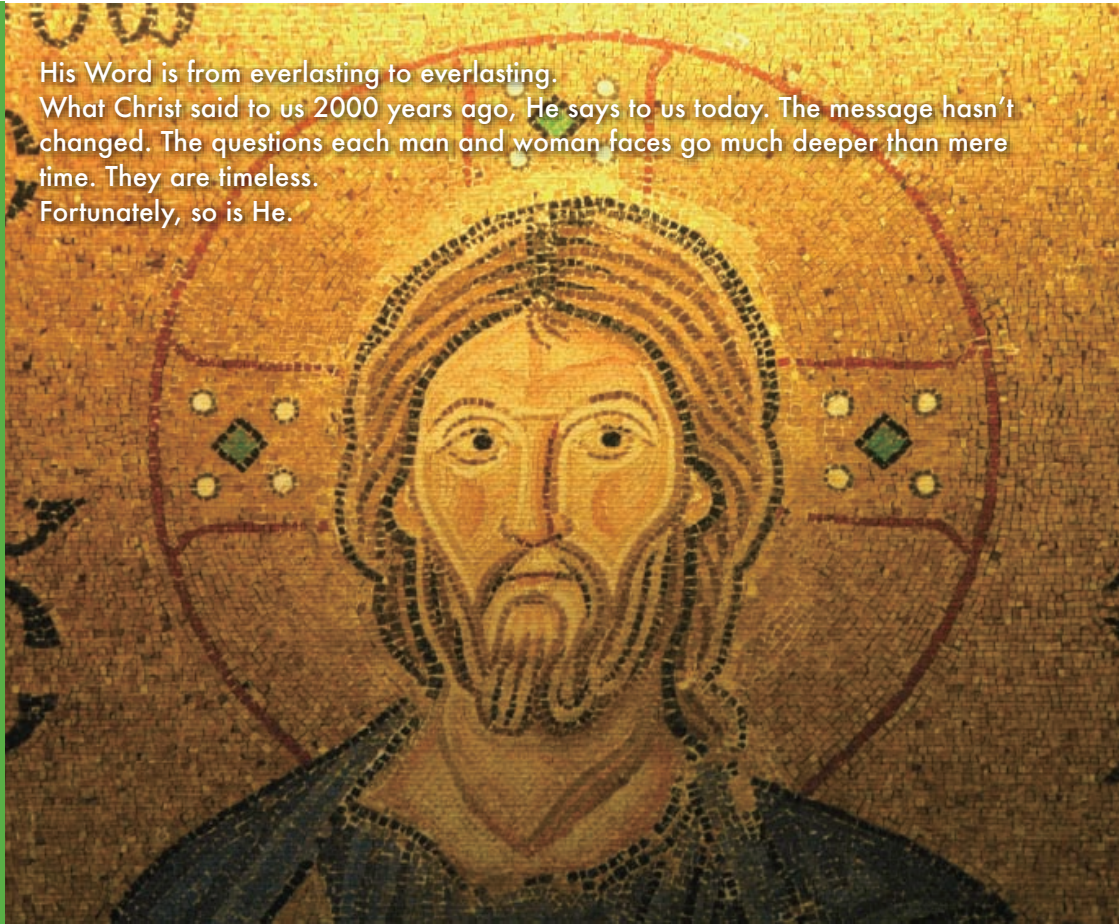


Citizens

OF THE
KINGDOM
OF GOD

His Word is from everlasting to everlasting. What Christ said to us 2000 years ago, He says to us today. The message hasn't changed. The questions each man and woman faces go much deeper than mere time. They are timeless. Fortunately, so is He.



We simply must refuse to substitute ritual behavior for genuine acts of love.

“Be ye perfect” is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. - C.S. Lewis

Review from last week:

The Kingdom was Jesus' main ministry. He told us that the Kingdom of God was at hand, meaning that though it has been here all along, He has come, the King Himself and has made it available to us.

What is a kingdom? It is where a king rules; where his will is done. The indescribable joy and wonder of God, the love unimaginable and the eternal life of the Father are all now made available through reliance on His Son, Jesus, the Anointed of God.

How to do the impossible!

Once when some people came to Jesus asking, “What shall we do to work the works of God?” (John 6:28) Jesus replied,

“You do the work of God when you place your confidence in the One He sent.”

That seems fairly basic; we are saved by faith, right? But what does that mean, especially in light of “The Gospel” that Christ has been proclaiming of the Kingdom of God? Yes, we are to trust Jesus. But honestly, we trust Jesus with our souls, but not with our finances, love life, career advice, or even our daily schedule. Where is the “trust?”

Quite often, as we know that one is not saved by keeping the law, we can think of no other reason to try to. Let's listen to what our Lord has to say on it though in Mark 10:19 and Luke 10:28.

Read Mark 10:17-19 and Luke 10:26-28

When a misguided young man comes to Christ asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus answers, “Keep the law.” The same answer is given to the “professional” - an expert in the law in Luke 10:28.

The keeping of the law is impossible though, right? That is yet another point that we must trust Christ on: for Him to “pick up the slack” as it were, but that does NOT mean that we are not to do as He says.

Read Matthew 5:16 and John 8:31, 15:7 and 2 John 1:9

There is a lawyer I call in time of need. He knows the law and I trust him - but part of trusting someone means actually taking their advice when they give it to you. Christ, granted, is far more than our adviser, but in Isaiah 9:6, that is exactly what He is called, “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” AMEN!

Series Schedule

The Gospel of Jesus Christ	1/21
Citizens of the Kingdom	1/28
Practical Living for the Kingdom	2/4
Share the Love	2/11



Kingdom brings us all that is right for human life."

"Law is not the SOURCE of rightness, but is forever the COURSE of rightness." And this is precisely the point: the law is not there for us to obey, but as a description to us of the indescribable character of the eternal God; Jesus IS the Word of God, and the Word IS God. As said before, God wants to transform you into something very much like Himself, if not in quantification, at least in qualification. And in doing this, the law is simply a humanly applicable way to express the way we are to live.

Jesus does not tell us WHAT to do, but rather HOW to do it.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is that no one is beyond "beatitude," or being blessed by God, because the rule of God from heaven is available to all. Everyone can reach it, and it can reach everyone. We respond appropriately to the Beatitudes of Jesus by living as if this were so, as it concerns others and as it concerns ourselves.

God wants to fill you with such love as is in Christ that the law merely becomes a description of yourself as it is of Him. If you love your neighbor, you will sacrifice whatever you have for whatever he or she needs. If you love your neighbor, even in difficult situations and times of confrontation, it is their best and highest good that you will seek, and "Do not murder" will seem almost trivial to the levels and fine layers that God's powerful eye allows you to see through your own heart as well as your neighbor's - and YET love them still.

We will be looking at many more of these lessons from the Sermon on the Mount in more depth in the coming weeks.

Act out of love, not adherence.

Do we honestly think that Jesus would tell us to do something without giving us the means to actually carry it out? What is impossible with man is possible with God.

First, we must remember, a rabbi who taught in Israel in the first century did not intend to give "head knowledge;" he intended to change your life. Every student was expected to do just as the teacher did. Elijah's student, Elisha, asked for a double portion of his teacher's spirit in order to do even more things! (Read their stories in 1 & 2 Kings)

A little help from above!

We are asked to join in the holy, eternal wonder and love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and in doing so, receive the Holy Spirit by which our lives will be transformed. God does not want us to be law-abiders: He wants us to be sons and daughters of the Most High God. Now, that is high calling! God wants us to be "little" Christs. That is part of the good news, that by obedience and faith (or faith and obedience) we will be made into exact likenesses of Christ, each personal and individual perfect in Him.

Now, as we are to do what Christ says, and that means that we are to uphold the law, lets us see what that means exactly, because we all know, as Paul said, "the law brings death" and Christ brings life.

Practical Kingdom living

Dallas Willard, in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, points out that in Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is decidedly NOT giving us more laws to live up to.

"The keeping of law turns out to be an inherently self-refuting aim; rather the inner self must be changed.

Trying merely to keep the law is not wholly unlike trying to make an apple tree bear peaches by tying peaches to its branches."

Jesus knows this. He knows this more than anyone. For one, He was tempted and never gave in (meaning that He was tempted far greater than we ever will be for precisely the fact that we DO give in) and two, He is God and simply, the smartest man to ever have and ever will walk the face of the earth. With this in mind, we must look very seriously at what He says in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus wants us not to obey a law in order for us to become like Him - which is, as Willard pointed out, basically like putting on a fake beard and calling yourself Jesus - but to trust Him to change our inner motives. In and of ourselves, utterly impossible. But not with Him, and especially not with the Holy Spirit, our great Helper.

Does that mean I can just sit back and engage the divine autopilot?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says plainly, "The only proper response to this word which Jesus brings with Him from eternity is simply to do it." Willard points out, "Remarkably, almost one sixth of [the Sermon] is devoted to emphasizing the importance of actually doing what it says."

"Law as God intended it remains forever essential to the kingdom, and Jesus made it clear to His hearers that His aim is to bring those who follow Him into fulfillment of the true law. The fulfillment of He had in mind was not for the purpose of making them humanly acceptable... But fulfillment of God's law is important because the law is good. It is right for human life. And the presence of the

Kingdom Righteousness

With our hearts pointed in the right direction, we simply have no problem "obeying" God because it is good and right, not because we are attempting to conform, seek approval (from men or God) or even for self preservation.

The deeper question always concerns WHO YOU ARE, not what you did or did not do, could or couldn't do.

Discussion Q&A

What does it mean to actively live in the Kingdom of God?

1. Do you understand all that we have studied here this evening?

How do faith and obedience play a part of my salvation? What are you being saved *from* and what are you being saved *for*?

2. How can I practically trust Jesus in my daily life?

Jesus knew how to and actually raised many people back to life including Himself. At the very least, He knew how to instantaneously change water into wine on a molecular level. Why do we think He wouldn't have the knowledge to help us out in our day to day comings and goings?

3. When it comes to business, what are some ways that you can practice "loving thy neighbor?"

Read Micah 6:8, Luke 3:13,14, Exodus 23:4. Can you think of other verses? Whatever you do, do without hostility, bitterness and the merciless drive to win. Be prepared to sacrifice your interest for that of another if that seems wise (by God's standard).

4. What about anger, lust, pride? How do I defeat the devil on his own ground?

Read Matthew 5,6 and 7 for next week. We will begin a pretty in depth study of the Sermon.

5. Are there times in your life that you have found the call and will of God undeniable?

What sort of blessings did you receive and how did it increase your faith?

Because "salvation" is not the ultimate goal, but God is, we must realize that to trust in God IS having Him. Jesus says that "knowing You, Father, that You are God and I am Your Son" is eternal life. Trust Him today!

NOTES:

Ways to volunteer!

TBC's At Home Ministry is always in need of a few extra, able-bodied hands. Especially after the last service on each 4th Sunday of the month. The fourth Sunday of each month, there is a celebration feast for the homeless in Tokyo and surrounding areas. Last Sunday, the 24th of Jan. we showed "The Miracle Worker" movie as 76 men and women came to eat with us downstairs in Lange Hall. Join us!