

## **Sermon Series: "Your Kingdom Come" (followed by "Rubber Meets the Road")**

### **Purpose:**

To get a truer picture of what the Reign of God is to look like according to the King himself, Jesus, in order to move us toward identifying specific bench marks we can use for self reflection, goal setting, and evaluation.

### **History:**

A local church went through weeks of introspection, prayer and reflection in identifying its mission. The church summed up the results of that process as:

*"The church of Christ is a Christ centered family, learning, caring, and sharing."*

This is a highly pregnant statement that begs to be "unpacked," or to use another image, "birthed" into life and growth, which is what the sermon series and the small group discussions will contribute toward. The results of this series is to provide a theological foundation toward building a plan of action that will intentionally develop each of the emphases in this statement.

### **Plan:**

This series will focus particularly on the presentation of the ideal people of God in the Gospels including its purposes, character, and focus. Rather than starting with the statement above, the sermon and discussion will be more inductive, allowing for a process of discovery of the shape of the mission of God among us. As a result, it should become clear that this is not merely a man-made effort, but the Spirit leading us to mission, which is the pattern we see in Luke/Acts.

### **Critical and Interpretive Considerations:**

There are various emphases in the various Gospels as a result of the shaping of the material by the authors. We need to keep in mind that the Gospels are not merely historical annals or a list of events. The order, selection, and wording of the narrators all seek to get across specific aspects of the ministry of Jesus and his message. Reading the Gospels side by side demonstrates that chronology was not necessarily an organizing scheme in their writing. In this way, the authors are also like preachers that might organize material around themes rather than chronology. Apparently, the early church recognized this because they referred to the authors of the Gospels as "evangelists." Their purposes were not merely to recount historical events.

For instance, John is explicit in his purpose: "

"...but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31)." This, along with the prologue in John demonstrates how God carried his purpose out, through sending Jesus incarnationally into the world, and through Jesus sending the Spirit (paraclete) into God's people to carry on the mission of God in his followers after Jesus departs. This is key to understanding Jesus' instruction in John 20:21-22 - "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you...Receive the Holy Spirit." This gives us a model for mission. Faith is every bit as much caught as it is taught.

The other writers are not so explicit in their purposes. However, the beginning and ending sections of the Gospels each give significant clues as to the purpose. For instance, Matthew concludes by citing a time when Jesus instructed his trained apostles to "make disciples of all the nations." That perspective shapes the selection of content for his Gospel and the way it is ordered. Much of the teaching in Matthew is ordered thematically, which aids in teaching and instruction. There are many mentions of "nations" or "gentiles" in Matthew, which begins with several pagan Magoi who acknowledge Jesus as king. In fact, Jesus begins his ministry with Galileans, Syrians, and people from the Decapolis as well as people from Jerusalem. The "all the nations" perspective is something that Jesus demonstrates from the beginning.

When applicable, this series will be sensitive to these sorts of things.

### Themes and Concepts:

There are several significant themes and concepts in the Gospels and Acts that this sermons series will pick up on. Here is a list:

#### 1. Emphasis concerning Jesus in the various Gospels:

##### a. Matthew: Jesus the King and Teacher

Matthew introduces Jesus as royalty in both his lineage and the announcement of his birth as the "Son of God" and recognition as "King of the Jews" (Mt 1-2). Jesus brings in his kingdom not with a revolution of spears, but a revolution of the heart through teaching and instruction, something he instructs his disciples to continue to do at the end of his ministry (Mt 28:18-20).

##### b. Mark: Jesus the Revolutionary.

The first miraculous works of Jesus in Mark demonstrates his power over the oppressive forces of this world, he has plundered the oppressive "strong man" (Mk 3:27). He casts out oppressive spirits, sickness (Mk 5), and even walks on the water (Mk 4:35-41), a highly symbolic gesture of his universal power over the forces of chaos.

##### c. Luke: Jesus the King and Deliverer

Gabriel introduces Jesus as a King who will "reign" forever. The song of Mary signals that this will be a new order with both a spiritual and social dimension. There is both a spiritual and a social dimension to the reign of Christ. Jesus announces this in his "manifesto" in Nazareth (Lk 4:18f). Thus, in Luke, the word "save" is often connected with healing and wholeness in the now, and not just from hell after death. This fits in with the perspective of the kingdom as both a future consummation as well as a partial and present reality (Lk 11:20). King Jesus launches an offensive on evil and oppression in all of its forms and offers deliverance in the reign of God.

##### d. John: Jesus the sent embodiment of God

John introduces Jesus as the very embodiment of God who is sent into the world in order to demonstrate the message of God and bring faith and life to believers.

#### 2. Key Concepts related to the Kingdom suggesting a new order

##### a. Politically charged words used of Jesus, his message, and activity:

- 1) Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον; εὐαγγελίζω; **בשׂר**) - Official decrees or announcements of long hoped for fulfillment of peace. An example is the announcement of the birth of Augustus as the Gospel, since he brought forth a new order/age of peace (Pax Romana). "Gospel" is rarely used in the Septuagint and in the cases where it is used, it translates the Hebrew word, "glad tidings" where it is in reference to God establishing a new reign

of peace.

- 2) Savior (σωτήρ) - A term sometimes used of emperors because they brought about and preserved "peace." Calling Jesus "savior" could have been taken as a challenge to the ruling powers much as the title "King" was.
- 3) Reign (βασίλεια; מלכות); King (βασιλεύς; מלך)- Used of the rule/reign of kings
- 4) Messiah (Χρίστος; משיח) The meaning of Messiah (Greek: Christ) would have been lost on someone not familiar with Judaism, since the Greek word does not have any meaning beyond "to put ointment on..." However, this was highly meaningful to Jews.
- 5) Announce/Herald/Preach (κηρύσσω; κηρὺξ; κηρύγμα) - Used of public, authoritative announcements (usually from a king or other ruling official). Interesting choice of words for preach, since there were other words that were not as politically loaded as this one.

- b. Not of this realm
- c. Light to the Nations
- d. Salvation

e. Insight: The ruling powers of this world (which Paul referred to as powers and principalities) rightly recognized that the Christian movement was a threat to the existing order. It threatened to transform it not through a revolution of rebellion or war, but through a revolution of the heart which had the potential of changing the existing social, ethnic, political, and economic order. Thus, for someone to pray, "your kingdom come" is a subversive activity. As an agent of the Reign of God, the church can only fulfill its mission when it truly understands its relationship to God and the world and is truly obedient to the call of God. It engages the world in the same manner as Christ did. In a sense, it is a microcosm of God's ideal for mankind, and as such, functions as a city set on a hill and a light to the world.

### 3. Focuses

- a. Discipleship (especially Matthew and Mark)
- b. To all peoples regardless of ethnicity (Especially Mark and Luke/Acts)
- c. God's Liberating Reign both future and present (Especially Luke)
- d. Incarnational Mission (John)

### Overview of the Series Progression:

This Series will begin in the Old Testament in order to show how the church stands in continuity with Israel, the former Covenant, and especially Yahweh, whose purposes for his people have always been the same. All of the New Testament references to "the scriptures" refer to the Old Testament. This means that reflection on God's plan and purposes for the church came not only from the Apostles, but also the Old Testament, which was the foundation for their understanding of the nature of the church. The series will expand on the theme of the kingdom of priests, light to the nations, and the meaning of Torah and covenant. Even though Israel failed to be a light to the nations, profaning the name of Yahweh and causing his name to be blasphemed rather than honored, God had another phase in his plan ready to go.

The next phase in his plan involved a new covenant and a new Reign of God.

In his ministry, Jesus inaugurated a new Reign of God characterized true peace, justice, equity, and grace. His reign is not of this realm and is open to all peoples. Jesus forms a new people of God who are to be a kingdom of priests. As a people set apart as a Kingdom of Priests, the purpose of the Church of the Messiah is not unlike the purpose of God's servant, Israel. As far as mission, there is a major difference concerning how it is to be carried out. The church is to be more like the Diaspora than the original self-contained kingdom in Palestine. The church lives as aliens in a foreign land, called to be that city set on a hill.

The central theme of the preaching of Jesus was the Gospel of the Kingdom, which meant salvation in the Reign of God. While many conservative evangelicals tend to emphasize the eschatological elements of the kingdom, and many protestant mainliners tend to emphasize the present social dimension of the kingdom, the portrayal of the kingdom in scripture is solidly both. Good news, life, deliverance, all found in the Reign of God is both a future hope and a present reality. Jesus inaugurated the Reign of God in his ministry, but the full consummation of it is yet to come in the eschaton, when the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever!

It is to the present and now aspect of the Gospel of the Kingdom to which this part of the sermon series will place its emphasis. The marks of the Reign of God are more communal than they are individual. Part of being the city set on a hill has to do with being a counter-cultural, alternative community, something the Bible calls "holiness."

The remainder of the sermon series will highlight the marks of the Reign of God and what they look like according to the way Jesus taught and demonstrated it in his ministry. Sermon ideas include the following:

## **1. Introduction: The Spirit of God vs. the Spirit of the Age**

**Summary:** It is valuable to understand how history, tradition, and culture have shaped our faith and mission today. Medieval, reformation, and enlightenment thought have all left distinct impressions on our faith and mission. We need to name these "principalities" and "powers" with discernment in order to evaluate them more effectively.

**Know:** We are always shaped by our surroundings as we interact with it, it is therefore important to evaluate the assumptions of our culture about the nature of man, truth, and reality.

**Feel:** The subtle danger that lies behind the spirit of the age.

**Do:** Discuss the attitudes and assumptions of our culture that are at odds with the principles of God. Identify ways our culture shapes our assumptions, our faith, and how we live our Christian life. Consider ways to evaluate, rather than blindly acquiesce to our culture.

**Text:** Eph 6:12

**Scripture Reading:** Gal 1:3-5

## **2. Why are you Here?**

**Summary:** God's overall purposes for choice of Israel were relational. He chose Israel for the specific purpose of being a kingdom of priests and a light to the nations not just at some future time, but also in the present. This was to be merely in profession, but in practice. As Christians, our practice demonstrates our godly character more than our profession, therefore we need to ensure that our practice is in line with Christ's demonstration in his ministry.

**Know:** God's purpose for his people is for them to draw people to himself. This happens more so by practice of godly attributes than by profession. Poor practice destroys good profession.

**Feel:** Small by yourself, because you are part of a purpose larger than yourself

**Do:** Reflect on some of the characteristics of God and how a community of believers that demonstrated these characters might carry out God's relational purposes. Identify ways you fit into this overall picture.

**Text:** Exodus 19:1-6; 1 Pet 2:9; Mt 5:14;

**Scripture Reading:** Lk 2:32

### 3. Christian Schooling

**Summary:** The Gospels introduce us to Jesus as the King who inaugurated the Reign of God, which requires allegiance to Christ as Lord, master, and teacher. Unlike the instruction of the Torah, Jesus is the embodiment of Torah, which means that we not only listen to his words, but observe his actions as well. This means that learning to be a Christian is not merely academic, but hands on. All of life is a classroom for the Christian not for the purpose of information, but formation.

**Know:** For us Christians, we learn not merely for academic knowledge, but even more so to practice the lifestyle of Jesus every day.

**Feel:** The inadequacies of book knowledge so that there is a desire to learn and teach by doing.

**Do:** Reflect on the teaching style and methods of Christ. Compare Christ's teaching methods with our own and list ways that our own teaching methods could be improved.

**Text:** John 1:14; Mark 3:12; Eph 4:20-21

**Scripture Reading:** Lk 6:40

### 4. I Pledge Allegiance...

**Summary:** The Gospels introduces Jesus as the king who inaugurates the promised Reign of God. Even though there is a future consummation of the Reign of God, the Reign of God is also something in the present. Jesus demonstrates that the Reign of God is present in this world, yet is an alternate system not of this world religiously, socially, economically, and even politically. Jesus wants to transform the system of this world through a revolution of the heart, not a revolution of the sword. Our place is to show the open door of the kingdom to those on the outside.

**Know:** There is a sense in which Jesus' Reign is in this world and is lived out and practiced in the present time. The Reign of God is relevant and applicable at all times and places.

**Feel:** A desire to live out the Reign of God daily

**Do:** Reflect on the nature of the Reign of God and how that compares to your past concept the "kingdom" of God. List ways the Reign of God makes claims on us religiously, socially, economically, and even politically. What are ways the Reign of God should change your life?

**Text:** Mt 4:17-25

**Scripture Reading:** Jn 18:36

### 5. What is Good News?

**Summary:** The background of what the Gospel ("good news" or "glad tidings") is begins in Isaiah. According to the prophecies in Isaiah and the Gospels, the Good News involves both

present and future blessings. Jesus demonstrates that the blessings of the Gospel have a clear present social dimension to it as well as an eschatological one. For the poor, downcast and the humble, good news means not only being in the eternal kingdom after death, but also the kingdom in the present which is an alternate reality where things such as equity, justice, compassion, fellowship, and wholeness can be found.

**Know:** The Gospel is not limited to the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Although this is the core of the Gospel, the Gospel is more holistic and also has a present social dimension that includes concern for the poor, release from oppression, and potentially even transformation of oppressive structures (which the Bible calls principalities and authorities). Rather than being aloof from the world, the Gospel engages the world as an alternative system of freedom and healing.

**Feel:** Compassion for those in bondage, downcast, and oppressed

**Do:** Compare on the nature of "evangelism" ("gospelizing," or "good newsing") as the Gospel describes it and compare it to how we typically conceive of it. Identify what is present in our efforts and what needs to be improved. List the things that need to change by way of information, formation, and attitudes in order to conceive of mission in the way Jesus demonstrates it.

**Text:** Lk 4:17-30; 7:18-23

**Scripture Reading:** Is 61:1-2

## 6. Marks of a Faithful Church

**Summary:** Summary: In our heritage, we have had the tendency to highlight aspects of the faithful church in terms of what made us distinct from other churches, institutional structures, individualism, and other such things that were shaped by historical, cultural and traditional forces. The marks of a faithful church that Jesus highlights need to receive more emphasis, such as ministries of compassion, ministry among outsiders, attention to the least of these, and things of this nature.

**Know:** The marks of a faithful church have more to do with Christ like lifestyle and practice rather than the fine, hair splitting points of doctrine.

**Feel:** The desire to act, live, and think as Christ did concerning mission.

**Do:** Compare what Jesus highlights is a faithful church to what we have typically emphasized as marks of a faithful church and note similarities and differences. Identify Christ's vision of the most important aspects of what makes a faithful church. Consider what that would look like for the Leavenworth Church of Christ.

**Text:** Highlights from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) & the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6-7), the Kingdom Parables (Mt 13), and the ministry of Christ.

**Scripture Reading:** Lk 12:42-43

## 7. The Missional Church

**Summary:** The church needs to view itself as Jesus did, as an agent of God's mission, not as the goal of mission. The church does not send, but is sent to carry out God's mission. This call can take many different shapes and forms. In most instances, it will involve what can happen outside the church building. The possibilities are endless. To be missional, a church must be available, flexible and faithful.

**Know:** Mission by nature is incarnational, which means it may take various forms depending on the situation. God sent Jesus, who sent the Spirit, who sends us incarnationally into the world.

**Feel:** The desire to engage the world with Christ

**Do:** Reflect on the missionary nature of God and how incarnational ministry looked in the ministry of Jesus. Highlight ways your ministry can be incarnational. Consider the challenges to missions and brainstorm on ways the church can be more missional.

**Text:** John 1:1-14

**Scripture Reading:** Heb 1:3

## 8. The Mission of the Leavenworth Church

**Summary:** God's vision for our church is to engage our world missionally and incarnationally in the way that Jesus demonstrates. This means we need to have a clear sense of God's vision and purpose, looking to Jesus as the model for our mission. Our mission can be summed up with: "We are a Christ-centered family, learning, sharing and caring." This is accomplished in the ways we have explored in this series. (Note: This is a great summary, and the interesting thing is that this statement is a general summary of the questions we explored concerning what our congregation is about. We had a "general" idea of what the church is supposed to be about, and it seemed to be on target. This series was to get a clearer picture of what this is supposed to look like according to God's vision for our congregation)

**Know:** God's vision for his church is to leave and go as Christ left and went, and engage the world. This means getting out of the pews and into the streets where there are people who are sick, broken, hurting, and in need of the holistic healing that only comes from Christ.

**Feel:** The desire to be missional in all of life

**Do:** Review the statement, and discuss each item of the statement and how each should look in our congregation. Identify and list specific ministries and potential ministries in which the church can carry out God's mission (think outside of our "box" - the church building).

**Text:** Review of the Texts already used, and a review of the discussions of what we felt we were about.

**Scripture Reading:** John 20:21

## 9. Concluding Summary to the Sermon Series: Your Kingdom Come

**Overview:** An overall summary of the main points and highlights of the sermon series, emphasizing the overall missional identity of the church as the counterculture Reign of God.

## Sequel to "Your Kingdom Come" Sermon Series: Rubber Meets the Road

**Purpose:** To provide a more focused look at specific ministry areas in congregational life along with a process for discussion, self-examination, and idea generation for aligning ministries to the mission of God based on a strong theological foundation.

### 1. Sermon: The House of God

**Summary:** Church ownership of a building can be an asset or detriment depending on the church's view of its building in relation to its missional call. The church needs to shape and utilize the building to conform to God's mission rather than the other way around.

**Know:** Even though the Bible is neither for or against church buildings, it is clearly for God's mission. Any resources we created need to serve that mission, including a building.

**Feel:** An openness to look at our facility use critically

**Do:** Reflect on how the facilities fit into God's mission, and how we are doing with utilization, configuring and maintenance of facilities in light of mission.

**Text:** 1 Pet 2:4-9

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Pet 2:5

## **2. Sermon: God's Family Fellowship**

**Summary:** As part of God's desire that we engage the world for his mission, we have a distinct Christian fellowship with fellow believers that God creates not us, which means it is not based on 100% agreement but on God's work; so our part is to recognize it and live it through expressions of unified missional ministry.

**Know:** The theological foundation of Christian fellowship lies not in 100% agreement on every little point of doctrine, but on God's acceptance through Christ and our honest faith in him.

**Feel:** A desire to strengthen brotherly ties to Christian brethren

**Do:** Keeping the slogan in mind - We are a Christ Centered Family, Learning, Sharing and Caring, and keeping the theological basis of Christian fellowship in mind as presented in this sermon, discuss what currently happens that is good for fellowship, what needs to be improved, what needs to stop happening, and what needs to start happening.

**Text:** 1 Cor 12:13-26

**Scripture Reading:** Ps 133:1

## **3. Sermon: Key Elements in Worship**

**Summary:** Congregational worship is a collective response to God for his ongoing acts in a participatory encounter than can transform us and serve as a witness to him as we rehearse our commit to give him the very best.

**Know:** Worship is an expression to God who is worthy of the very best, therefore we need to give him the very best.

**Feel:** The desire for excellence in worship

**Do:** After considering the broad picture of what worship is, evaluate the congregational quality of worship and what can be done to improve the worship experience.

**Text:** John 4:20-24

**Scripture Reading:** Heb 13:15-16

## **4. Sermon: Becoming an Apostolic Church**

**Summary:** God calls us to live apostolically as demonstrated by Jesus, who didn't just preach "at" people from a distance, but got involved with, identified with, and care authentically for people, creating space for hearts to accept the Gospel.

**Know:** We are not to send people to evangelize, but are ourselves sent to evangelize in the manner demonstrated by Christ

**Feel:** The desire to share the Gospel in a caring way

**Do:** After reflection on the rationale for Evangelism and how it applies to everyone, reflect on how the body of Christ with all of its diverse parts can carry out its mandate for evangelism in the most effective way possible through evaluation of what is presently good and needs to continue, what needs to improve, and we needs to stop.

**Text:** John 4:1-38

**Scripture Reading:** Lk 19:10



## 5. Sermon: Christian Education

**Summary:** Christian Education is the total process through which we are being transformed into the image of Christ to serve God and others in all we do in order to carry out his mission. Elements of Christian education includes information, formation, and **transformation, all in the context of knowing God.**

**Know:** Christian education is not complete until it moves from theory, to values, to action.

**Feel:** The desire to engage in transformational educational activities

**Do:** Evaluate the educational program of the church, what is done well, what needs to stop, and what needs to improve or change?

**Text:** Col 1:9-12

**Scripture Reading:** Titus 3:14

## 6. Sermon: A Benevolent Church

**Summary:** Benevolence is a social ministry that is a part of the church's overall ministry of shalom that places priority on the brethren, but spills over its blessings to outsiders in need, thus bearing witness to the nearness of the Reign of God to the world.

**Know:** Social ministries are an integral part of the overall ministry of the church as demonstrated in the ministry of Christ

**Feel:** The desire to consider new ways and new ministries

**Do:** Evaluate attitudes, beliefs and understanding about benevolent and social ministries. Reflect on how Jesus modeled caring ministries and consider ways to incorporate ministries of compassion and social ministries as an integral part of the overall ministry of the church.

**Text:** Luke 4:18

**Scripture Reading:** Psalm 41:1

## 7. Sermon: The Meaning of Membership

**Summary:** We need to prevent anything from crowding out full participation in body life because Jesus has incorporated us for full, "sold out," non-optional participation in his body as a part of our relationship with him. Therefore, we need to examine specific expectations of discipleship in our context and express them clearly.

**Know:** Participation together with the body in ministry is an indispensable component of life with Christ.

**Feel:** The desire to be connected in ministry with the rest of the body

**Do:** Reflect on the level of involvement we expect as "normal" in the congregation and compare it to the Biblical picture of what is expected of the Christian life. Brainstorm ways to raise the bar on "membership" in the congregation.

**Text:** Luke 14:16-35

**Scripture Reading:** Mark 10:28

## 8. Sermon: Transformation Transition

**Summary:** Since transformation into the image of Christ in order to carry out his mission is an ongoing process, transition is a part of life. To reject transition is to reject transformation leading to things such as stagnant faith, legalism, and comfortable religion. We need to not be fearful of what the Lord has in store for us in engaging an ever changing world with the Gospel.

**Know:** Ministry methods are more fluid than the ministry message. Incarnational mission means being willing to engage in ministry in the most effective way

**Feel:** The freedom to explore dynamic ministry methods

**Do:** Explore ways to minister in effective and innovative ways that are purposeful and faithful to God's mission

**Text:** 2 Cor 3:18 - 4:7

**Scripture Reading:** Phil 3:13