**St Martins C3 – March 10, 2024**

**Living Kingdom – A Kingdom Vision**

**Sermon Summary:**

When Jesus began ministering to people in Israel 2,000 years ago, the impact was immediate and dramatic. People were helped, healed, and delivered from sin. Naturally it raised the obvious question, “why is Jesus doing this?”

**Read: Luke 4:42-43 & John 18:36-37**

126 times in the gospels Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God. Like here, where Jesus explained that it was His life purpose and with Pilate, where He confirms it’s a Heavenly Kingdom, but He is the King of that Heavenly Kingdom.

**Read: Luke 19:8-10**

Zacchaeus, like us, and like the world around us, had moved away from God and His purposes. Because of sin (or evil) that had come into our world and into our lives. We had created a fallen world, where evil could thrive. Our world, like Zacchaeus, needs The King and His Kingdom to come, primarily because evil needs to be defeated and God’s righteous ways needed to be restored.

A vision to see the Kingdom of God become established and begin to thrive in our fallen world was the focus of Jesus’ life and ministry. He calls us, to adopt the same vision for our lives. A vision that sees wholeness (God’s purposes) restored to every person and every community. This is a Kingdom vision that has empowered the church since the time of Christ.

Those who catch this Kingdom vision accept that we will continue to live in a fallen world, until Christ returns to bring the fullness of His Kingdom. So, there will be some challenges, as Satan and his kingdom resists the expanding of God’s Kingdom. However, we also live with the certain hope that we are making a difference in the present and that one day, all sin and evil will be defeated.

However, history has also proven that there are a couple of things that derail the church from that Kingdom vision.

**Danger 1: Doing good, but not addressing the problem of sin.**

There are lots of people around the world who are doing good, but not addressing the sin problem. As Christians we are supportive of good works, but good works don’t go far enough if they don’t address the underlying cause, which is the fallen world we live in. The cross of Christ conquers sin, good works don’t. We ought to do good works, but we also ought to present the gospel.

**Danger 2: Focusing only on getting people to Heaven and not helping them in other areas of their lives.** Sure, our primary focus is on someone’s salvation, but our Kingdom vision for them is not just their salvation, it is seeking God’s best for their whole life. We would love to see everyone in St Martins come to know Christ, but we also want to see St Martins be the community God wants it to be. It is not a matter of “either-or,” but, “both-and.”

**Developing a Kingdom vision is an important part of being a disciple of Christ.** It shapes how we relate to God and how we relate to the world around us. Let us seek together to grow in God’s Kingdom vision for our lives and the world around us.

**Connect Group Material:**

**Key Point:**

An important part of our discipleship journey is developing a Kingdom vision for the world around us.

**Discussion Questions:**

*What is the Kingdom of God?*

*How would the world be different, if the Kingdom of God came in all its fullness?*

*What is God’s Kingdom vision for His Church now?*

*What are a couple of things that derail us from that Kingdom vision?*

*What “Kingdom visions” has God placed in your heart?*

*How might God be leading you to serve His Kingdom vision in the context you are in at the moment?*

**Monday’s Devotion – Kingdom resourcing**

**Acts 2:44-45**

*And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.*

This week we are exploring how the first followers of Jesus caught God’s Kingdom vision and how that expressed itself in how they lived their lives.

I appreciate that reading a verse like this raises a whole lot of practical questions that we won’t get answers to. Questions like, how did people continue to survive when they had sold their property and possessions? Was it just surplus to requirements, or were they selling the family home? Interesting questions, but they miss the point of the passage.

Luke mentions theses extraordinary acts of generosity because this behaviour was generated by a Kingdom vision. Luke’s point is, early followers of Jesus internalised the value of helping others, rather than getting ahead financially. They only did this because the presence of the Holy Spirit had confirmed that God’s Kingdom had come, it was real, it was worth living for, it was being resourced from Heaven. Therefore, there wasn’t the need to build earthly wealth, but rather turn earthly resources into Kingdom resources.

These sorts of details are included in scripture to inspire us towards a Kingdom vision, and the shaping of our values and choices so they are in line with that Kingdom vision.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Kingdom Healing**

**Acts 3:6**

*Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up andwalk!”*

An important detail in this account is the fact that the man was lame from birth. Being physically handicapped in the ancient world, made life very difficult. This man would have had limited opportunities. He was just surviving on the few coins he could beg off others each day. Then Peter brings Christ’s healing to this man. This would have dramatically changed his life. Maybe he could now get a job, get married, attend the church that Peter was going to and discover Christ? The Kingdom impact was dramatic.

An interesting question to ask in regard to this account is, WHY did Peter and John do what they did? – It would seem that they had caught this Kingdom vision. The Holy Spirit was leading them in that moment to bring something of God’s Kingdom to the lame beggar. They did what they did, because that is what God’s Kingdom to that man in that moment looked like.

Notice also, that Peter was aware of the power of God within Him. Because Peter lived with a Kingdom vision, He also knew that God would empower the works of that vision. Peter gave out what He had received from God. What has God given you, that you can in turn, give to others?

**Prayer focus:** Pray for God to reveal to you, what He has given you, to give to others.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Kingdoms in conflict**

**Acts 16:18**

*This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her.*

Obviously if God’s Kingdom is advancing, then Satan’s kingdom is retreating. Demonic forces are not going to like that and are going to do what they can to hinder the Kingdom of God advancing. This is exactly what is happening here. A girl has the power of fortune telling, because of a demon within her. Paul ignores her for a couple of days, seemingly led by the Holy Spirit to focus on helping others in need, rather than her, but then gets fed up with this demonic disruption and removes the evil presence from both this girl and the community. Kingdoms are in conflict and God’s Kingdom wins.

This is a good reminder to us, that when we hold a Kingdom vision and seek to live out that vision, we will get resistance. Some of that resistance will be spiritual, not just natural. In these situations we need to be confident in two things:

1. We are not resisting or fighting against people, we are fighting against the spirit that is influencing them. So, we pray for the removal of the spirit, not the person.
2. It is not in our power that we drive out Satan, it is in Christ’s power. It is Him that has to lead us in these moments and it is His power that we rely on.

**Prayer focus:** Pray into the situations around your life. What might be some spiritual realities that Christ needs to deal with?

**Thursday’s Devotion – Kingdom going**

**Acts 16:9-10**

*That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” So wedecided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.*

When we catch God’s Kingdom vision for our lives, the natural extension is that we catch God’s Kingdom vision for the world. God’s Kingdom isn’t present to only change us, it is present to change the whole world. If God has called us to partner with Him in extending His Kingdom, then that means taking that Kingdom to the whole world. This vision had obviously gripped Paul’s heart, which led him to begin preaching the gospel in as many places as he could.

Notice how in this passage God specifically leads them as to where to go. When we like Paul, and his team, make ourselves available to God and start going, God will direct our steps. God wants to see His Kingdom extended and will guide and empower His people as they go.

It is true that God will also bring people across our path for us to minister to; however, it is more likely that a lot more opportunities will open up as we make the effort to go out and bring the Kingdom of God to others.

**Prayer focus:** Pray into who God is leading you to minister to and how He is leading you to GO to them.

**Friday’s Devotion – Kingdom leaders**

**Acts 20:31-32**

*Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.**“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.”*

The context here is Paul meeting up with a group of church leaders from Ephesus. He is encouraging them to stay true to the Kingdom vision that he had passed on to them.

God hasn’t called us to bring His Kingdom to the world on our own. We partner with our Christian brothers and sisters to extend God’s Kingdom together. This includes raising up leaders who will serve God’s Kingdom purposes and lead others to do the same.

What I like about the Kingdom vision that is forming in the church around the world at the moment, is that it is a broader vision than just developing church leaders. It is about developing Kingdom leaders. Every Christian bringing the Kingdom of God into their context. Every Christian recognising that if they hold a Kingdom vision that automatically makes them a leader, not only to bring that Kingdom vision about, but also to draw others into and equip them in that same area.

**Prayer focus:** What have you learnt about extending the Kingdom of God in your context? Who could you share that knowledge and experience with? Who might God be encouraging you to develop as a Kingdom leader?