



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

"1st Things 1st: A Vision For The Kingdom"

Ps. Rice Broocks – Jan. 12, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What state or nation were you born in?
- Have you ever lived in another culture? If so, how was it different than here?
- If you could visit another nation or culture, which one would it be?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

Christianity is not a moralistic religion. Fundamentally, it is the story of God's redemption of sinful humanity, and is centered in the person of Jesus Christ, who is none other than the incarnation of the Son of God. He establishes his kingdom in the interior, spiritual life of individuals through God's Spirit, and then transforms them from the inside out. Jesus is the King of this kingdom. Citizens of this kingdom are under the rule and authority of King Jesus. Those who have been born again have received a revelation of God in Christ and as a result have experienced a spiritual revolution. People must not only receive the revelation, they must also respond to it.

John 3:3 ESV *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Colossians 1:13-14 ESV *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

There are only two kingdoms: that of God and that of spiritual and moral darkness. You are either in one or the other. One subsists of self-rule, the other of God-rule. Allegiance to God entails the serious embrace of his values out of submission to his authority, which is both holy and loving in nature.

John 8:44 ESV *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Jesus said this to dedicated religious people. Religious dedication is insufficient. The question is, Whose values do you embrace and live by? To whom are you loyal and dedicated: yourself, or God?

Our duty is to advance God's kingdom. The church and the kingdom are not identical. The kingdom is to be expressed and advanced by the church. The church is the redeemed people of God. The kingdom is being manifested everywhere where the reign, values, power, and person of God are being expressed and advanced.

Matthew 13:31, 32 ESV *He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

God wants to express and advance his kingdom through each of us and through all of us together. His kingdom had a small, seemingly insignificant beginning, but has grown to be worldwide. Likewise, his kingdom often advances through us in seemingly small ways, but over time grows to have significant impact and influence as people we have touched grow in their knowledge of, love for, and obedience to God.

Matthew 13:44-50 ESV *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The kingdom is more valuable than anything and everything else. We must be willing to pay any price to lay hold of it. We must give our lives fully and unconditionally to our King in order to enter into and possess the kingdom of God.

Only those who belong to God's kingdom will enter it forever. Salvation is found in Christ alone. He is the treasure. He is the pearl. He is the great King. His is the kingdom, and if we have embraced him, we are his people.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- What is the difference between being a dedicated religious person and being a member of the Kingdom of God?
- What are some ways that you tend to be merely religious at times instead of living fully as a member of God's kingdom?
- How can you better represent the kingdom of God in your workplace, school, or neighborhood?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- That God would open our eyes to any areas in our lives that need his life to express his kingdom better.
- That God would lead us and empower us afresh for the advancement of his kingdom in our families, workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods.
- That God would help us to effectively lead others into a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ, as both King and Savior.