

Jun 21 - Chapter 10 & Chapter 11 - p.203-239 All

We can reach our world, if we will. The greatest lack today is not people or funds. The greatest need is prayer.

Community Building: TBD

First Reading: (p 206-207) THE KING- The Bible mentions the kingdom of God and its synonym, the kingdom of heaven, over eighty times in the New Testament. It was the focus of Christ's ministry and message, and therefore it follows: the kingdom must be the framework for our lives on mission. As the church, we cannot talk about mission without thinking about the kingdom of God. And we cannot think about the kingdom of God until we realize that it's all about the King. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord," the people of Jerusalem sang at Jesus' triumphal entry. ³ This moment was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9: 9: "Behold, your King is coming to you ... humble, and mounted on a donkey." Jesus came as King, but He came in a peculiar way. ⁴ He came in an unkingly sort of fashion. The character of the King and the way in which He came are indicative of what the kingdom will look like. Jesus came as a baby and rode in on a donkey precisely because He was ushering in a kingdom of humility. And Christ is coming again. But according to Scripture, when He returns this time, He won't be coming humbly. Matthew 24:30 says that when Jesus returns, it will be with power and in great glory. On His robe and thigh will be written the name "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," ⁵ and at that time "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." ⁶

1. What are the three tenses of the Kingdom?
2. Where is the Kingdom of God?
3. Read 1 COR 10: 23-33. How do these scriptures describe Paul's approach to mission?
4. Read Romans 14:7. How do we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bring righteousness where it isn't? How do we bring peace where there's turmoil? How do we bring joy where there's sorrow?

Second Reading: (p. 218-219) VICTORY AND SUFFERING - Wherever hope exists, suffering exists also; for if there's no suffering, then there's no need for hope. Suffering is a component of the current kingdom. In fact, we're able to enter into the kingdom only because of the King's suffering on the cross. Jesus didn't do away with the suffering of the world at His first coming. That is yet to come. What He did away with was the separation between the world and a holy God. When we enter into the kingdom of God, we become a part of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. ³⁹ We have hope because we look forward to the day when Jesus will wipe away every tear and eradicate all death, mourning, crying, and pain. ⁴⁰ Jesus will deal with the suffering of humanity, and so we say the words of 2 Corinthians 4: 16-17: "We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." As Christians on mission, we don't view suffering as the world views suffering. The kingdom of God gives us a present and future theology of victory over sin, Satan, and sickness based upon the death and resurrection of Christ. "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us," Paul wrote in Romans 8: 18. The kingdom gives us both a theology of victory and a theology of suffering, the two expressed equally throughout the New Testament. In Matthew 16, Peter struggled with the fact that Christ was going to be crucified and that the kingdom of God would involve suffering. "If anyone wishes to come after Me," Jesus said to His disciples, "he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." ⁴¹ In that

culture the phrase take up your cross meant nothing less than suffering and death. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it," Jesus continued. "But whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

5. According to 1 Corinthians, what are three things that will last forever? What is hope?
6. Share examples of suffering that cause the kingdom of God to go forth.
7. Share examples of victory (perhaps healing) that cause the kingdom of God to go forth.
8. When we experience suffering, how can we avoid losing heart or allowing the difficulties of this life rule over us?

Third Reading: (p. 232) DISTINGUISHED - Giant of the faith Andrew Bonar once said, "God likes to see His people shut up to this, that there is no hope but in prayer. Herein lies the Church's power in the world." The single feature that distinguishes Christian churches, Christian people, Christian gatherings, and Christian mission is the aroma of prayer. The fact that we pray to the God of the Bible defines us and shapes us as being distinctly and explicitly Christian. Our connection to and dependence upon prayer is what makes our mission Christ's. Without prayer we run the risk of living a mission that's merely our own. We don't need good ideas, we need God ideas. The mission of Christ continues in the world today. The goal of the church is to discern what Jesus is already doing and then to join Him. When there's an absence of prayer in our lives, we quickly revert to doing our own thing. In the absence of prayer our mission ceases to be distinctly Christian. When we throw our hat into good humanitarian endeavors, ignoring the tool of prayer that changes hearts, situations, and circumstances, we degenerate into secular humanism. We may have good intentions, but they are void of God's power. We have to pray. When we pray as He commanded," wrote Warren Wiersbe, "we will see what He saw, feel what He felt, and do what He did." 14 The more we pray, the more we gain the heart of God for the world. And we could use a greater sense of the burden of Jesus for people and against evil. We need to feel a little bit more of what God feels. Prayer precipitates joining in the mission of Christ. It realizes that Christian mission is birthed in prayer and continues in prayer. Prayer is what Christians are called to do.

9. What is the natural result when God is profoundly present, practically and intimately, in a Christian's life?
10. What kind of faith comes through prayer?
11. Share scripture that displays the power of prayer

'Prayer opens the channel between a soul and God; prayerlessness closes it. Prayer releases the grip of Satan's power; prayerlessness increases it. That is why prayer is so exhausting and so vital. If we believed it, the prayer meeting would be as full as the church.' - Alan Redpath

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