

In the Gospel of Luke, the Kingdom of God, is one of the most prominent themes. 32 times, this phrase is used (“the Kingdom of God”).

The Kingdom of God is something that we long for, and we sorta have the Kingdom of God already, but not fully.

- It starts out as something little, and it grows;
- It’s something that we catch glimpses of through the miraculous work of Jesus;
- But it’s not something that’s going to be fully realised until Jesus returns. On that day, the wicked will be judged, and the righteous will be feasting with Jesus **in** the Kingdom of God.

Last week, Jesus said that there are some who are not fit for the Kingdom of God. Do you remember what that was about?

<sup>62</sup> Jesus said ... **“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”**

In other words, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and **keep** following Jesus, and when He calls you to mission, **follow** Him in that mission... because if we commit to Jesus, but then turn back,, we’re not fit for the Kingdom of God...

And there is a truth here, that becomes plain in the Gospel of Luke.

1. God calls all Christians – all Disciples of Jesus are called into mission.

I know you know this. We may try to ignore it, in the hope that “those other Christians – they’re the ones that God is wanting to use – not me”... But deep down, you know this is true, don’t you???

God is calling you **and** I into mission – it’s part of the DNA of being a Christian.

2. And a second truth that becomes plain, is it’s when we are actively involved in the mission of Jesus, **that’s** when we experience the Kingdom of God... Whenever the Gospel is proclaimed; Whenever the sick are healed in the Name of Jesus, the Kingdom has come near...

And this is what I want us to understand:

The human mindset judges things on **response** and **results**...  
But from God’s perspective, things are very different...

*I don’t know if you’ve noticed or not, but some of us pastor-types like to skite: “Oh, we had 15 salvations last week; and 12 the week before... And another 6 decisions for Jesus today...”*

And if you add up all the claimed salvations, you find yourself wondering:

- a) where are they all because your church hasn’t grown by a tenth of that; and
- b) What’s wrong with the rest of us? Why aren’t **we** having the salvations???

And the conclusion we might come to is: God is obviously using **that** person to proclaim the Gospel (because we hear of

the claimed results), which means He doesn't use us, because we don't have those results...

And I don't know about you, but I feel terribly inadequate to share the Gospel, (and I've been trained to do it); and as I've been teaching you week by week, **you've** been trained to do it. But because we're focused on "results" (and we don't believe we can get the results) we assume God is not calling us into mission...

Is that how you feel? If so, it's based on an incorrect assumption... And I'll tell you why.

The Lord, doesn't depend on you for results, just like He doesn't depend on me for results. And you and I need to get that through our thick skulls. The Lord does not depend on you or I for results.

What the Lord requires of you and me, is "faithful service". That's it. And in faithful service, the Kingdom of God comes near. **Whenever the Gospel of Jesus is proclaimed**, the Kingdom of God has come near. (whether people respond to it or not)...

Last week, we talked about the nature of Discipleship – it's about having a total commitment to Jesus because He is Lord/#1/the boss...

And over the last couple of weeks, we've been seeing that authentic commitment to Jesus, is a costly thing. At times, we will be rejected, just like Jesus was...

And Satan uses fear of persecution and fear of rejection to prevent the Gospel of Jesus Christ from being told... And to our shame, we sometimes succumb to this... And our fears mean we take our eyes off Jesus and look back...

But overall, Satan has failed. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus, **has** been proclaimed for the last 2000 years. The question for us today, is “Will it be proclaimed by us?”

Back in Chapter 9, Jesus sent His 12 disciples out on mission. But now he appoints another 72. And as He sends them, they're not going out on their own – He sends them out in pairs.

What is it with our modern age? We are so individualistic – we have the impression “It’s all about me on my own”... In matters of faith “It’s my decision”, or “It’s personal – it’s none of your business”. And even when it comes to serving Jesus. “It’s about the personal call that God’s going to give **me** – it’s what I feel I should be doing – and you’ll do what you feel...”...

Seriously!!! Jesus appointed 72 people at once here – same call... And He didn’t send them out on their own – He sent them out in pairs...

And this is how we should understand ministry – it’s not so much about “My individual call” – it’s about our **united** call.

On your own:

- you get tired and run-down;

- you feel like no one's in your corner, and so when someone rejects the message of Jesus, you feel like everyone's against you;
- there's no one to take over when you're sick/tired/run-down;
- there's no one to pray with;
- it's easy to get distracted, and even easier to give up...

In Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him — a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

I usually hear that read at weddings, but it's actually written, the context of "life" and "work"... God hasn't designed us to be alone. And He hasn't designed us to be a one-man-band in isolation in ministry...

a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Who's the 3<sup>rd</sup> strand in the cord? God.

Did you notice (even here), Jesus didn't send the 72 out into the never-never. He sent them in pairs, and He sent them into every town and place where **he himself** was about to go.

And in the Gospel of Matthew (in the great commission, where Jesus sends His Disciples out on mission), He says, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”...

And this is why, whenever the Gospel is proclaimed, the Kingdom of God comes near ... It’s not about us – we’re just being faithful... It’s about the work of Jesus, Who is **with** us...

But it can all seem so “overwhelming” – the need in this world is so great... **Jesus** said: “**The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few.** There are so many people who don’t even know the Name of Jesus. There’s a whole generation of kids out there, who don’t even have a concept of there even **being** a ‘god’...

The need is so great. We need more preachers of the Gospel. How do we get them??? I’ll tell you how – By being the faithful Disciples of Jesus that He’s called us to be, and by proclaiming the Kingdom of God as He’s told us to do...

But some of you might identify a loop-hole here, and say, “But hang on a minute Michael, Jesus said: “**The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.”**”

And you might come back at me and say, “I’m the pray-er – I’m the one praying to send **others** into the harvest field”... Well, you’ve missed the point...

Do you know who the others are that we’re supposed to be praying for??? The extra labourers to help gather the harvest, are the ones that **we** gather in the harvest... Those who receive the message (that we preach), become those who deliver the message... ... Are you with me???

pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Being a faithful Disciple of Jesus, and proclaiming the Kingdom of God (as Jesus expects of us), doesn’t mean that it’s going to be easy... “Lambs among wolves”... And so this is another good reason to proclaim the Kingdom of God together with another (you can uphold one another in prayer).

The picture that Jesus gives here, is a ministry marked by “Prayer” and “dependence”...

We like to be “independent” don’t we? And so we only consider ministry if it’s at our own cost... And that’s why so many people put it off... “When I get a bit older, I can live off my retirement savings and do a bit for Jesus, but until then, I’ve just got to save up”... Bunkum...

The thing is, when Jesus calls, we're not supposed to be independent – we're supposed to depend on Him.

- **4 Carry no moneybag**

In other words: Leave your wallet and credit card details at home.

- carry **no knapsack**

That means: Don't take a port with a change of clothes.

- carry **no sandals**

You only need one pair of shoes – the one's you are wearing are enough;

- **and greet no one on the road**

He's not saying to be rude about it – He's saying, "Don't dilly-dally"...

And when you turn up at a town and no one knows you, stay with whomever will take you in... Bless their home – bless the folk who have welcomed you in. If they turn out to be bad-eggs, that don't matter (God will remove the blessing)...

But if they **are** good people – if they are what Jesus refers to as **a son of peace**, then blessed they shall be, for welcoming you in...

BTW, are you and I, what Jesus would describe as “sons of peace”?

A “son of peace”, will welcome a person (even if they're a stranger), into their home, and give them food and lodgings,



simply because they've come to serve in the Name of Jesus...  
Are we willing to open our homes and to provide for strangers  
who are on mission in the Name of Jesus???

This is what Jesus was talking about when He said, “  
Matthew 25: (ESV) <sup>34</sup> ... 'Come, you who are blessed by  
my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you  
from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was  
hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you  
gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed  
me....

And the righteous thought, “Hang on a minute, when did we  
do that for you Jesus???” And He said: **as you did it to  
one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to  
me...**

You see, that's what a “person of peace” does – they welcome  
strangers, who serve in the Name of Jesus, into their own  
homes... And as we welcome these our brothers, we're  
welcoming Jesus...

*You know, when I left my job to become a pastor, one of the  
toughest things for me, has always been, to depend on others  
for my provision/living... The protestant work ethic is strong  
– I feel a need, to be working with my hands, to earn a  
living...*

But Jesus is telling us here, (and it's not just for full-time  
pastors) – it's for you too – because we're all called to some  
kind of ministry and mission for Jesus... ...

- Stay with this person of peace.
- Eat and drink what they provide for you.
- **for the labourer deserves his wages.**

When **you** take time out, to proclaim the Kingdom of God, in God's eyes, that's not slacking off – it's your vocation – you are a labourer who deserves his wages. What are the wages? A person of peace will provide for you, while you proclaim the Kingdom of God...

And so sometimes you will **be** a person of peace to another, and provide for them while **they** minister in the Name of Jesus. And sometimes a person of peace will provide for you, as **you** minister in the Name of Jesus... And this is how the body of Christ works together: supporting one another in ministry; upholding one another...

But it's not about what we can get out of it... Once you've been invited into a home, that's where you stay. We don't look for 'greener pastures' – you don't look for another host who might be a better cook, or "Their house has air conditioning"...

But what does the mission itself look like? Well he mentions "**Heal the sick**", so it involves praying for those who are in physical need, but what is **highlighted** here (and what comes up several times), is proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is near.

You don't need:

- a theological degree;
- a special gift-of-the-gab;
- to be a high-falutin evangelist...

He simply says: **say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

There's the message. Now, I want each of you to give this a go – to say these words right now:

**'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

Look at that – a room full of evangelists –

- prepared;
- equipped;
- trained;
- ready to be sent out;
- able to say everything Jesus has told us to say...

This is exciting. Let's do it again: **'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

Why is that message enough??? I'll tell you why: It's because with that much information, the person who hears it, will either seek God or reject Him...

And that's the nature of the Gospel... Some will accept it. Many will reject it... But if they reject it, that's not on you and I – that's on them... For goodness sake, get over the spiritual self-flagellation of "I failed – I should've done it better – It's my fault that they didn't believe"...

## It's nothing of the sort

And that goes for Parents as well. Today, Jesus wants to set you free from guilt... And I believe I need to say to the parents of unbelieving children today, "If you have proclaimed the Kingdom of God and your adult child does not believe, that's not on you. Stop carrying the guilt. They are an adult, and it's on them." Keep praying for them, but stop beating yourself up.

In fact, Jesus said, "When a whole town rejects you, (no, don't do what James & John wanted to do and call fire down from heaven to consume them)... If a town rejects the Gospel – if there's no welcome – if they are completely closed-off to the Kingdom of God, move on. But as you move on, they need to know the consequences, and be in no doubt, it's on them...

Maybe the next town might be open to the Kingdom of God,, but as you go, let them know (one final time), **the kingdom of God has come near** and you missed/rejected it.

It seems to me, that in our culture, one of the worst sins, is to offend someone. And it's not even nice to tell another person, "There are consequences for what you do"... But when it comes to rejecting Jesus, this carries with it, the most severe of consequences...

On the Day of Judgment, it will be more bearable for Sodom, than a town that rejects Jesus. What happened to Sodom? It was that horrible violent sinful city who did not welcome (in

peace), an angel of God. And God **did** rain down fire from heaven...

I suspect that's what James & John were thinking about, when they suggested they might call down fire from heaven... What they didn't understand, is that "Now is the time for saving. When Jesus comes next time, that's when He will come as judge...."

And Jesus names a few towns where He did some amazing miracles, but they still didn't repent...

Have you ever heard someone say, "If God wants me to believe in Him, all He has to do is an amazing miracle..."  
Rubbish.

Jesus said did amazing miracles in Chorazin and Bethsaida... And "Woe to them"... That means "Oh how sad I am for you – how bad it is for you..." <sup>13</sup> ... **For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon (wicked, godless places), they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.**

On judgment day, they'll fare better than you do... And Capernaum, are you going to go up to heaven? Nup! You'll be brought down to the place of the dead...

There are consequences for rejecting Jesus.... And a great display of miracles won't soften a hardened heart. ...

If you have had the Gospel proclaimed to you, and you have not repented of sin and submitted to Jesus as Lord,, Woe to you, because You have rejected God...

You see, as we share the message **that the kingdom of God has come near**, it's not you or I they accept/reject – it's Jesus... And ultimately, they reject God.

This might seem incredible, but this is what God does... When we give that simple Gospel message (what is it?) **that the kingdom of God has come near**, a person will either accept it, or reject it. For some, that message will be enough for them to seek Jesus. And Jesus said, "Seek and you will find". For others, in rejecting us (in rejecting this simple message), they reject Jesus. And to reject Jesus, is to reject God...

So:  
Are you a person who has been impervious to the Gospel – When the Gospel's been proclaimed, you have reject it... You know it's time... It's time to become a person of peace and receive the Gospel of Jesus... Receive the message, and then become a **giver** of the message...

Are you a person who prays for harvesters to be sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God, but you also presume that you're not one of them? You're wrong. **the kingdom of**

**God has come near.** That's your message, and you can say it.

Are you a person of peace, who welcomes strangers into your home because they are brothers and sisters in Christ, who are proclaiming the Kingdom of God? If so, the blessed peace of God is upon you.

Are you a person who beats themselves up because you blame yourself when others **don't** turn their hearts to Jesus??? If so, you need to hear the word of Grace, that: <sup>16</sup> **"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."**

Let go of your guilt, and get on with the business of proclaiming that **the kingdom of God has come near**

Let's pray:

Lord,  
we want to thank You,  
that in every age, the Gospel has been proclaimed.

And Lord,  
We know that you are sending us.  
We pray that as we give this simple Gospel message,  
that **the kingdom of God has come near,**

that some would receive this message,  
and that they would be saved;  
and that they would become fellow harvesters.

Lord,  
we thank You that in Your wisdom,  
you don't send us out alone.  
Forgive us, for our fixation on "self" and  
"individualism".  
And help us to journey with each other,  
as we share in Your mission together.

By Your Spirit,  
help us to be persons of peace;  
a people of hospitality;  
who welcome and provide  
for those who come in Jesus' Name.

And Lord,  
may the harvest be great.  
in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.