

K-466 Agenda for Biblical People

by Art Katz

Art Katz challenges believers to live out their faith authentically, transcending cultural norms and embracing the reality of the kingdom of God amidst societal pressures.

Duration: 1:22:06

Scripture: Matthew 5:14, Matthew 6:33, Acts 4:29, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:9, James 1:27, 1 Peter 2:11

Topics: "Biblical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christians being representatives of another kingdom. He describes the Bible's view of change as primarily coming through the presence of God's people in history, demonstrating what human life can be in the love and power of Christ. The speaker shares a powerful statement from Paul about the gospel's purpose being to teach men how to live, and highlights the role of gospel people in teaching the world to live according to God's values. The speaker challenges the congregation to examine their lives and submit them to God's light, seeking to establish a distinct lifestyle that originates from heaven.

Transcript

What we had thought to do was to have a discussion based around some of the statements of what I consider to be an enormously significant book, written by a young man, I think I made some reference to him earlier in these days, who went from the seminary to the establishing of a community in the inner city in Washington, D.C., to test the reality of the Gospel, to see if the kingdom can be a present reality in the thick of a black ghetto of hopelessness and despair. Out of their experience that God has tempered in them has come this little book and a magazine which they produce called Sojourners. You can almost start from the first page of this little book and read your way through it.

I've just marked places throughout the book. But I just feel like leaping in to a statement that he makes on page 36. And by the way, I think you ought to take the title and get yourself a copy and circulate it around your own fellowships and chew on it.

You'll not find everything digestible. He has a kind of social concern that doesn't seem to be characteristic of many of us, but he has also an insight into the reality of the kingdom, the meaning of the church. The name of the writer is Jim Wallace, W-A-L-L-I-S, and the book is called Agenda for Biblical People, published by Harper and Row, so it should not be difficult to obtain.

Jim Wallace, W-A-L-L-I-S, Agenda for Biblical People, Harper and Row. I don't think that I'm exaggerating too much to say that it's almost something like the Magna Carta of the Body of Christ or the Communist Manifesto, so to speak, for the believers of our generation. I've not read anything more pointed, more challenging, about the meaning of our faith than what this young man has expressed.

You know the way God has a manner of putting something in your hand at the propitious time. It seems that just as our hearts were becoming kindled for the reality of the kingdom, bang, this book came. I had just returned from weeks overseas with one powerful conviction that the gospel of the kingdom of God needed to be proclaimed in the church first before it's proclaimed in the world, that the church does not understand or know the gospel.

And probably one of the most stunning observations that came to me through the course of those weeks, staying in the homes in different countries of ministers, was the shock to see that when they made their decisions and their fundamental choices, they were made on exactly the same basis by which the world makes theirs, that there was enormous disparity between what men preached on Sunday and what was the actual constitution of their life, that when it came to the security of their family or their future or the future of their children, they made their decisions as any solid middle-class burgher would make it anywhere. In a word, they did not make their decisions on the basis of a kingdom. It showed that their lives were really effectually lived in the world and that their Sunday religion was some kind of an appendage, something tacked on, a kind of a ceremonial something, a word game, and not really the platform or the foundation of their actual lives.

I think that's a description not only of ministers, but by and large, Christendom, for which reason we have not had the impact in the world that God intends. Here's what he says, The environmental facts of our life have become more determinative of our style of life than our identity as Christians. This problem is most crucial, for in a situation of widespread social conformity, the lifestyle of those in the churches becomes evidence for the view held by many that the gospel does not transform people's lives, but is a mere appendage which provides religious sanction and justification to lives really lived on other grounds.

I have to look at your faces to see if you're comprehending. Some of these statements deserve and require second and third repetitions. Okay.

The environmental facts of our lives have become more determinative of our style of life than our identity as Christians. I think I'm in a better position to perceive this, perhaps, than you. Because you know what I notice in my travels? Whether I'm in Yugoslavia or Germany or Denmark or Holland or England or the States, the nationality of the believers has more to do with their lifestyle and character than the fact that they are Christians.

They are Dutch Christians. They are German Christians. They are English Christians.

And the fact that they are Dutch, German, and English has more to say and more to do with their effectual lifestyle than the fact that they are Christians. For example, the English are very parsimonious. That means stingy.

You'll come to an English household as a guest for dinner and they will serve you the plate. They will put on the plate the portion of meat, vegetables, potatoes, and so on and serve it to you. That's it.

Very different from our lifestyle, which is more or less everything is on the table, you help yourself. And I notice that when it comes to offerings and love offerings in response to speakers, in some churches we got like \$30. And that was a matter of fact.

Their whole style of life is scaled down. They're very parsimonious, stingy. Everything is measured by teaspoons because English society itself is conducted in that manner.

Whereas conversely, in America, we're accustomed to a much more freewheeling and commodious style of life. The kind of square footage, for example, that we think that we need for adequate space for living is maybe twice that which is required in England. In England, if you've got a cubicle in which you can put a couch and a chair and have a table in which you can put your teapot, that's adequate.

Here's my point. Neither is the parsimoniousness right, nor the largesse of American life, if the determination has been the culture in which those things are enacted. But the question is, what is the culture of the kingdom of God? None of us have ever asked the question or thought that there is an alternative to being English, German, French, or something else.

And I think that God is wanting to bring us to a place and to a situation that wheresoever we travel in the world and meet others of the same kingdom, there is an immediate and instant identification that transcends the culture of our given localities. If you understand what's being said here, it's an answer of the deepest kind for the things that have brought profound division between God's people because they happen to be black or white, northern or southern, rural or urban, American or English. I believe that what God wants as a final testimony in the earth is a transcendent culture that is visible, demonstrative, tangible.

It can be handled. Remember what John said, the word of life which we have handled. He wasn't some ephemeral ghost that you glimpse from afar.

They handled him. As we say in Yiddish, he was zaftik. He was juicy.

He was pulsating. He was something. He was phenomenal.

He wasn't just a spiritual entity walking on eggshells. He was a total man. And God is calling us also to a total and a transcendent kind of culture that very much is incorporated in the cry, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

I hope I'm not going to weary you by my repetitions, but this has the power, the burning meaning of that apostolic cry is so with me that it has ruined me for Jewish evangelism. I just can't get excited for Jews for Jesus and B'nai this or that or all the other cutesy approaches to Jews that is affected by the wearing of stars of David and other kinds of little gitchoy goose. I mean, it's cute.

And maybe you'll win a peripheral Jew so long as you'll assure him that there's no risk in the loss of his Jewishness. I want to assure them that there's every risk. Not only of their Jewishness as they've known it, but of their very life.

That God is calling them to something that transcends and that the key to it is to follow him in death and burial and be raised with him to newness of life, to ascend up to the throne and to have the actuality of our being established there. You guys can think me maniacal if you want, but I am absolutely persuaded that Paul was serious when he said that he had a citizenship in heaven. You know, Paul is something else

again.

When you read Paul, when you get the sense of his personality, you don't get any sense of a rabbinical man. Somehow, however deeply ensconced he was one time in that Judaic culture, and he was, however great his future in it might have been, he was so profoundly converted that the apostolic giant that comes forth out of the pages of the New Testament is not in any way characteristically Jewish as we have ever understood that word. He's a new kind of entity altogether.

He's larger than life. And therefore we see a man who can enter the synagogues and dispute with the Jews and is equally comfortable and at home on Mars Hill with the Greeks. There's nothing for which he was out of place because he was the citizen of another kingdom.

This problem is most crucial for in a situation of widespread social conformity. The lifestyle of those in the churches becomes evidence for the view held by many that the gospel does not transform people's lives but is a mere appendage, something tacked on, which provides religious sanction and justification for lives really lived on other grounds. When Paul was at Athens, it says that his spirit winced as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Therefore disputed he in the synagogues with the Jews and in the marketplace with the devout persons who came unto him. What are devout persons doing in the marketplace? And why is a man who has been cut by idolatry dispute with Jews in the synagogues? Because it is a statement of a whole world and a system ruled over by a prince of darkness which is in utter opposition to another kingdom. And if you want to come to the crossroads of that system, you'll find it in the marketplace and in the synagogues of the Jews.

You'll find it in the universities and in the places of culture and refinement. Not only in the synagogues of the Jews, as I said the other day at the university, but the synagogues of the Gentiles. One and the same.

I'll tell you that the Jewish ministers and the Presbyterian ministers and Methodist ministers and all of the others of that ilk are virtually interchangeable. You can swap them and their congregations would not even look up and note the difference. They're all equally as antiseptic.

They're all equally as removed from God. They're all equally religious functionaries providing a minimal service for people who want religious cop-out. And we have not impressed the world that the church is anything else but that.

That's the point he's making here. We're a mere appendage. Something packed on.

A Sunday afterthought. But our lives are really lived not on gospel grounds, but on other grounds. Let me just give you a contrast out of the book of Acts in the fourth chapter, 29th verse.

Here's a band of believers whose life is so lived on other grounds that they are incompatible with the world about them, with the Jewish society out of which they were converted. Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost? Repent, how do they say it, and save yourself from this untoward and perverse generation. How many of us have the powerful conviction that this generation is untoward and perverse? In fact, one of the first things that God is doing with us is cleansing us from our own perversities.

He's going to have a holy people, sinless and unblameable. The fact that we have not been alarmed by the world shows that we ourselves have been too accommodated to it. Unlike Paul, our spirits have not

winned because we've been watching the box too much and endorsing its values too much.

This apostolic band was something else. They experienced almost an immediate persecution. And I think that persecution, there's a phrase in Latin, the *sinquanon*, how do you say it? It is the essential necessity, a requisite of true faith.

I don't think that persecution is an accidental happenstance or it's reserved for those behind the Iron Curtain. The moment that Paul and Silas cast out the demon spirit in one who made her masters much gain, in that same moment they were brought into the marketplace before the magistrates and the rulers and were publicly disrobed and beaten. And it says the whole mob rose up together against them.

Dear children, if I can just deposit one conviction in your souls this morning, you know what it would be? That there are two kingdoms in absolute and uncompromising collision. We need to sense that and to realize that. Although the conflict is often masked and subdued, that we don't see it in its true proportions, though it is always in opposition and collision.

And at the very end of the age, that mask is coming off and the sparks are going to be struck and it's going to be teeth again gnashed upon believers and great vexation and distress and anger and bitterness when the gospel shall become the controversy that it indeed is and ought to be before all men. And that's a mamby-pamby little kind of thing that is a polite appendage to our culture and takes the rough edges off and gives us a little polite Sunday experience to which all our children should be brought for Sunday school. If Satan can't destroy something by actual opposition, he'll destroy it by widespread acceptance.

Circumcision is a profound act of cutting that is mortifying, humiliating, and draws blood and was the seal of a radical covenant with God. And today, the whole world accepts it as mere hygiene. If you can't beat him, join him.

Well, he was a persecuted band who could not be joined because no man dared join himself to them. And the awe of God was so great upon the church. It wasn't a little Sunday club thing that you might consider filing your membership or that you entered by accepting Jesus.

You entered it by dying to everything. To enter this was to sign your death warrant. You were finished.

And for what reason then should you clutch your possessions, your homes? You had cast your lot with the people of God to suffer what they will suffer in anticipation of the hope and the glory of his coming. By the way, may I ask this? How many of God's people today are living in anticipation of the hope? Isn't it strange to consider that those that were 2,000 years farther removed from the hope lived in its expectation and those of us who are 2,000 years closer and even mild the platitude, that's what it's become, of the coming of the Lord, the soon coming of the Lord. He's coming soon.

It's become a platitude. Are not actually living in the hope. You say, how do you know that? Well, if we were, we would be palpitating less over our clothing, over our summer vacations, over our security, over our orange juice, over whatever it is that occupies our lives.

We'd be living in the hope. And that's another kind of living. I hope you're not getting the impression that you're being bawled out this morning.

See how much nicer we were eating bagels at the same time. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Acts 4.29, And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word

by stretching forth thine hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. I just challenge you to study the word together. From the first verses of the book of Acts and right through, just study the word together.

And I want to say this just to help you in that study. It doesn't mean what we think it means in colloquial present-day English usage. Together is more than physical proximity.

Together, in the biblical sense, is a profound state of being so unparalleled in the experience of near-earthlings that it cannot be known. And it's a condition that can only be affected by the very power and life of God and by the Spirit. That's why the room was shaken.

They had come into a profound new condition of being which is called together. First thing that God has got us to do with us is to get us together. Get it together, cats.

Get your whole life reconciled. Become the full-aught man, mind, body, soul, and spirit flowing together by the Spirit of life. End your own disharmonies and your own internal warfares and your own conflicts where flesh and spirit are in contention.

Get together. Then you get together with those whom God has joined you, being knit by the Spirit. And as you've heard last night, I think as much was said that was intimated and left between the lines as was actually spoken.

I enjoyed last night enormously. Wood to God that it could have gone on for hours and hours and there was that much to say. And everyone that got up to speak, I thought to myself, wow, if people only knew the whole story.

And our experience is yet relatively brief. The whole history of the community is three to four years old and as you heard from someone, they've been on here a year, two years, three years. But the depths of God's dealings, what it has taken.

And who's to say that we've arrived? We're not yet together in the sense that our presence will cause the room to be shaken. But we're moving that way. And I can tell you it takes something to bring people to the place where they are together.

And that something is the cross of Christ Jesus. That something is pain. That something is suffering.

That something is disappointment and the deepest kind of disillusionment. How I have disillusioned people myself. You know what the worst disillusionment is? Yourself with yourself.

Seeing things you would never have glimpsed if you had not been thrown on a daily basis into the most intense experience of life with other souls. That's why the kingdom cannot be affected on Sunday. I just want to make a flat pronouncement.

If you have an intention for the kingdom of God, you might as well forget it if you think that it's going to be established by mere Sunday fellowship. They went from house to house daily breaking bread. I can just say, and being broken.

I tell you it's the episodes over the orange juice and the little mundane trivialities that are really the sand and the grit of God that is used to make us into a people that can be together. What you did not hear last night seeing our beaming faces were the crises to which God had brought us when we were not beaming. When our chins were scraping the ground.

When we were so utterly discouraged and downcast and depressed that we couldn't even go on. And that if there was any way out we would have taken it. But where shall we go? He had the words of life.

We were trapped. He had us. And because there was no place to go and we had nothing to do but to just eat this death.

Out of ground zero, out of utter despair. If you can picture some of the same people you heard last night on their faces before God for 13 hours in a living room together. You'll have a picture of what was our final condition.

So out of it, so bereft of anything to say or do or to be clever or religious or spiritual or to play at the body of Christ that all we could do was occasionally whimper or groan. We were talked out. We were prayed out.

And then God began to do something. In a day a nation was born. The same people who dreaded to be with each other in the morning by that night did not want to leave each other.

God did it. Together is something that God does when there will be people who will yield themselves to him willing that he should break all of their earthly ties and connections bringing them out of the culture of this present world into his. When they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spoke the word of God with boldness till we all come.

Either we're going to come all or we're not going to come at all. This has been a trial of my patience because I'm constituted to be quick and impetuous and want to get to the heart of the matter. That's the way God has made me.

It was an agony last night to get two elders together with me in a room to speak to another family. Just to get us together in that room. How they traipsed their way so slowly down the aisle and stopped off to see this one or that till we all come.

But you know I recognize, except that we're all there nothing can be transacted for God. And I think the most profound revelation that God has given us in the depths of our experiences in Minnesota is this that despite our brave vocabularies despite the spiritual sophistication that many of us had in being able to articulate with conviction and sincerity the principles of the body of Christ and submission and authority and all that when it came to the actualities of our life there was a shriek and a howl that came up from the deepest places of our being that were testimonies to our individualism and our independence of spirit. Self-willed, proud hearts that would not condescend to be submitted to men.

Maybe if we could see as God sees the reason it takes us to get down the aisle to a room is for that very reason. Maybe the way we shuffle our feet and drag is an unspoken expression of a subtlety of rebellion that we have not recognized. But this kingdom is holy.

It's clean through and through and it's true. And such subtleties are dealt with and removed in the process of God's people grinding together daily. It's easy to say thy kingdom come but this is what it's going to take to effect it.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. We've had some enormous adventures testing God whether he had the power to have us as a multitude be of one heart and of one soul.

I wondered if Art was going to call me last night. Here's what I would have shared. How there came a time when a very radical suggestion was made that the Katz family should leave the community and have a sabbatical of their own in another city hundreds of miles removed from our Minnesota community at a time when families were coming to join us.

It was so absurd. It almost sounded suicidal. There's no kind of human or religious logic that could have approved it.

And I said, of course I'll not do that. Other families are coming and we should leave? I'll not do it except that God will give a witness to the entire fellowship. Guess what he did? The very next morning he gave a witness.

Everybody was in agreement to the most radical proposition that they ever had to contemplate which could have cut their own throat and could have been the death of the community. And on the basis of the unanimous witness that the whole multitude was of one mind and one soul, we left. We were gone something like nine months in Kansas City and I think it was a turning point in the salvation of my own marriage, which is to say also the salvation of our own ministry, which is to say also the salvation of our community.

It was a critical step in which we dared not miss God. And I was amazed that not only was the whole multitude of us agreed, but three beautiful prophecies came that morning. The one that I remember best is where the Lord said that if you'll submit to this pruning, I'll make you exceedingly fruitful.

It was a cutting. It was a pruning. Well, you know what happened in Kansas City? I wasn't looking for any ministry to the Jews.

We were there on a sabbatical to attend to the family, but this Jewish person needed help and this lawyer was coming to me at 7 o'clock in the morning for a little scripture help and this one needed... And I said, well, finally, I just let them all come together one night of the week and it turned out to be a kind of regular weekly Bible study. And before you know it, a Jewish work was beginning to commence and the believers were getting excited and interested and, hey, look what God is doing. So finally, by the time the nine months had gone, it reached such proportion that it was quite clear to me that this was really the purpose of God.

And then the brothers were coming to me and saying, ah, it's time for you to return. Well, I didn't have that witness. Look what God was doing.

This was God. I wasn't seeking for this Jewish work. God himself was doing it and he was unfolding a new pattern that really could be something that could go beyond Kansas City of apostolic proportion.

What am I going to do, go back to Minnesota and twiddle my thumbs in the woods? Come on, fellas. I remember four of them came down in a car driving 700 miles each way to seek to persuade me that it was time to return. They had fasted and prayed and that was their unanimous witness, but I did not share it.

And, by the way, I'm no babe in the faith and I'm a man led by the Spirit of God and God has led me in sensitive things, so exacting and you can't believe, so if I don't have any witness, you know... Well, finally it was evident that I would have to go up to Minnesota and straighten them out. LAUGHTER So I took two prominent leaders from the Kansas City Jewish-believing community, who many of you know, really tested them, the pure men of God, who agreed with me. And we flew up to Minnesota and we were going to really straighten this thing out once and for all.

I remember we assembled the entire community in the living room of the house and I recounted to them the whole story of how it is that we were brought to Kansas City by the ordination of God, what has happened in the months that we've been there, and the significance of what is happening there, the foolishness of returning now in the light of these things and what God is evidently doing, and I rested my case. Out of the mouths of the babes of the community, Jeffrey was one of them, I remember that, within the space of less than five minutes, God shot me down and let me to know that I was wrong and that they were right and that I was to return. And that ministry flows out of life and life out of relationship and that if I were to be severed any longer from that life and from those relationships, there would be no ministry and that it was time to return now.

My head fell on my chest and I said, yes, Lord, I was saved from deception. I'm not ashamed to tell you that big boys like me can be deceived. And the saving grace was the truth of God expressed through the body of believers with whom I was in real and actual commitment.

It'll save you every time. We're not playing a little game about submission and authority. It's no little system that we're practicing.

We're not giddy little kids who got a box top and sent it in for a Junior D-Man set and we're playing Body of Christ. These are vital things, life and death for ourselves and for those to whom God will bring us. And you know what we found? That when the commitment is real, when you trust God that He can bring you together and that the multitude can be of one soul and one mind, He'll do it.

The same God that sent us returned us. And so it continues to this day. Are you in that kind of commitment? Are you willing to be? Are you willing to have your life submitted to men? And maybe your own self-interests will be violated? You can't believe how independent we are because we have drunk too long and too deeply from another fountain.

I want to say that the spirit of individualism is utterly satanic. It has its origins in the pit of hell. It is an appeal to the egoistic hearts of men and wholly contrary from the spirit of the Kingdom of Heaven which is a society of men and a corporate glory.

One of the favorite phrases that I heard from a precious brother, Ern Baxter, was that God Himself is a sweet company and He wants a sweet company on earth just like Him. As submitted one to another as the Son is to the Father and the Spirit to the Son that we might be one. I am so suspicious of these hokey full gospel type shindigs and themes of unity and ecumenicism with big banners of the dove with glad-handing and back-slapping and hugging as if in so cheap and easy and glib a manner is that this kind of true togetherness is going to be established.

It's established at the cross. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own but they had all things common and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

Christian lifestyle begins with a break with the world situation and its givens. It is a choice of a path which leads the Christian out of conformity to the world. Therefore it is the choice of a path moving in a different direction from those who persist in conformity and uniformly with the patterns and structures of the world system.

What we're learning in our community situation is that the community is much more than a religious entity. We're having a new kind of economy, a new kind of political order, a new kind of a social order, a new kind of society. Our culture is being changed and our tastes and something is being shaped and formed which is neither gentile nor Jewish which somehow is removing us from the power of Sears Roebuck and Ward catalogs and the necessity to walk through shopping malls if you can get a cyclic fix for the relief that comes from being able to go out for a night on the town.

One thing we pray is that he doesn't take away our ice cream. I mean have you realized have you realized that buying is far more than the obtaining of commodities? You know that, don't you? Buying is a psychic orgy. Even window shopping will give you a fix.

When I heard out of my own ten-year-old son, can we go to a shopping mall? I began to realize that even he had been affected by the fever. He had no intention of buying. He's tight-fisted but he wanted to see the merchandise.

I'll tell you that merchandise has never been more cunningly displayed than in this generation. There's a whole psychology of display that has to do with color and arrangement. The very principle of the supermarket.

Listen, I go back almost 50 years and I can remember the little corner grocery store where all you saw were a few scroungy shelves and if you bought a quarter pound of butter he cut it out of a tub and dipped the milk out of a container. Contrast that with our present supermarkets in all of their splendor cunningly designed by artful men who know the valences of color and sound and display. And you see merchandise stacked up on shelves in great volume.

It has an overwhelming capacity to affect your soul and to influence your choices. How many of us are buying more than we need? And how many of the things that used to be called luxuries have now become needs? Why there are men right now breaking their brains. The most powerful of human personalities the most prepared and trained whose one function it is is to find new ways to tempt and tantalize and to seduce people into merchandise.

You know that there's only one reference in all the scriptures to hallelujah being cried out in heaven? You know when it comes? When Babylon is destroyed in a day. When those who pander after delicious merchandise cry because their city has gone up in smoke and it's merchandised with it. That's delicious from heaven hallelujah.

What it needs to elicit from us now is hallelujah. And not to wait for that final day of the Lord but let it be a day of the Lord now for us. How would you like to see your merchandise sold in smoke? And your

wardrobe? And your high fives? And your books? I'll tell you I see libraries of individual saints that deserve to be public libraries.

The reference volumes and thousands of dollars when different displays of books of which I myself am not altogether innocent. It's amazing how that stuff accumulates. And almost invariably when I set up a few days in this trip the shock and the contrast of coming back from Holland and England where everything is reduced one third in scale the size of the houses the amount of food in the portions and then being thrust into this sprawling American lifestyle with the square footage and the food and the luxury and the comfort and the luxury is really an adjustment.

But in every house that I stayed with the exception of perhaps one or two when it came time to hang up my one or two things in the closet I could not find room. It took Herculean effort to push back the overflow of their garments in the guest room in order to get up my couple of things when I hung it. Let's face it guys our culture has had more to do with defining our lifestyle than the kingdom of heaven.

The most profound experience that I had in Holland I have to share it with you now and I've shared it individually was an overnight visit to a community of believers founded and built around the men who at one time had been one of the impressive evangelical roost kids of Holland who was going places and God brought him down into the dust of death and shattered everything. It moved him to the place of obscurity and on a two acre parcel of ground there are 65 souls living. Two acres.

You would call that a ghetto congestion. And I remember walking into the building and when I saw all of the bodies immediately I sensed the discomfort of crowds. But after I sat down for a couple of minutes I began to realize that it was only an instinctive reflex action but that I was not experiencing that discomfort longer but I was experiencing conversely a profound peace out of proportion with the physical number of bodies present.

There was a marvelous peace that prevailed in that place. And this brother was saying to me you see that one art? And I saw a woman looking perfectly whole knitting and joyous and people kissing each other and hugging and talking and chatting in just the most wonderful warmth of the heavenly environment. He said he was a hopeless schizophrenic.

This one attempted suicide last week in a mental institution and she came to us. This one was a hopeless drug addict. This one is a notorious criminal who cannot get back into his own country.

You know what I saw? The scum and the off-scourings of society. I saw the rejects and the neverses. By the way, if you don't know what the word neverses means that's what it means.

The helpless, the awkward, the ungainly for whom the world is not worthy. Who are the victims of a world whose system is satanic and whose values run counter to the organic life for which God has created us. I want to tell you that God has made us to dwell in a kingdom of heaven.

Our minds and our nervous systems and our bodies are made for a certain quality of living that is true and unsane and joyous and fervently loving. And when we're submitted into conditions of unreality you know what happens? We crack up. The marvel is not that our mental institutions are jammed with victims.

The marvel is that there are countless millions walking this street that presume to have some semblance of sanity whose life is really insane and unreal. What God wants is for there to be islands of sanity and reality and truth and love that the distressed and the soul-sick and the hopeless can see and enter on the

basis of repentance. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

See? Here it is. Repent, give up your filthy lifestyle and your mucking about and your vicious, egoistic pursuit and the accumulation of your merchandise and your ego trips and your competition and enter this kingdom. There'll be no cry for repentance until there's a kingdom at hand as an alternative to which men can come.

So here I am in Holland seeing this precious environment. About 10 o'clock that night they had crosses. Precious how they served each other.

Remarkable. The love and the way they served each other. You know it's the little things that are everything? Whether you eat or you drink, do it as unto the Lord.

How many of us serve each other like that as if it's unto the Lord? I'll tell you that these little graces change the whole complexion of all of life. But again, we're schooled by our society to not slap down the ketchup bottle in the milk container and slide it across the counter, find yourself a fork feeding your face. Yeah, but eating is more than feeding your face and your gut.

Eating is more than a gastronomic activity. Eating is an art and a grace and a breaking of bread and a communion. I'm spoiled because I've eaten at Darmstadt, Germany with the Sisters of Mary and they set a table for me folks.

It would not have shamed the Lord himself if he sat there. They took blue crepe paper and they made a star service on the entire table. And I've never seen silverware more green in all my life.

Nothing more white. Dishes more bright. And the whole thing set in such architectural splendor in such symmetry that you wince even to see food come on the place and spoil it.

Kingdom of God is how you keep your bathroom. And what your linen closet looks like. And another German sellship that invited me in for a meal in Jerusalem in the old city living in the basement of the Redeemer Lutheran Church.

And I came in all hot and sweaty from the bus and I said, do you have a towel? She said, sure. And she opened the linen closet and there I was absolutely transfixed and speechless. I was more ministered to in that moment looking at the linen closet than any dozens of times sitting in churches at services and listening to sermons.

It was a spiritual experience to look at the linen closet. I mean, these were towels that were so bright and so precisely folded and stacked in such symmetrical order that it took your breath away. It was the suggestion of another kind of culture and another kingdom.

And as my eye went from that linen closet to the table, to the room, to the furnishings, and to the people themselves, it was all the same. They were not German so much as that they were the representatives of another culture that is transcendent and heavenly. Thy kingdom come is going to take some elbow grease and application.

I remember visiting the home where the people had a love for the Jewish people. I mean, a really sincere concern and pray and occasion to have Jewish visitors and I had to use their bathroom. I almost prayed after using their bathroom that Jewish people would not come into their house because I know Jewish

people.

These Jewish housewives boast about whose floor you can eat from. And if they were to come into a sloppy and slovenly place and see the caked crust in the bathroom, whatever you said to them in the living room will be unknown right there. We've got to do something more than say.

We've got to be the incarnational expression of another kingdom. The words made fresh and dwelling among them. Thy kingdom come.

When he showed me these broken people, thought this one was a schizophrenic, this one's this, this one's that, I couldn't get over their sanity, their wholeness. When they had that little Bible study at the end of the evening, you know they've been two years in the letters to the Corinthians? Sometimes they don't get beyond a word. They're marched by another beast.

They're living by faith and they're being sustained somehow. They will not take any aid from just society. And they could qualify because they're rendering a social service.

And these European countries are very generous in terms of underwriting social services. They will not take anything from the world. Their holy chastity upon God.

This man took me up later to see what he says. First of all, his own children are living in the dormitory with other kids. They have not an independent little home of their own.

He showed me his room. It was large enough only to accommodate his bed and his wife and himself and a chest of drawers and a chair. That was it.

They're as happy as lark. They're having a joy that's unspeakable. They're the fathers and mothers of a community.

And when he began to say the word that night, I couldn't understand it being in Dutch. I never saw such attentiveness to the word of God as these former inmates of prisons and mental institutions were given. They hung on the word as if it was very long.

And the thing that blew my mind was when it was time to go to bed and they all got up and left. But not a soul left before they kissed each other. And I have never seen holy chastity as God had meant.

I was sad in the heart. How we have leaned over backwards to avoid any kind of intimacy and physical expression and I think we've made a mistake. Where's our confidence in God? And haven't we yet come to a sufficient maturity and purity that we can again embrace the saints and give a holy kiss and open the door that will loose our hearts and our spirits and our minds and our souls to be made whole and to be freed from our insecurities and our fears and our hangups? I'll tell you that holy kiss did more therapy for those broken victims than shock treatment, drugs, medications and even Christian therapy and counseling.

Notice what he told me? He's a brilliant man. He said, I don't counsel any of them. Only the very minimum of actual counsel we get out of the way and we let go.

He said, all we do is provide an atmosphere of love and acceptance and we let the spirit of God directly heal these people. I'll never forget the experience. And I'm anxious to get back home and start kissing.

It's another culture. The path of obedience to Christ brings a break in the human situation made possible by the inclusion of the gospel as the new factor which breaks the dominance of the old factors of the world. The gospel signals the end of the unconfessed dominion of principalities and powers of the world over people's lives.

All this has been brought about by the inbreaking of the kingdom. Only our daily decisions and choices can show the reality of our relationship with Jesus Christ. The kingdom is a daily thing.

It went from house to house daily breaking bread. It's a moment by moment thing. It's how you set the table.

It's how you greet the saints. It's what you do with your arms. The proclamation of the New Testament is the gospel of the kingdom.

A gospel of a new order, a new creation, a new world, a new age. The gospel presented in the New Testament is a scandal to the values and standards of the world. The absolute authority and dominion of the destructive forces and structures of the world has been ended by the inauguration of a whole new order in human affairs called the kingdom of God.

I didn't say it before, I want to say it again, that there's a difference between the gospel and the gospel of the kingdom. You never see the word gospel standing nakedly by itself in the scriptures. John the Baptist came preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus, from the beginning of his ministry, preached the gospel of the kingdom. And the apostle Paul, with the last breath that was in him in the final stage of his life in Rome, proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God to all who came unto him.

There's a difference between the gospel of narrow salvation and personal self-interest and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. That gospel is a scandal. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is a contradiction to the world in every point and every particular.

And it will bring the reproach and the persecution of the world upon those who proclaim it and demonstrate it. Talk of pragmatism, respectability, and methodologies dominates the conversations of contemporary religions. But the New Testament speaks of the abandonment, insecurity, persecution, and exile that come from seeking first the kingdom.

How many of you know the history of the Mennonites and the Hutterites and all of the Anabaptist troops who were drowned by the thousands and burned at the stake and roasted on the spit and were allowed to rot in dungeons? You know why? They returned to the kingdom. And you know who killed them? Catholics and Protestants. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

They will kill you and claim they are doing God a service. It is a picture of persecution that comes not from the world so much as it comes from religionists for whom you have gone too far and lost the boat. The New Testament speaks of the abandonment, insecurity, persecution, and exile that come from seeking first the kingdom.

A church of comfort, property, privilege, and position stands in sharp contrast with the biblical description of the people of God as aliens, exiles, sojourners, strangers, and pilgrims. So I've got a few things to say. I had a conversation last night with a young brother outside sitting on the steps.

He's been listening to a lot of tapes on the faith message. What do you think about the faith message, I guess it's good I said, but the kind of faith that really excites me is not the kind that believes the Cadillacs, but it's the faith that is written of the roll call of the giants of faith of whom the world was not worthy, all of whom died not having seen, who saw themselves as exiles and sojourners and strangers looking for a city not made by him. It says that they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers, not nearly acknowledged it.

Let me ask you the question this morning. How much are you a pilgrim in a sense? How much are you ill at ease in the culture of this present world? How much do you shake in your business world or your professional world or in the neighborhood? How much do you feel out of joint and out of place and out of time? Where do you feel more comfortable? With the saints or in the world? You don't have a sense of freakiness and strangeness about your life. There's something wrong with your values.

I'm getting increasingly freakier, becoming an embarrassment. But I'll tell you what it's like. It's a freaky man walking into the office of the chairman of the Department of Philosophy at a college in New York and stunning him right out of his wrist.

The word of God so powerful and sharp and clear that in a few massive strokes that man is taken right out of his thin striped suit and left sitting in his DVD naked and revealed once and for all. He's had a confrontation with a freak. And this is a man who is privy to the religious counsels of Christendom because he's sick in the midst of ecumenical activity with all kinds of Christian bodies and archbishops and clerics and all of the whole panoply of the religious world in the conferences of Christians and Jews.

And the first thing I had to say to him was, look here, buddy, don't equate me with them. I'm not in that flow at all. I leap over that and go back to something much older and earlier and original that had to do with Paul and the fathers before him.

I'm not in this murky ecumenical business. And a man who thought that he came to exchange pleasantries about our differing religious perspectives found himself utterly devastated and confronted by God in a way for which he shall be held eternally responsible. I heard myself saying to this man with such authority, former high school dropout, saying to the chairman of the department of philosophy, you have no fundamental respect for truth.

A child would know that except that there's a foundation of truth, whatever you shall build after that, whatever that superstructure is, shall lean and be out of filter and subsequently come down the tenet stairs. Talking to a man with a wall loaded with honorary degrees and certificates and diplomas as if he were a little child, that could be the confrontation always between those who are strangers and pilgrims and forgers, who march by another gate and they confront anyone in this world because their reality is other. Their reality is based in the world and the call of God to become citizens of another kingdom.

I'm so fond of saying now that when the world encounters us on a bus, a train, a plane, an airport, a waiting room, wherever, they should rub their chins after we leave and scratch their heads and wonder, was that a man or an angel? On those same days in New York on a subway train, what a picture of hopelessness in this world, going into these exhaust tunnels, bodies jammed together like sardines, being curdled, they know not where and for what, lives tragically misspent and wasted, trying to take a few pictures to show the folks back home what life in New York is like because I think God is calling us to have a greater involvement in His purposes here. The trains are loaded with graffiti and all kinds of filthy inscriptions and writings and as I was trying to take a picture, a kid with his anthropology books under his

arm said, hey mister, what are you doing? I said, I'm taking the pictures of natives to send the folks back home. I said, I might even send a picture to Samoa, show the folks in Samoa how they live in New York.

You know, the classic in anthropology is coming of age in Samoa, so the kid shuffled. We had a few words and I had to get out at the next stop and just as the doors opened and about to leave, I found myself turning and I said to him, I said, by the way, there's only one culture that's worth any consideration at all. Oh, he said, what's that? I said, it's the culture of the kingdom of God.

And he walked out and the doors closed and the train went on into the tunnel. It doesn't take much if you're the representative of another kingdom. Oh, children.

Yeah, hallelujah. The Bible sees change as coming about primarily through the presence of the people of God in history. A city on a hill, a demonstration of what human life can be in the love and the power of Christ.

I think the best thing and the favorite thing I've ever heard from Paul is when he said one day as we were running along and he had his coffee cup in his hand, he said, you know what the gospel is all about? I said, what? He said, it's just to teach men how to live. And something went, That's great. That's what the gospel is all about.

To teach men how to live. And that's what gospel people are all about. To teach the world that is dying in their distorted and perverse values what free living is.

A demonstration of what human life can be in the love and the power of Christ. That's what you saw here last night at the same. People learning what life can be.

If they let go of their security, their material possessions, their love of privacy, wanting to keep themselves concealed and hidden, clutching the things that have been dear to them, and let go and let God thoroughly work in these things. That nitty-grittiness of being thrown together with the saints of God daily will be able to show a world what human life can be. The new community of God's people exists as an alien force in relation to the old order and is intended to be an outcropping of the new order, a presentation to the world and to the very powers of the world of the possibilities of a new order that has come and that has already taken root in the life of the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now listen guys, we have to grow up. The resurrection is not given to us simply as a doctrine in which to believe. It is our life for we of all people are most to be saved.

We may have been able to conduct Sunday Christianity on the basis of our natural endowments and sincerity and well-meaning religious intentions, but we cannot conduct the kingdom on that basis. What you saw last night is the result of eternal consequence in two hours than many Christians have experienced in a lifetime of Sunday, one two-hour session, going from house to house daily. I think the single greatest reason why we have not had a visible kingdom on the earth has been that there is not a people who have been willing to divest themselves of their own meager life to trust Him for His and to move and live and have their being in Him and test the reality of the resurrection in their own life and their relationships together on a daily basis.

It's everything that God was saying yesterday in the opening chapter of the book of Acts. Is it now time for you to receive a kingdom? Listen, cool it. It's not that kingdom at all that God is even interested in.

But you shall receive power that you may be witnesses unto me and to be a familiar to the utmost corners of the earth. That's what it's all about. You shall receive power.

You're not going to be able to do this on your own. This is not by your amiability or your temperament or your nice guymism. That will be shattered within a matter of days.

This is on the basis of my life. If you'll come together, I'll fill you with my life. I'll send down my glorified spirit that has been tempted through suffering and death and now has the right and the privilege to be ascended on high at the throne of my father David.

And I'll send down that spirit that you might be able to be a kingdom unto me, a witness unto me, and show people who are dying how to live. A new order, a presentation to the world of the possibilities that have come and taken root in the life of the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The powerful biblical metaphor that compares the church's life to that of a physical body is now almost completely foreign to most congregations, which are little more than voluntary associations of autonomous individuals.

Whew! He's right. Comparing God's people to a body is a foreign identification for most Christians, the body of Christ, who are a voluntary association of autonomous individuals. You have a totally different perspective when you're a minister and you look down from platforms, from church to church, congregation to congregation, than you have sitting in them.

You know what you see? You see little isolated ions. You see little particular communities of self-interest, but you don't see a body. They're autonomous, independent entities unto themselves.

They are not that joined corporate expression animated by his life or his purposes. You know what it takes to go from the individual autonomous life to that corporateness which reveals the glory of God? Something has to go, a crack, snap, and pop, in this deep sea of individuality and self-worth, that we might flow together as a people before God, not just giving up our arms due to the reluctance of experience, setting the table for each other as if it were for the very Lord himself. You know how that Dutch fella took eight? I had two meals with them and their meal is bread.

In the morning it was bread and jam or bread and butter or bread and a thin slice of cheese and cheese. When they came to lunch, which I thought was really going to be the meal of the day, it was bread again. Only they substituted thin slices of bologna for what was in cheese.

And that's it. I never saw people live more simply. I even wonder whether three meals a day was ever written in heaven, plus the after-meeting snack.

I know I'm skating on thin ice. I'll probably cancel my ice cream for tonight. To begin by speaking of, it wouldn't be nice to have bagels for dinner.

I can go on, but I think that we have gotten this point. I don't think it's too much of a joke to say that maybe we ought to examine some of the unquestioned predicates of our life, like three meals a day, like doing business as usual, like having our wardrobe stuffed with clothing, like the time and the attention that we give to awkward things and to obscene, like the superficiality that characterizes our congregations where we are the economic singularity. In a word, what we need to do is to submit the whole of our present life to the light of God, with the cry, Thy kingdom come, willing that he should severely, if he will, cut away that which is not compatible with his kingdom, that there might be established in the corporate-ness of God's

people a distinct lifestyle whose origin is unmistakable.

It's heaven. The description that R.T.B. gave last night of these men in Illinois, these wealthy, charismatic farmers, beautiful fellowships, and just in the space of two days we found these men at the very end, broken, whimpering on the floor. You can't believe what God was beginning to suggest to them.

And we came without any design. Men who are actually in competition with each other, of who has got the most recent, brand-new banking combines and harvesters, which, by the way, now cost about \$45,000 apiece. The first thing that these brothers will do when you visit their homes is to show you their machinery.

Who gets the seed in the ground first? Whose rose is greater? Whose harvest is more abundant? Who's made the killing in the market this year? Who's able to buy himself a new car? Well, we began to suggest to them that they need to submit not only their religious life, but the totality of their life to the kingdom. We watched grown men cry. But we've got to have our own machinery, because it's only a short season, and if you don't get your harvest in, your crops can be ruined.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things else will be evident to you. You know, guys, the gospel is a radical premise. And I just suggested, not being a farmer, who knows that the God will, through you, sustain the harvesting season, that you might bring in all of your crops together and not be cutting your own throat and competing with your own brothers and be loading upon yourself such indebtedness because each one has to have his own equipment.

Who knows if God will not meet you in a kingdom way and stretch the harvest season. We feel ourselves as a community to be on the threshold of a new dimension in time and faith relationship. God is stretching things and opening up a new order.

One would have thought that if you're away from the community for two months that that could be injurious or perhaps fatal. Nothing like that. One would have thought that your family would suffer if you're a long absence.

We find our families flourishing. We're entering into a new kind of thing where you don't compensate for your absences necessarily by taking your kids fishing. That there's something that is transacted in the heavenly where God himself ministers directly to the needs of a family and a community when you are in the place of obedience and faith relationship.

That somehow we're not to measure as the world measures. Not to think as the world thinks. Not to make their values our values.

But we're to enter into a new realm of seeing and believing and acting which is heavenly. It will extend your harvest season. It will give you new ways to do new things.

New enablement. New provisions. You really have your citizenship.

In heaven. Do you believe that? And would you be willing to perish if it's not true? Yea, though he slay me. Yes, like that thing.

Yes, if my harvest doesn't come in and my crops are ruined and I can't make my payment and I have to foreclose my property I'm still willing to seek to be a farmer in the kingdom manner than in the American

cultural way. You know what God told these farmers? That American agriculture is predicated upon gambling. You see a fancy word for it? Yes, it is.

Speculation. What will the price be of the thing that they're planting now when the time comes to bring their crops? And how long can they keep their crop in storage waiting for the optimum market price? It's not based on need. It's based on profit.

It's not based on the kingdom. It's based on speculation for the hope of greater gain. You know why that elevator crane collapsed and failed though it was the business of an elder of a Presbyterian church? And he had me for dinner and he was trying to pull out a cart and explain to me what went wrong? I said, here's where you went wrong.

Why did you enter that business for the hope of greater gain? Because that's where you went wrong. That is not a kingdom motive. Because we're hearing a gospel like that today.

You can even measure your spirituality by your affluence. But it is not the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Your children were required to march by another group.

You have another purpose. You have other values. They're established in heaven.

And if you seek it first, all things will be evident. Thy kingdom come is the cry of God now as it was at the beginning of the earth. There'll be no salvation for the despair in you until there's a kingdom of heaven which is at hand.

Willing to give yourself to that in Raleigh and in Durham and Paris and the places where you enter? Willing to go from Sunday Christianity punctuated by the Middle East Bible studies into a kind of gritty, daily relationship with God's speakers with everything he's up for grabs, he doesn't want? Willing to open yourself to the intrusion of otherwise hungers? Willing to have your privacy violated? Willing to have your secret phantom revealed? Willing to be found out and revealed for your weaknesses and your defects? Willing to suffer the humiliation of such revelations that God can purge you and establish you in his love together? Whom is Satan with who assembles together? Great grace is upon them all. With power do they customize the revelations of Jesus Christ. Those that believe love together.

Hallelujah. Let's pray thy kingdom come in North Carolina.

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