're like, "Why didn't you arrest Him?" "Never did a man speak like this man speaks." Well they go on, and they argue back and forth, Nicodemus begins to show the fact that God is working in his heart, and he starts defending Jesus, and the Pharisees, one of the Pharisees says to him, basically, "Check your Bible, no prophet comes from Galilee. This guy is from Galilee of all places, no prophet comes from there."

Now of course, see they don't know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but He did live in Galilee, was raised in Galilee. Again, unimpressive, and all of His disciples, almost all of them are Galileans. It is kind of like, I don't know if we have, we don't have an appropriate example of this that we can relate to, but it would be something like saying, "No good thing comes from Louisiana or Mississippi." I lived in Mississippi and actually liked it all right, it was fine, but I remember when I was going there, you think, "Really? Mississippi?" But people in, I grew up in

Atlanta, and folks say, “Who would want to go to Georgia?” right? One of the sayings I liked was, “The only good thing to come out of Alabama is I-20.” I lived in Alabama too, by the way. But you have in John 1:45-46, remember when Nathanael is told about Jesus, he says, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” because not only Galilee but Nazareth. But this is the King. Isaiah had told us it would be like this.

***Isaiah 53:2 ~***

***He has no stately form nor majesty  
That we should be drawn to Him,***

He is not going to be outwardly impressive, that is what the prophet said 700 years before His birth. He is going to be an ordinary man from apparently an ordinary place, but in reality, when you are around Him, and you hear Him teach, and preach, and you see His power, you will realize that He truly is the King. So how does the Kingdom come? The Kingdom comes in the person of Jesus Christ. That is what we see in John 18:37, He is the King, and to be in His presence, and to have Him in your life is to have the Kingdom of God, because Jesus is the King.

## II) The Advancement of the Kingdom:

Now, *The Advancement of the Kingdom*, the second major point. That was *The Arrival of the Kingdom*, it arrives in the person of Jesus. *The Advancement of the Kingdom*. How does the Kingdom advance? How does it advance in the world, and how does it advance in our lives? Essentially the answer is, it is the proclamation of the person of Christ. You proclaim Jesus and the Kingdom advances. Now you see this in John 18:37 when He says:

***John 18:37 ~ Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.***

To be the king, “and how is My Kingdom realized? It is Me testifying to the truth.” He said, “Listen, the reason I have come into the world is to testify to the truth and in testifying to the truth My Kingdom goes forth.” The essence of the truth is that Jesus is the King, that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is the one that God has installed upon Mount Zion, His holy hill, as we read from Psalm 2.

Remember you're reading along and He laughs at them, and He says, "Surely I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." Jesus then speaks in Psalm 2, and says, "I will tell you of the decree of the Lord. He said to Me, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me and I will give the nations as Your inheritance.'" There the Father has installed the King, and the King is Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look again at this question. How does the Kingdom advance? He answers this really in the passage. I already told you that the answer is going to be positively the proclamation of Christ, but let me show you negatively first how He answers this question. He tells us first of all how the Kingdom does not advance, that is, negatively. How does the Kingdom not advance? Verse 36:

***John 18:36 ~ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."***

How does the Kingdom not advance? The Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of God, does not advance by worldly means. It does not advance by earthly measures. That's what He's saying. "If My Kingdom were of this realm, of course I would be fighting. That's how you protect a kingdom. That's how you extend a kingdom is by physical violence, physical means. But My Kingdom is not of this realm, so my Kingdom does not play by the same set of rules. It's not by physical violence. It's not by any worldly means. It's not by military conquest. It's not advanced by political victory. My Kingdom is not advanced by popular opinion, by social movements, or moral reform. As good as each of those things are, they are far secondary, and they are ultimately not of any value in the ultimate advancement of the Kingdom of God. They're band-aids."

Now listen, I think you should vote in every election. I think it's a failure of citizenship as a Christian to not vote, and it's usually clear that the most evil side is usually obvious. Sometimes you actually have some good candidates, but generally it's a lesser evil versus a greater evil. So we shouldn't identify with the Republican party, saying it's the Christian party. There is no Christian party. There may be one but I haven't seen it. It's not on the ballots. But there really shouldn't be a Christian party, because we're not into political victory. That's not our ultimate aim. That's a small thing. It does help.

It's like someone who's been in a car accident. You have to stabilize the person. You try to stop the bleeding. You try to keep them from going into shock, but what do you do? You get them to the hospital to the physician. So what do we need to do? We need to get them to the physician. That's the way the Kingdom advances. So it negatively is not by political victory, or military conquest, or popular opinion. It's not by any earthly means. Globally we think of those things, but think of it individually. It's not by psychological pressure. It's not by social conditioning. It's not even by intellectual argument ultimately, though you will use intellectual argument in winning someone to Christ. You're to persuade men. Ultimately the Kingdom doesn't advance just by logical formulations. The Kingdom doesn't advance by 12-Step methods, though we're glad for people to stop dangerous and damaging habits. But that's not how the Kingdom of God advances. We have a more powerful way. Positively, how does the Kingdom advance? Verse 37:

***John 18:37 ~ ...I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.***

“My Kingdom advances as I testify to the truth.” It's not by physical exertion. It's by spiritual power. And that spiritual power is unleashed in the proclamation of the truth, an apparently utterly unimpressive way to release power. This is why Paul said, “The foolishness of preaching—it's foolishness to men,” that the Christian church throughout the centuries gets together and a preacher or a teacher usually teaches the Bible, right? That's how we do it, and people out there just don't understand that. “What in the world?” Especially nowadays, “You sit and listen to some guy talk for a half hour or an hour? That's crazy.” It seems like it, doesn't it? When I say that, I think it's crazy actually, but we realize that God has ordained that this Book, His word is the way the Kingdom goes forth. So though it may be foolish, and though we may all be inadequate to this task, the word of God is not inadequate. The word of God is life-changing power. It is the power of God unto salvation. And it's not just through corporate preaching. The Kingdom goes forth through individual proclamation, one on one, as you proclaim what? Jesus. That's the message. It's Jesus. The Kingdom arrives when Jesus arrives. And so what do you do? You proclaim Him. We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching. We proclaim Christ.

The reality is that's what Jesus came to do. He came to preach. His message was Himself, but He actually came to preach, and it's interesting to note how this is emphasized in some surprising ways. When I first saw these in a couple of places, it shocked me, particularly one passage. Turn with me to Mark 1, because you could say, “Now, didn't Jesus come to die, ultimately?” Yes, He did, but I would submit to you that His death is itself the greatest proclamation of truth. It's the



greatest proclamation of who God is that the world has ever seen. Where do you find out about the justice of God? Where do you see the holiness of God expounded? Where do you see the righteousness of God and the wrath of God most clearly and fully expounded but in the cross? Where do you see the love of God, the compassion of God, the mercy of God, the tenderness of God, but in the cross? All of the attributes of God reach their zenith as Jesus dies. So even His death is His bearing witness.

Remember that word *bear witness* actually is μαρτυρέω (martyreō) from which we get our English word *martyr*. Even in Jesus' death, He's bearing witness to the truth, to who God is and to who He is, so that in reality He says, "I came to proclaim the truth." After all, John has introduced his letter telling us, "In the beginning was the Word." He is the proclamation. He is the One who reveals the invisible God. But in Mark 1 you see this priority, because you might also say, "Didn't He come and do great miracles? And Jesus went about healing people, because people needed to be healed, and He went and He healed them." Yes, people needed to be healed, but they needed preaching more than they needed healing. Look at how you see this. Verse 22:

***Mark 1:22 ~ They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.***

Now, here He is and He's going about healing, but what really stands out in the people's minds is the power of His teaching. You read on down to Verse 32, and He's already been healing some here in Capernaum, and it says:

***Mark 1:32 ~ When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.***

These are people who desperately need help. Verse 33:

***Mark 1:33 ~ And the whole city had gathered at the door.***

Mark says it's as if the whole city had gathered at the door waiting for Jesus to heal. And Verse 34:

***Mark 1:34 ~ And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. 35 In the early morning, while it was still***

*dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*

He had to get away to spend time with the Father. Verse 36:

*Mark 1:36 ~ Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and \*said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”*

“You didn’t finish last night, and there are more people that have come today.” Look what Jesus says in Verse 38:

*Mark 1:38 ~ He \*said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.”*

He didn’t come primarily to heal. He came primarily to preach. In fact, when you look at even the miracles of Jesus, John makes this so clear, that the miracles of Jesus were just basically frames for His preaching ministry. They weren’t the point. That’s why John uses the word *signs*. The Greek word that is translated as *signs* means that which points to something outside of itself, the way we use a sign. When you look at a sign, it tells you to go to somewhere else to find what you’re looking for. The sign itself is not the point. It’s pointing you to something beyond itself. All of His miracles were merely signs. They were pointing to something beyond themselves. Think about this. You see this in this Gospel so beautifully.

One of the early signs of Jesus was He fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. He fed 5,000 men plus women and children, maybe up to 20,000 people total, with just some small fish and five rolls, basically. Now, when John tells us about that though, he gives us the discourse that followed that where Jesus says this: “I am the bread of life.” He preached. What was the content of His preaching? “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will not hunger but will have life. I am the bread of life.” He heals a man who’s born blind, John tells us in John 9. He heals a man who was born blind, right after He said a couple different times, “I am the Light of the world,” in John 8:12 and John 9:6. “I am the Light of the world. He who believes in Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” His greatest sign was when He raised Lazarus from the dead, a man who had been dead four days. He raises him from the dead, and what does He say in that context? “I am the resurrection and the life.” The miracle simply points to the person. He’s preaching Himself. “I am the only way for you to come back to God. I am His King. I am now making the offer of salvation. Come to Me.”

He's simply saying, "I am the Lord. I am the King." So how does the Kingdom advance? The Kingdom advances as you proclaim the Person of Christ. You proclaim that He is King. You proclaim that His power is mighty unto salvation. And when you do that, think about it. When you're talking to somebody—haven't you had this experience a number of times? You're talking to somebody and you think, "I want to share Christ with them, and I'm trying to turn the conversation, but they look like such a mess. I don't think we can even get there. They're so far. The distance between us is so far." What do you do? What you try to do is you try to proclaim Jesus, because Jesus is the power to bridge that gap. The person looks like they're in bondage that's so great that they can never be brought out. Their life is dominated by sin, and you see the evidence of it through the cracks that you see in their personality, in conversation. You think there appears to be no hope for this person, and all I have is the message to tell them about Jesus. They scoff at Jesus. They believe what the world says about Jesus. It seems like such an utterly unimpressive thing for me to do. But if you do that and God blesses it with His power as He often does, then you are unleashing the power of God unto salvation. And the message about Jesus, "Let's talk about Jesus. Have you considered Jesus Christ? He is my King and my Savior. He is Lord. I know you've heard a lot of things about Him, but have you looked at the Bible yourself? Have you considered the Person of Jesus yourself? Because often you don't want to take what somebody else says about Him. Take what God's word says about Him."

You just proclaim it with simple confidence, and then what happens is greater than a political victory. It's greater than a military conquest. What happens is what Colossians 1:13 says, that He delivered us from the domain of darkness and translated us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son. In the preaching of the Gospel, He reaches into the kingdom of darkness and defeats Satan, and delivers the person out. It's a rescue operation that happens. It's like the Delta Force or the Navy Seals being sent in. That is a tiny glimpse of what it is when you preach the Gospel and someone is saved. That's the power of God.

I love the picture Jesus gives in Matthew 12 when they were accusing Him. He was driving out demons, and the Pharisees said He drove out demons by the prince of demons. What a ridiculous thing for them to say. Jesus says basically, "That's so stupid." I'm paraphrasing. He says, "Satan is not even that dumb. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Satan can't be divided against Satan. If I deliver someone by the prince of demons, that's nonsense. But if I deliver someone by the power of God, the Kingdom of God has come among you."

Then He goes on to give the image of, “How would you enter into a strongman’s house and steal his stuff, unless you first bind the strongman? Imagine that. If you’re going to go into—I was going to say Arnold Schwarzenegger, but he’s not as strong as he used to be. But let’s go ahead and go back to 30 years ago. You’re going to go into Arnold Schwarzenegger’s house and he had a lot of stuff back then, because he was a famous movie star and everything. I guess he still does, but you go, “I’m going to take that TV. I want a big screen TV.” This is back when the big screens would have been really heavy. You really need him to carry it out to the car. “Arnold, would you carry that and put it in my car? You’ve got a lot of money here. I’m going to take that too.” This is ridiculous, right? There’s no way you could do that. He’s going to take care of you and throw you out. But if you see somebody’s house like that, and somebody’s walking out with all of his stuff, what do you know? They’ve bound the strongman and they’re plundering his goods.

Jesus says, “When you see these guys being delivered from demon possession, one, after another, after another, after another, what do you know? Satan is bound, and I am plundering his house.” That’s what you know. And so when we proclaim the Gospel, when we point them to Jesus, what we are doing is pointing them to the One who can walk into Satan’s house and pluck them out and deliver them. That’s salvation. We preach Christ. How does the Kingdom come into someone who is lost, and who is in darkness, who is in despair? We preach Jesus. It’s that way in salvation. That’s the real power.

It’s that way in sanctification too. How does our life continue to manifest the Kingdom of God? How does His Kingdom come in more and more areas of our lives? It comes through the process of the proclamation of the truth. It’s that simple. It’s really astonishing. This is the beauty of biblical counseling. Our church is committed to that, and we’ve trained people in that area for a number of years now. It’s something that every Christian needs to be trained in, because we all do counseling, because people ask us our opinion about things, and we ought to do biblical counseling. We ought to give biblical truth. But the way you grow in grace is through more of the truth, more of the truth about Jesus. It’s that simple.

So it’s such a joy to know that too, because you run into people lives, and you get in their lives, and you find messes that are so deep, and so, “Why didn’t you come for help five years ago?” Have you tried a fishing rod that’s got the lines all twisted around? You’re thinking, “Okay, maybe I can get this done,” and at some point you say, “It’s time to get a new fishing rod,” or, “It’s time to get that reel disconnected,” and keep the rod and but get rid of the reel. Sometimes people’s lives look like that, don’t they? Sometimes our lives feel like that, don’t they?

“I’m in such a mess and I have no idea what to do.” The good news is that this is what God has called us to do in the body of Christ. When we find ourselves in messes like that, we need help, and we’re to go to brothers and sisters and share our hearts, and say, “I need help.” The best way that you can help someone in that situation is simple. Proclaim Jesus. And it doesn’t mean just talk about Jesus and getting saved. No, they’re already saved. It’s explaining how the Lordship of Jesus relates to this particular part in their life.

I’m so grateful to the Lord for His grace in my own life. I’ve seen this—I’ve now been married for coming up on 29 years, and I’m so grateful for my precious wife. I still can’t believe she married me. I thought that when she was walking down the aisle. “I cannot believe that woman is marrying me,” and I still can’t believe she’s still married to me. And especially knowing what I know about myself, I really can’t believe it. There are so many things that I was just a terrible husband. I’m not going to bore you or discourage you with the ugliness of that in this setting, but I just trampled on her in ways that just being so full of myself, and caring about the approval of others, and not caring about her like I should. It was awful. We’d been married about ten years, and things kind of came to a head. I’d been the pastor of this church for about 3 years, so this is 19 years ago, and she was so unhappy, and I was unhappy that she was unhappy.

I remember thinking in the audacity of my heart, “Why can’t you be happy with me? I would be happy with me if I were you.” Because I’m stupid, I would be happy with me. She was hurting so much, and I kept hurting her and didn’t realize what I was doing to hurt her. And there were things in my life that just—anyway, I remember her saying one day that, “If you were not a pastor, I would have left you.” She was saying, “The only reason I’m still in this marriage is for the glory of God. I don’t want to be here.” She at this point was resenting me. I was resenting her. There was a lot of sin on both sides by this time, and I remember thinking, “I don’t feel anything anymore for her. I don’t feel any love for her. She doesn’t feel any love for me. She hates me. There is no hope.” I had that thought a number of times. I know she had that more than I did, because she saw it a lot earlier than I did. But the Lord did something. I think she was discouraged after trying for so long and me promising to be better for so long, and so I remember one day the Lord showing me just a simple truth. Some truth was proclaimed, and it was this. “Marriage is not about your happiness. It is about My glory. So you’re not in this to be happy. You’re in this to glorify Me. The way you glorify Me is you love your wife and you serve your wife, and you’ve never done that. So start doing that.”

I started thinking about what that looked like and trying to do that, and little by little that truth began to change things.

I found that the more you serve someone in walking in the Spirit and trying to just figure out how to put off sin and put on righteousness in this one area, God starts working. It's a little unimpressive thing that if you think about it, it seems like you're just dropping a drop of water on a raging fire, but you are dropping a drop of living water, and the fire can't stand up to that. So what the Lord began to do was give me more love for her, and she at the same time was seeking God. We went to counseling. She was having someone tell her she's supposed to love me regardless, and I was having someone tell me I'm supposed to love her regardless. And what happened was the Lord started rebuilding and building our marriage up so that I can say today I love this woman more than I could have ever imagined loving her. I love her more than I ever did when we first got married. I love her far more than that. The delight of my life is to walk through life with her, and that's because God did it. It's the truth, just taking the truth as a Christian. You've got to be saved. You've got to let Christ come into your life. You've got to surrender to Him and submit to Him. And we had to both say, "Even if we're never happy, we're going to follow Jesus and serve our spouse." And when you do that, when you die to self, the power of God is unleashed. The power of His word is unleashed, and hell cannot stand up against that. This is true in any area of our lives. You say you struggle with anger and you can't overcome it. You need to humble yourself, and get in the word, and get someone to talk with about it, and let them remind you of the truth, speak the truth to you, and hold you accountable. If it's lust, pornography, don't let these things continue to dominate your life. Open up and share with a believer that you trust, that loves you, and will share the truth with you, and will hold you accountable.

The word of God is mighty. It's living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. That's how Jesus' Kingdom comes. And listen, when His Kingdom comes, there is no better place to be in the world. There is no happier place than at the feet of Jesus Christ. I could remember, and I know Patti can testify the same way. When the Lord started working in us, even though our marriage was still in the process, there was such a comfort and joy in knowing, "I'm finally getting something right with Jesus here," and a sense of peace begins to permeate. That's available to every child of God, and the reality is if you're not a child of God, it's available to you, because you can become a child of God, because Jesus Christ has done everything necessary to save you. He is a mighty Savior, and I encourage you to repent and place your faith completely in Him. Surrender to Him. The Lordship of Christ is the sweetest place to be. There is no other place of happiness. Everything else is an illusion.

Let's pray together...

*Father, we stand in awe of You, Your infinite mercy that would look upon sinners who are prideful rebels flaunting our own importance, dishonoring You, and worthy of wrath and damnation, and yet You being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which You loved us, You made us alive in Christ. “For by grace are you saved...” You save because of Your own gracious disposition, Your own immeasurable compassion and mercy, but you save those who submit to You. Lord, open the eyes of people even in this room today to submit to You, to turn from living for themselves, living in rebellion, and to surrender to Christ. Isn’t it amazing that You’re a God who says, Lord Jesus, “Come unto Me you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart.” How can it be? Lord, You are so glorious. And Father, for those who belong to You already, may we more fully and truly lay everything down before you, every area of our lives, every area of struggle. May your peace, your shalom, reign through granting us deeper repentance and submission, and may Jesus Christ be praised. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

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