

St Martins C3 – March 17, 2024

Living Kingdom – A Heart For The Kingdom

Sermon Summary

For us to see God's Kingdom come we need to allow space in our hearts for other people, for the needs of a hurting world. God wants to change our hearts, so we are willing and available to extend His life to the world around us. This is an opportunity for us to partner with Him, requiring us to regularly submit to and ask for His leadership.

Read Proverbs 27:19, Proverbs 4:23

An idea to ponder: You become what you give your heart to.

As these proverbs highlight, the focus of our lives is steered by our heart and what it desires. Sometimes it is circumstances and external influences that govern what we give our heart to and what drives our lives. Other times it comes down to what we are feeding ourselves, think of the saying "You are what you eat."

We have a choice as to what we "feed" our hearts. God wants them to be filled with Him. With devotion to him, love for His word and a desire to see His Kingdom established. Ultimately God wants to be the one that changes our hearts, but He won't simply do it without our invitation, and change of heart can be a long process.

Read Matthew 6:9-10

Jesus instructed his followers to pray with His Kingdom in mind, to desire that His will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. When we build this language of His Kingdom coming into our regular prayer life, we are giving our heart to the things God has for us, allowing him to change us from the inside out. While it's important to build this habit, it is God alone who can truly bring real change to our hearts.

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27

As God changes our hearts and gives us a heart for His Kingdom, we will begin to recognise around us the needs of our hurting world. Through prayer and discernment, God will lead us to the people and places that He would have us impact.

Because we are open to being used by God, the Holy Spirit at work in us will lead us to the people in our everyday lives who are in need, perhaps of practical or emotional support. Just as important as this spontaneous leading is the way we can plan and prepare to extend His love.

In the life of our church, there are many opportunities to commit to seeing God's kingdom established. From serving on the teams for Toddlerock and Cameo, financially supporting youth to attend a life-changing camp, inviting a friend to attend a mental health seminar or course, or even signing up to teach at our new initiative 'Skills Nights.'

It's God who changes us, gives us a heart for His Kingdom, and it's God who leads us to bring His light to the world.

Connect Group Material

Key Point:

For us to be used for God's Kingdom we need to have a heart that has space to bring His life to those around us.

Discussion Questions:

Can you think of an example of how you become what you give your heart to?

If a Christian's entire heart was filled with God's Kingdom what would they look like and do differently?

Share a time when you "fed yourself" with the right things and it had a positive impact on your life. What about the opposite?

What barriers are there in your life, that might get in the way of serving God's Kingdom?

How can you make more room in your heart for God's Kingdom?

Who can you be praying for or practically helping this week?

Is there a section of the community that you feel a strong burden to reach?

How could you be involved with the skills night outreach that we have been talking about recently?

Monday Devotion: What is the Kingdom

Read Matthew 3:1-2; 6:31-33

When John the Baptist turned up on the scene he came with a very important message. “The Kingdom of God is near.” But what did He mean? What does *anyone* mean when they talk about the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God might seem like a strange concept. A piece of old language that we still use – a hangover from the Middle Ages, a time with Kings, castles and knights swinging swords.

The best definition is found in the contrast found in Matthew 6. Here Jesus encourages His followers not to worry about the everyday things of this world but to focus instead on the things of God.

Here is how The Message paraphrases it: *“People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions.”*

The Kingdom of God is what would happen if the way God works were the way our world worked.

Today, think about your world and whether you are living for your own needs or whether you are making space for God’s way of life to become a reality for you.

Tuesday Devotion: Heaven Come to Earth

Read Matthew 6:9-13

When Jesus was asked how to pray, He gave us what is known popularly as the Lord's Prayer. This was more than a prayer; it was an outline of His mission on earth.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." This coming together of Heaven and Earth should be what we are after now as well. This would radically transform all parts of our world.

A big part of this is in the way we make and grow disciples, however, God calls us to do more.

Making and growing disciples is not our only job as God's people. The Bible also calls us to look after God's creation, create healthy cultures, defend the poor and oppressed, do great work, serve others, and love our enemies. But making disciples is perhaps our most important mission and will contribute to these other mandates as more people truly follow Jesus.

Think about the world around you and the things you would like to see changed. Commit these to God as you look for practical ways in which you can be part of the good that God wants to do in the world.

Wednesday Devotion: The Kingdom is For All

Read Luke 14:15-25; Matthew 20:1-16

As Jesus taught and shared parables he often said “The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...” As you read these parables you get a sense of the value of God’s way of life and the grace that allows us to be included in it. Two parables stand out.

In the Parable of the Great Banquet, a man hosting a great banquet invites many guests. When the invited guests offer excuses and do not attend, the host instructs his servant to go out into the streets and alleys of the town to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

In the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, a landowner hires workers at various times throughout the day but pays them all the same wage, regardless of how long they work. The parable highlights God's grace in extending the invitation to His Kingdom to everyone, irrespective of when they come to faith, emphasizing generosity and equality.

As we seek to develop a heart for the Kingdom we need to see that bringing the Kingdom often means serving those others overlook. God’s love is expansive and wants to include everyone regardless of their social status, ethnicity, moral history, or religious background. Instead, it is open to all who respond to God's call with humility, repentance, and faith.

Today, test your heart and ensure it is soft towards all people, even those we might think are undeserving or unwilling to be part of God’s Kingdom.

Thursday Devotion: Changing Our Hearts

Read Hebrews 10:14

Hebrews 10 tells us Jesus has made us perfect, forever – forgiven, welcomed into God’s family. Yet, we are still being made holy, as it says here. It takes time for our hearts to change.

God has always got something he wants to work on in us. I'll say it another way. We will always have areas in our lives that God wants to work on. We call this process sanctification.

I, for one, am relieved hearing these words. Because I know my salvation is complete in Christ, but I am not holy yet! I know there are things in my heart that need work – and only some of them have been revealed – God’s gracious enough to wait until his right time to sanctify the next part of me.

Whether you're young or old, a brand new Christian or a seasoned prayer warrior - God wants to use you for His Kingdom. God wants to bring you closer to him, bring you even more freedom, and work through you to bring his love to this hurting world.

Consider one thing you can do to help you grow in filling your heart with God’s way of life. Pray that God will show you the way to follow Him in giving all you have for the good of His Kingdom.

Friday Devotion: Why We Fight

Read Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4

Band of Brothers is one of the great TV dramas. It follows the real-life exploits of Easy Company during World War II. The ninth episode is titled, “Why We Fight”, and shows Easy Company discovering a concentration camp in Germany.

The scenes are some of the most affecting you will ever see as mistreated and malnourished prisoners are liberated. The filmmakers even used chemotherapy patients as inmates to reflect the reality of the situation.

The episode gives meaning to all the soldiers have been through previously. Many have fought and died and now they know they were fighting for a reason. It is clear they would now give everything to see these people set free. They know their efforts are defeating evil and saving lives.

We too fight a battle. We long to see our world freed from its captivity to the curse caused by sin. This fight is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of this world. As we make God’s way of life a reality to those around us we will need to be strong in the Lord whilst pulling down strongholds that stand against Him.

Ask God to empower you to fight for the freedom of our world and those people who live in bondage around you.