



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

LifeGroup

June 2, 2024

Matthew 10:1-16

Community

THEME FOR TODAY

Jesus sends his disciples to proclaim the Kingdom of God as representatives of the one who has come to fulfill the scripture.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

The Kingdom of God is not life in heaven after you die. It is a reality that Jesus announces and inaugurates here and now, in this life. The Kingdom is within reach, it is near you, it is at hand, and yet it is also a reality that will not be fully revealed until Jesus returns. The Kingdom of God has an “already, but not yet” quality about it, but it is a reality that all of creation is invited to live into, now.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

Receive it by faith. Repent of old allegiances to self. Proclaim the good news. (See “Application.”)

INTRODUCTION

There’s not much good news in the paper, on the radio, or on the internet. Our text in Matthew 10 has Jesus telling us very specifically that the “good news” is that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or has come near.

Many people think that “the Kingdom is all about when I die. It’s the same as heaven.” Instead, God invites us to consider that the Kingdom is a present reality that impacts how we live *now*. His moves Christianity from a “get out of hell free and keep God mildly happy with me until I die, getting away with all I can” idea to a faith that engages us daily, challenging our priorities and per-spectives. It invites us to partner with God to change the world in the here and now.

ICEBREAKER

What is the Kingdom of God to you? What images come to mind? What difference does it make to your faith life that the Kingdom of God is now? How does this become good news for you?

PRAY TOGETHER

Father God, you want our hearts, our love and our will, but you do not force this to happen. Instead, you invite us and call us into obedience to you through faith. You call us to repentance; a change

in our hearts, minds, and lives. You call us to a new allegiance; to submit our lives to your authority in the realm of your kingdom. We eagerly await that day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Amen.

Content

In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus’ public ministry begins after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness. In each case, we’re told that Jesus begins to proclaim the good news about the Kingdom of God:

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17).

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:14-15).

But he said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” (Luke 4:43).

(Read Matthew 10:1-16 together).

BACKGROUND

Let’s start with the basics. A kingdom is the domain of the king, that place in which the rule and reign of the king is manifest. The Kingdom of God, therefore, is existent wherever God’s reign has come, both in the cosmos and the human heart. The Jews connected their longing for God’s Kingdom with a reinstating of the Davidic dynasty. A “son of David” would come to reestablish a political realm, a realm of power and prosperity in which God’s people would be free from oppressive Roman rule.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is this “son of David” who has come to reestablish God’s Kingdom. Jesus’ incarnation, his first advent, is rightly perceived by the Magi as the birth of a King. The question is, of course, what kind of king is Jesus? His miracles clearly demonstrate that he comes in the power of God’s Spirit (Matthew 11:4-6) as the Messiah.

Matthew very carefully crafts Jesus’ passion as a coronation. Jesus is given a royal robe and a crown to wear. And for Matthew, Jesus is finally revealed as the God-King when he is “enthroned” on the cross. The sign posted above his head even confirms this fact: “This is Jesus, King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37).

Everything about this King is upside down and inside out. Rather than coming with brute force to bend the will or break the backs of his subjects, Jesus comes with the transformational power

of servant love to woo the hearts of sinners. Rather than slaughter the infidels and empower the righteous, Jesus embraces the sinner and chastises the self-righteous. Because Jesus has come, the Kingdom of God is near, or at hand, and it is a very different Kingdom than anyone anticipated.

When the early disciples proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, they are announcing that God's promised reign has arrived, because the King of the realm has arrived.

DISCUSSION

Describe ways in which Jesus' Kingdom is upside-down and opposite of what the people were expecting. Can you name specific ways in which you see the Kingdom of God among us?

GOING DEEPER

Three additional observations about the Kingdom of God might be helpful.

1. The Kingdom of God is internal, but manifests itself externally. In this age, the King does not force obedience, but invites submission by faith. King Jesus wants our hearts, our love and our will first and foremost. That's why the announcement of this Kingdom includes a call to repentance, to a changing to one's heart, mind and life. The proclamation calls for a change of allegiance. This, however, will change in the age to come when, "at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

DISCUSSION Name some of the allegiances we need to give up as we grow in spiritual maturity.

2. In his ministry, Jesus focused on the ways in which we live into this new Kingdom. While the Kingdom of God comes to us – it is a given reality – Jesus focused on how we live into this new reality *now*. In Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount is a mini-tutorial on living in the Kingdom. Our lives are to reflect the heart of the King by expressing love and mercy, a life of self-giving rather than grasping. Because our King provides for all our needs, we can live generous lives in the Kingdom.

DISCUSSION How is Kingdom living connected to generosity?

3. The Kingdom of God is already here, but not yet fully. In this age we see and experience glimpses of the Kingdom, but in the age to come all of creation will see and know, and will bow down. For now we pray, "thy Kingdom come," and seek to live as if it were already fully here, but we await that day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

DISCUSSION What are some ways in which we can live as if the Kingdom were already here?

Application

Here are three suggestions for living into the Kingdom reality:

- Receive it by faith. God grants us the faith to dare to believe that this good news is for us.
- Repent of old allegiances to self. This good news calls us to think and live in a whole new way. The King's agenda becomes our own, and this agenda calls for sacrifice. Soldiers give their full allegiance to their country, and many give the sacrifice of their lives. The Gospel calls for that kind of allegiance, and that kind of sacrifice.
- Proclaim the good news. Our proclamation is both verbal and through action. When we love, forgive, extend mercy, give generously and serve selflessly, we proclaim the Kingdom come. Remember Jesus' words: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

PRAY TOGETHER

God, in your Kingdom everything is turned upside-down. The first are last and the last are first. Greatness is measured in selflessness. The poor and humble are honored. Enemies are loved. This week, help us to be your people who love, forgive, extend mercy, give generously and serve selflessly. Amen.

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND REFLECTION

Bold and Shameless in Prayer

Matthew 7:7-11

It would be tempting to read Jesus' teaching on prayer and assume he's saying that we should badger God over and over with our requests until God delivers. But that's not what Jesus is teaching. The Greek word translated as "persistence" is actually very difficult to translate into English. It combines the ideas of boldness and shamelessness. Jesus' point is that, like someone who would be bold and shameless enough to wake up a neighbor for a simple loaf of bread, we can boldly and shamelessly bring our needs before our loving God. Be encouraged to pray no matter what's on your heart or mind. God longs to be in conversation with you!

Matthew 10:1-16 NLT Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. (2) Here are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (also called Peter), then Andrew (Peter's brother), James (son of Zebedee), John (James's brother), (3) Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew (the tax collector), James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, (4) Simon (the zealot), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him). (5) Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: "Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, (6) but only to the people of Israel—God's lost sheep. (7) Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. (8) Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received! (9) "Don't take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins. (10) Don't carry a traveler's bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed. (11) "Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. (12) When you enter the home, give it your blessing. (13) If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. (14) If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. (15) I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day. (16) "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.