

The Radical Kingdom - Part 1

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon calls for a radical reawakening of the Church's understanding of its role in manifesting God's kingdom in a world that is indifferent to His presence.

Duration: 1:21:17

Scripture: Psalm 119:1, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 2:2, Matthew 5:39, Acts 17:31

Topics: "Kingdom Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing two contrasting worldviews: one that is fear-centric and believes in the presence of God, and another that is secular and believes in a random world without God. The speaker argues that the church has lost sight of its mission to fulfill the dominion mandate and bring the knowledge of God to the nations. This lack of understanding has resulted in lackluster services and a failure to fully engage in the work of the church. The speaker also criticizes the escapist mentality of many Christians who are focused on being raptured and avoiding suffering, rather than embracing their role in the world.

Transcript

There's a remarkable indifference in the Earth to the fact that this planet was visited by God. I don't know what it takes. I think we just have to recognize that we're in a kind of a sleepwalk, a stupor.

That the God of this world has blinded the mind, not only those who do not believe, but those who only nominally believe. And that the impact or the fact, the significance that this planet was visited by very God has not penetrated us to the depths of our understanding. I very much agree with the brother who said, we're not yet ready for the second coming of the Lord, because we have not yet fully appropriated the meaning of his first coming.

There's not a sufficient sense of astonishment, and no one is really raising the electric question of why it is that God would choose in a point of time to visit the Earth, and for what purposes did he come, and what was affected by his coming, and what is the significance to us who remain. It's more than just a matter of historical curiosity or interest. It's amazing in the same sense as I'm speaking now, this cosmic impersonalism of a world without God, or even if it's a world with God, what has he done but set it in motion and abandoned it to men.

A kind of mechanistic universe that prevails and perpetuates itself, in which God does not have to be too seriously considered. Therefore it's not at all surprising that in the vital interest that affects the lives of men and of nations, God is not invoked, nor is he sought. It's just remarkable to pick up a newspaper, or a newsweek, or time, and to see that the media is filled with the counsels of men about the issues of war and peace, and what ought to be done, and what constitutes wisdom, but never once is there any mention or reference to the fact that there's a God who can be considered, whose counsel can be sought, whose will can be obtained, or who was here at one time, and has spoken, and has left us a body of statements that he intends to prevail in terms of the conduct of nations and of men.

There's a remarkable indifference toward God that amounts to a rejection, and I hold the Church responsible for allowing such views as these to prevail, because when it comes to the effectual circumstances of our own lives, though we believe, the way that we conduct our lives and make our own decisions is virtually in keeping with exactly the way that the world makes theirs. God is not radically taken into our own consideration, and we make our decision, whether it's going to a college, or getting married, or establishing a business, or any such thing, on the same basis of appeal to reason, to logic, to circumstance, to convenience, to advantage, as by which the world makes its reckonings. The world is indifferent to God, because we who believe have not radically taken God into our consideration.

The conditions have become such that any thought of bringing God into the counsels of men is considered a violation, and it's ironic that it's the world who raises the issue of the separation of Church and State, as if somehow the State needs to be protected against the Church, that somehow the Church is not to have any voice, not to stick its nose in, not to sound itself, not to express itself, not to bring the counsels of God into the secular affairs of men. This would violate the separation of Church and State, altogether forgetting that the principle, when it was first invoked, was invoked to protect not the State, but the Church, that God never intended that there be the distinctions of sacred and secular, which prevail today, and constitutes the comfortable categories, not only of the world, but of the Church itself. In my opinion, God intended for the penetration of the secular by the sacred, and the Church is the agency and the instrument by which the divine is to come into the ordinary, and eternity is to come into time.

These things have been lost to us in exactly the same proportion as the kingdom of God has been lost to us, because, for very fact, this is the kingdom of God. This penetration of the world is a kingdom come. But in keeping with the kind of impersonalism that prevails, and God only as a Sunday object, the phrase, the kingdom, has lost its currency, or has never been known.

It's a kind of airy phrase that refers in some vague way to some distant thing that perhaps is our experience after we die. The Church has little expectancy for a kingdom come in earth as it is in heaven. The remarkable thing is that the Church has allowed the world to define it, to define its function, to define its role, to define its activity.

I'm reminded of the condition of Israel in its apostasy, and the people love to have it so. As I go on, I think you'll recognize that the alternative to what is prevailing, namely a Church that is kingdom-oriented, an active, victorious, and triumphant Church, requires from its members challenging things in the pursuit of which the consequence is going to be, at the least, reproach and persecution, and at the uttermost, martyrdom. I pray that you'll stay for all three speakings, because I want to conclude with the theme of martyrdom, not as some kind of rare experience for the very few, because they were not wise enough to avoid the consequence, but as the normative logic and result of the faith as it is truly pursued in a world that is not only indifferent, but hostile against it.

The fact that we do not expect martyrdom, and that we are not preparing for it, is another statement exactly in keeping to what statements I've already made, that the Church is living beneath God's kingdom intentions. We do not share the apostolic view of the Church Fathers. We do not share the apostolic view of the radical Anabaptists of the 16th century, who were burnt at the stake, tortured in dungeons, bound back to back, because they saw as the context of the drama in which their own Christian life was set, two kingdoms in inextricable conflict and clash, a kingdom of darkness and a kingdom of light.

They had, as it were, a kingdom view, and they lived out of that kind of seeing, and therefore they had a radical impact in the communities in which they were, and the result was persecution. Not so much from the world or from the state, as from the prevailing religious bodies, who saw their kind of Christianity as threatening and intimidating, and going beyond the safe prescriptions that they wanted to define Christianity as. All these things have relegated the Church to a nominal and secondary place, a kind of an institutional adjunct to society.

The Church has been effectually domesticated, made tame. Its role has been defined by the world. It has given us the hour in which we can safely conduct our services, without interrupting the football schedules or the golf course, and so long as we adhere to a schedule of services and see the faith as a Sunday continuum, a succession of services, and that the Church keeps its nose out of the world's business and recognizes and stays within the confines that have been established for it, we will be allowed our tax-deductible advantages and the like.

The adherents of the Church constitute in the world's sight a kind of fraternal order, or a society sharing a quaint vocabulary and a hymnology whose presence can be tolerated, so long as it does not interfere in the things of the world that really count. Phew! I mean, I'm staggered even as I'm reviewing these things myself. And you'll hear from me probably tomorrow, but I just feel like saying it now.

Except that the Church introduced truth and righteousness into the earth, there is no means by which these things can be admitted. Do you realize that? Righteousness and truth are distinctives of the Church alone. Only the Church has the capacity to understand the meaning of these words as they are spirit words given from heaven and are understood not by reference to the dictionary, but in the living experience of the saints, whose God would have righteousness to dwell in the earth.

And except that the Church makes truth and righteousness visible through its conduct and through its presence, there is no way for the world to understand what these words mean. The Church itself lives as the world, that is to say, as if God does not really exist, and that no practical import into their daily lives is expected by virtue of their believing. I know that that's not true for most of you, but I'm making a statement about the Church at large, because your heart needs to break, and you need to see and understand the condition of the Church as God himself sees it.

What am I saying here? That those who bear the name of Christ themselves do not believe that there's going to be an existential consequence for their life by virtue of their believing. In other words, they expect to have cancer, they expect nervous breakdowns, colds, flus, divorces, and all the kind of malady and complaint and misfortune that besets anyone in the world. The fact that they believe does not effectually touch the practicalities of their life.

And therefore we confirm the world in an attitude toward the Church which is antiseptic and relegates the Church of no consequence because they see that it has no visible consequence for those who profess the belief. Instead of seeing transcendent men and women who are living above disease and above calamity

and above disaster, they see them beset by the same kinds of misfortune as those who make no profession to believing. Such things ought not to be.

And the reason that they prevail is because the Church is not the Church until it recognizes its kingdom mandate. It always will live beneath the intent of God in the transcendent and powerful place that God intended for it until it lifts its eyes to understand its kingdom call. Its life is more than a succession of Sundays.

Our salvation is intended to procure something in this earth. We're intended to affect nations and societies. We are a light unto the world.

We're not just a fraternal society that has its own peculiar vocabulary and hymnology. As I said before, the decision-making of most Christians is like the world, predicated upon secular premises, reason, logic, need, self-interest, probability. It is not assumed that God has a will in such matters, that it can be discovered and obeyed, or that it is indeed His normative intention for those who call upon His name.

And so long as we believe that... See, what we believe is not what we say we believe. What we believe is what we demonstrate in the actuality of our life. And so long as that actuality does not demonstrate a God whose will can be revealed and obeyed, then the world has no obligation to consider Jesus as both God and Lord, or King.

So long as they see us predicating our lives and making our decisions on secular premises and not the consultation of God's will in a faith that believes they can be revealed by the Spirit because we have the intent of obeying it, the world is under no obligation to take the Church seriously. And as we understand clearly, except that He's the Lord of everything, He's the Lord of nothing. So long as that we have a mentality that divides the great questions and the small and consults for the will of God in what we consider the great questions and allows ourselves the prerogative of making our decisions in what we consider the things that are small, we ourselves are suffering from an inadequate view of the King and the Kingdom.

For in the Kingdom of God, there is no decision that is small. There is no issue that is little. He's totally the Lord, or He's not Lord at all, and that's something that has got to be more than just a piece of our doctrine.

It's got to be demonstrated in the actuality and the totality of all of our living. Another demerit of the Church that reveals to the world that there is no such thing as a King or a Kingdom is our attitude toward sickness, toward accident, and toward death as being wholly arbitrary. It just happens.

It's the way the cookie crumbles, or it's natural, or it's a disease, or I caught it. The Church has little sense of divine causation, little awareness of cause and effect, of things that come from God as chastisement, as judgment, or for the various reasons in which God will allow things to happen. And so we dismiss our things as the world dismisses it, and therefore we pair to the same remedies, whether it's aspirins or doctors, without asking why it is that we're suffering an economic setback, or a calamity in marriage, or a failure in health, or the various other things by which God is seeking to probe and to touch us.

We do not have a Kingdom view that sees the hand of God in our circumstances, and therefore the world is not obliged to see the hand of God in theirs. Another aspect of this cosmic impersonalism, of not bringing God vitally into the world which he created, is a lack of awareness of the invisible spirit world, which is greatly dismissed, and is outside the consciousness of most Christians. There is no practical

knowledge of the wiles of the enemy who manipulates his victims at will.

The prevalence of Halloween, or jokes about the devil, or pictures of him in magazines with the tail and a three-pronged trident, and all of these kinds of cultural things show the complete dismissal of one of the most awesome facts that constitutes the reality of the universe, namely the existence of a whole spirit world of principalities and powers and rulers of darkness that affect the conduct of nations and men. And because the church has not sufficiently reckoned on that, does not sufficiently believe it, and does not walk and live as if it believes it, the world has not been required either to take it seriously into its consideration. And therefore Satan is having an unparalleled opportunity to jerk, to intimidate, to threaten, and to affect the conduct of nations without the slightest awareness that he is the source behind the evil that prevails in the world in a church that is too anemic even to indicate the source, let alone to bring the remedy.

They have not understood the great conflict between light and darkness that underlines all reality, both in history, the things of the past, and of the future. This is a kingdom consciousness that needs to be restored. As a matter of fact, the church is devoid of any sense of the past.

It does not have in its consciousness a sense of the history of the church in the vital way that it should. It does not have a living sense of continuum, of its antecedent conditions that go all the way back to the apostolic church and come up into modern times. And because we are cut off from the vital knowledge of the past, it's not an accident to find that we have no real regard for the future either.

We're lacking a sense of the things that are imminent and are about to take place. We're without a past, and we're without a future, and therefore our present is emasculated. We have no sense of real, eternal expectation.

And one of the earliest sources of pain for me, as a Jewish believer, was to hear as a cliché references by Christians to the Lord's soon coming. I could hear those statements, and I was never once persuaded. That is to say, people speak it as a trite cliché, as a conventional kind of burp.

But there's no real conviction, or passionate or palpitating expectation of the soon coming of the Lord. This is as much lost to our living consciousness as any regard to the past, and therefore we do not see ourselves as the successors or the inheritors of those who constitute around us, even tonight, the cloud of invisible witnesses. We are cut off from both the past and the future, because both these things are elements in a true kingdom view.

And as we have no sense of the past and no sense of the future, so also do we lack a sense of the glory of God. You can quiz any number of Christians for a definition of that word glory, and they'll be hard-pressed to give you an answer. And in a certain sense I sympathize, because it's not a word that lends itself to an easy definition.

But this much is true. There's not a jealousy for the glory of God. There's not an anticipation of the glory of God.

There's not an expectation that there's a glory to be experienced or to be sought. We have so long been accustomed to living outside the glory of God as something visible or felt or experienced, that we measure our meanings by another criteria altogether. Whether they were good, whether we enjoyed them, whether it was well attended, whether the offerings were successful.

When the only true kingdom measure of the success of anything is how it pertains to the glory of God. I'm mentioning all of the factors that are absent from the consciousness of the Church to the same degree as is the absence of the kingdom. And therefore it's no accident that as the sense of God's glory is absent, so also is any reference to suffering.

Not only is suffering absent, it is avoided and even despised. And even theologies and doctrines have grown up in modern times that have relegated suffering or any anticipation of suffering as somehow being outside the faith and needless in the experience of most Christians. But I want to go on record tonight as saying that to the degree to which we shun a necessary suffering in the pursuit of apostolic faith, to that same degree will we also miss his glory.

There's a place for suffering, and as I intend to show tomorrow in conclusion, it is a central place and it has everything to do with the cross which has equally been lost to our consciousness. I am hard pressed as I stand here tonight to remember when I have heard a message on the cross preached last. The cross is no longer in vogue.

I don't know that it ever was in. And yet when you read the apostolic literature, when you read the literature of the Anabaptists or any revival, restoration of true kingdom church reality, you see the centrality of the cross, the expectancy of suffering and the jealousy for the glory of God as being central to the consciousness of the saints of that generation. They need to be restored to our own.

The glory is absent, the suffering is absent, hope is absent. Dynamic faith is absent. Faith has become somehow a formula, a gear lamp which we rub to obtain Cadillacs or other things that pertain to our personal benefit.

But faith in the sense that it was apostolically understood as a mode of life, a radical cleaving to God, an utter trust, a dynamic. To that sense, faith is lost, hope is lost and love is lost or never been known in the sense of being self-sacrificing, utterly giving, unconditional. And so also in this catalogue of things lost is the knowledge of the resurrection life.

The doctrine remains, but the knowledge of the life has been lost or has never been known. And one of my prayers for this very seminar is that we do not only hear speaking on these things, but you'll see the very demonstration of them. Because it's very clear to me, as I sense what God wants to set before you in the short space that we have together, that the only way it can conceivably be done is by the resurrection life of Him Himself, by the wisdom that adheres in that life, by the dynamic and the power of that life.

We have really forfeited the doctrine of the resurrection except that we are actually living in it. And it's interesting that one of the central things for which the Anabaptists, the radical reform wing of the Protestant Reformation was persecuted, was their belief in the incarnate life of Christ and the body of Christ. That they should say with Paul, for us to live is Christ.

This was considered scandalous in the ears of Catholics and Lutherans who burned them at the stake and were all the more persuaded that these heretics must be of the devil because they had the joy and the glory of God even in the moments of their martyrdom. They showed forth such a demonstration of the life of God which was so unknown by conventional religionists of their generation that the very demonstration of that life was proof to those who persecuted and killed them that they were in heresy. Or else they would have been just as gray, just as lackluster, just as unbelieving, just as cynical, just as full of self-apology as those who persecuted them.

The prevailing mentality of the reformed church, whether it was Lutheran, Zwingli, Calvinistic or whatever in the generation that persecuted these radicals was that I'm only a sinner saved by grace. God knows I'm only human. There was no expectation for perfection.

There was no expectation to obtain Christ-likeness or the character of God or Lamb-likeness. And those who made such profession and believed that there was a way that it could be obtained by union with Him in baptism were considered so heretical as to be destroyed. And I have an anticipation in my own spirit that we're going to see that same drama enacted again at the conclusion of the age.

That there will be those who will kill us claiming that they are doing God a service. That's not the world speaking. It's religion speaking.

Because something so offensive has risen that cannot be tolerated, namely a people who have an apostolic faith and a kingdom view and believe for a kingdom come on the basis of the power of life that broke all fetters of death when it rose from the dead and can be fulfilled and enacted and expressed through the body of saints who are in the earth now. I'm quoting now from a precious writer who says Cosmic impersonalism is a way of banishing personal responsibility from the universe. It enables men to ignore the possibility of final judgment in terms of a fixed set of ethical standards.

Because if the world is just a random accident, if God is not its creator and therefore its Lord, if it just happened by chance, then there is no fixed standard. There is no divine ethic. There is no requirement made of men.

Anything goes and therefore there is no judgment. But it's interesting to see the kind of view held by the apostolic fathers, the kingdom view that believed that God had appointed a day in which he will judge all men. He will judge the world in righteousness, Paul says in Acts 17, through a man whom he has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.

I don't have time in the few occasions that we have together these days, but I invite you to look to the reference to the day of the Lord, the judgment of God. God as judge, as being one of the central factors of the consciousness of the apostolic generation. Completely lost from our own consideration for which reason we are still fornicating like jackrabbits or at least contemplating the possibilities.

The easy standard that prevailed in our charismatic evangelical age is a testimony to the fact that we, unlike the apostolic church fathers, do not believe that God is a judge. And we have not the faith to believe that we are actually being observed. We have not a living conscience which establishes what our conduct is when we're not being observed and determines what kinds of thoughts we allow ourselves to think when we're free to think what we will.

We do not believe with Paul really in our hearts that God has appointed a day in which he will judge all men for all that they have done in their bodies, both good and bad. And because the church has not communicated the sense of judge, the world is on a reckless course of such abandon, of such apostasy, of such total self-indulgence and gratification so as to make the things that God looks upon as abomination standards of behavior in our own generation or at least alternate lifestyles. Sodomy has become an alternate lifestyle because there's no fixed standard, because there's no judge, because there's no law word that God has given which is common to every generation and that has not passed because grace has come.

The world is in its very condition because we have not lived as a nation of priests before it to teach the world the difference between the common and the profane and have not communicated the sense of the fear of God because we ourselves do not have it. Paul says, knowing the terror of God, I persuade men. And we have been notorious in our failure to persuade men.

We may have enticed a few that God has a plan for their life or the benefit they'll receive if they make a decision and accept Jesus, but we have persuaded very few because we ourselves do not know the terror of God. We do not understand Him as judge. We are not living as if we believe that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world.

We do not believe that there's a standard that God requires not only of the church but of nations and of men, that righteousness exalts a nation and that the coming of God to earth was not just to bring a certain body of truth for a church, but to bring a revelation of God to the earth. We have not made the message known to the nations. I've just finished writing a letter to an officer of the American consulate in a certain African nation who called me long distance to explain to me why it is that two Africans whom we're desiring to come to us here in Minnesota and to attend our prophetic school cannot obtain their visas.

And in his explanation, he passed a thin threshold, in my opinion, between being official and being officious, that he was going to keep them from having their visas on the basis of certain opinions of his own, far beyond what was actually required from him as an official. And I wrote him a letter. We who have responsibility in government need to be reminded that we're only magistrates, that we have only a certain limited purview, a certain area for valid activity, to bring a certain sense of order and to uphold a righteousness that is pleasing in God's sight.

And that we need to remember that the earth in which our officialdom is being enacted is really and ultimately the Lord's, that men have a right to traverse the earth and to move in the fulfillment of his will. And I realize that as I'm writing this letter to a highly articulate government official that is an utterly secular man without the slightest awareness of these things in his vital consciousness, because it has never been put there by the Church. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and those that dwell therein.

There's a righteousness which God is going to hold both nations and men responsible and for which he's going to judge them. But this cosmic impersonalism allows men to dismiss from the universe which he himself made, to dismiss his judgments, to dismiss his standards, to ignore the possibility of eternal punishment. It allows man to reinterpret all facts according to his purposes and ideals.

Because if there's not a God who created the universe and set his purposes in that creation, if it's not moving toward some fulfillment in his will, then we have the obligation as unaided men to provide our own purposes, whether it's orgies or revolution, which is indeed what men have done in the absence of the knowledge of the purposes which are God's, which have not come to them because the Church has not made them known. Man becomes the determiner and interpreter of the universe. And understandably, secular man prefers not to interpret the universe in terms of God's categories.

He much prefers to live in the hypothetically random universe which is posited by modern humanism. Therefore, we need to contend for the faith. This contending for the faith that was once given to the saints is more than just a little Patsy formula.

It is a total Weltanschauung. It is a whole world view. It is a cosmic sense of the purposes of God that in here, in his creation, and through the Church, which is the agency intended for its fulfillment.

We need to contend for that faith and we need to recognize that we are living in a poisoned atmosphere. Poisoned because it is secular, because it is skeptical, because it is rationalistic. The God of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe.

And it is these people who are shaping and influencing our culture and our civilization. The world is becoming secularized and God is being omitted from the considerations of men. Therefore, we are rushing, tell Mel, to a doom, which is the consequence of living a life without the presence of God and his counsel.

If we lived in the atmosphere of revelation, which God intended, our every thought would express the truth which is laid in the creation of God. Let the wicked man, it says, forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and return unto the Lord. You cannot believe how much we need to have our thoughts formed by God himself.

Whereas our thoughts have been so much influenced by the world and the atmosphere that prevails that we do not have these kinds of expectancies or understandings because we have not the cosmic sense of God's own thoughts. It is the plan of God that gives meaning and a fact is not truly known or understood except to the extent that it is related to God. God needs to be so alive in our consciousness.

Every fact of our circumstance needs to be related to him. Everything is seen in terms of what is his ultimate purpose and intent. And it is for the want of that seeing that our life is so presently marred and crippled and inadequate.

We need the view of the largest cosmic sense of God's things to set our life in the context that God intended. No fact of the universe is independent of God and his plan. He is both creator and lord of the earth.

And to the degree that the evolutionists have been able to dismiss God as creator, to the same degree has modern thought been able to dismiss God as lord. So in the same Acts 17, Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, he says to these philosophical and secular Greeks who embody the same spirit that prevails today in the world, that the God who made the world, verse 24, and all things in it, since he is lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. In the same breath and in the same statement, Paul sets forth before secular Greeks that the God who made the world is both the lord of heaven and the earth.

There is a connection that cannot be broken, that if God is the creator of the universe, he is also its lord. Therefore, there's a purpose because he's not a mindless or an aimless creator. And therefore, our life has to be related to that purpose.

Or we are falling short of his glory and we invite his judgment. The random purposeless universe of the secularists ejects God from his own creation and autonomous man becomes his own God. Man becomes the source of cosmic purpose and the measure of all things.

The famous statement, the axiom, out of the enlightenment from which the whole genius of secular thinking has come is that man is the measure of all things. When the truth of the matter is that God is the measure of all things. But so long as we have forfeited the field and have not made that God clear and have not demonstrated him in the awesome reality that we should, man has prevailed as the measure of all things and asserts his sovereignty and control over nature.

And that's why we have genetic experiments today, abortion, economic planning, social elites, super states, all of the phenomena of modern times that has threatened the very life of man and the planet itself, that has made it insane, that has loaded our institutions, or has tortured untold numbers of men, devoid of feeling, or has permitted wars in their own self-interest, caused them to let rivers of blood flow in modern times is all the statement that man is the measure of all things. That he is sovereign and that he rightfully should control, make his experiments, do his thing, have his alternate lifestyles and make sodomy legitimate. There's so much more that can be said about how far man has gone and I hope I'm not throwing a little wrench in the works, but I can't help but speak of the things that are pressed in my consciousness at this particular moment with a daughter who's about to graduate high school in her senior year and is now filling out her forms for college in terms of the requirements necessary to become a nurse.

And I find that she has to have algebra and chemistry and I forgot what other kinds of sciences and math, which I doubt in a million Sundays she will ever be required to use. I'm becoming conscious of a kind of elite, a kind of academic elite where the sovereignty of men prevail and where they arbitrarily determine what are the criteria by which you earn your diploma so that you can obtain a certain mode of living and a certain income and a certain entree to classes in society. If God is absent and men themselves have to fill the vacuum, they will define their own criteria and make their own rules.

And the whole system has come to prevail, that is senseless, time-consuming, wasteful, self-perpetuating, because God is absent from the counsels of men. So if this is the case, what is an alternative? Christian cosmology or worldview? First, that the universe was not established by God and then allowed to operate mechanistically by itself for the free exercise of men, but that God gave a dominion mandate right from the beginning to men, that is to prevail in the earth, that is to fill the earth, and that is to rule in the earth, that is to be the sub-regent of God in the earth, that the man who is made in God's image also is called to a purpose in God to prevail over the earth which God has made and to make that God known and his law. The basis for order in society is a personal relationship between God and men who are in a covenantal relationship to obey his law in love, to subdue the earth and to rule over it as the regents, the sub-regents of the creator himself, on the basis of a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees and that exalts nations.

This is why I'm saying that you'll not get this in one hearing. I've not gotten this in one writing. What is the alternative to a random and aimless universe in which man does his own thing? It is to see that God is the creator and also the Lord of heaven and the earth, that he has given to us a mandate in dominion that we, men who are made in his image, shall have dominion over the earth, and that dominion is to be through the expression of his law and through the counsel of his will.

And because we have not believed that and have not consciously walked in it, nor sought it, nor expected it, we have forfeited the field to secular men who have no regard for God and have done their own thing and filled the earth with their own nonsense. If I had a good blackboard here, and I don't know, maybe I can do it, I want you to see like two columns. One is a theocentric view in which God prevails and the other is a secular view in which God is absent.

In one is a random world in which man is free to do his own thing. In the other, in which God is present, there's a planned view. There's a purposeful universe intended by God.

Therefore it requires a knowledge of God and a knowledge of God's word. For his word is a lamp unto our feet. And it's by his word that we walk blamelessly before him.

And blessed are they who walk blamelessly before him in all of his law. God has spoken. He has things to say about how we should conduct ourselves economically and socially.

What should be the quality and the character of our relationships. How we should tend the earth. What we should do with our first fruits and our increase.

What we should do with regard to the poor. How we should enact justice. What is righteousness.

There are practical things that God has given us in his word. And for the essence of that, we have planned economies, social elites, state-ism, to the point where men have exceeded the intention of God for the minimum of government required to establish order, where the state itself has become a phenomenon that has become deified and requires the virtual worship of its citizens. It itself has replaced God, which we have seen in the more extreme forms as the Nazi state fascism in our past generation and which we're seeing even in democratic states as they become larger, more monolithic, more consuming and requiring the attention, the energy, and the devotion of its citizens.

Exceeding the function and the intention that God intended for it and becoming itself an object of worship and full attention. In fact, probably no single factor has occasioned the blood of the saints more and their unwillingness to bow before the God of the state, whether it was Rome or any other in the history of the church. That there's a Lord who is above the state, that there's a loyalty and allegiance that is above government, that the law of God is of such a kind that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, that saints who walk in the light of it far more than exceed the minimal requirements of the secular law in the nations where they live.

But they cannot worship the state. Their allegiance is reserved for God himself. And maybe it's my recent experience in Africa where you see these issues really lodged in nations that are in their formative stages whose situation is like an open page.

They can move in any direction. And though these presidents of these black nations have had backgrounds in mission schools and have some semblance of a knowledge about God, they do not know him. And therefore they've come more under the influence of a Marxist, socialist and secular view by which they themselves are required to be the elite state planners and to determine what the condition of the economy is going to be or what is grown or by what means is going to be produced or distributed, what constitutes justice and so on.

Therefore there's no consciousness of God, no awareness of why it is that drought is suffered, no causal connection between conditions of drought or social calamity or calamities in nature with the fact that bribery, corruption and violence exist in their nations. These things are unrelated because they do not understand the divine hand of God and judgment which is already being expressed. Men have a choice of either praying for rain or crying out in repentance for sin that has withheld rain or seeding the clouds.

And I take this like almost a quaint and humorous illustration but it shows graphically what are the alternatives and what is going to be the clash of kingdoms at the end of the age. Those who are going to put their confidence in what they call science and technology which is to say the gods of this present world and who think that they're going to invoke rain by seeding clouds or those who will commend to men the bending of their knees and their supplicating of God and crying out repentance for their sins. We're coming to an inexorable clash of two basic cosmologies, two basic total world views.

One in which God is very present and who lives, who's the creator and lord who can be sought, whose will could be known and who can answer. And another in which God is completely absent and men have no alternative but by their own chicanery and their own devices to procure and obtain the things that they think constitutes human happiness. There's going to be a clash between these views.

Those who believe in God will seek him with fasting and in prayer for wisdom and guidance and blessing. I remember once right here in Cass Lake I think the year or so when we moved here, a year later when there was a seething and rising condition of discord between the Indians and the whites here and there was a community meeting. All kinds of suggestions were made for relief of the situation.

And one committee after another was being formed to discuss discipline in the schools or some other secular, philosophical or rational way of addressing the problem. And I, like some jerk, rose at the end of the meeting with faint voice to suggest that I was willing to head up a committee on prayer to as many as would be willing to join me believing that God needed to be invoked and brought into that secular situation as the only true answer to the distress between white men. I think it's really indicative that there wasn't a single soul that responded who believed that prayer had any efficacy or that my suggestion was in any way realistic.

There's a reason right now why in the Soviet Union Christians are sent to mental institutions and why it is that their children are taken from them why they're considered unfit parents because they're projecting to their children superstition and irrationalities that are contrary to reason, to sanity and to reality. And if you think that that's going to be confined only to that geography, you're mistaken. Because I think as the crises of the world heighten the issue is going to be joined about what it is that really constitutes reality what it is that really constitutes an answer what it is that really constitutes sanity and practical answer to the predicament of men.

And if the church will be the church and will stand with conviction to point the world to a very present God I don't think that our presence is going to be idly acknowledged. I think once again we're going to find the same kind of radical response to us as was the response to the apostolic church at the first and the response even to Jesus himself. Men sought either to throw him off over the brow of the hill or fell at his feet to cry out, my Lord and my God.

Men either tortured, burned or destroyed the apostolic generation or they came with trembling to cry men and brethren what must we do to be saved. I think we're moving toward a polarity toward a radicalization of all of the conditions of life in which men are going to be moved toward one extreme or the other. As a matter of fact if we will take God seriously in these very days and begin to walk out and to do and to be the kind of church he intends we ourselves will be a factor in precipitating a radical response to God either favorably or against him.

The world is either going to move toward bribery and corruption, favoritism and compromise, exploitation and misrule or it's going to move toward equity, righteousness, justice that does not regard persons. But it will not unless it has a church in its midst that is a model of what it means to be without regard of persons that does not favor some and disregard others. The church has got to be a living example.

It has got to be the thing in itself. It has got to be the apostolic model or the world is without any example to which to bend its views. The alternative to the exploitation of the earth is its stewardship.

And what that means and how that's to be exercised needs to be demonstrated by the church. That that is part of the dominion mandate that God has called us to be stewards of the earth and not its exploiters or its destroyers. What it means to be a servant.

What it is to have God's glory as a paramount motive. And the way in which these things are pursued is with the spirit of humility, the spirit of truth, the spirit of love, the spirit of peace, the spirit of discipline and obedience as against the world spirit which is the spirit of arrogance, the spirit of deception of lies, the spirit of hate, the spirit of violence in which torture is justified. There are two radical alternatives to living and the church has not sufficiently shown God that the world has had reason to be compelled to turn from what it considers the rightness of its way.

And if God is convicting me about anything, it's about arrogance, it's about impatience, even in small things. Because if we have not the spirit of humility and meekness in the small things, we don't have it in the large. Something is required from us more than Sunday attendance.

God is wanting a character that exhibits his own which is lamb-like. The genius of God that was revealed on the cross is the lamb that was slain. This is the thing that broke the back of the power of the enemy, controverted the wisdom of the world in its arrogance and its pallor and its hatred.

In a lamb-likeness unto death that needs to be exhibited by the church in its life. It's one of the reasons why we commend and see the connection between community and kingdom. Because church as it is presently constituted with a mere schedule of services has not the framework to present an opportunity to men by which their character can be attended and be brought to the god-likeness that God intends.

Merely seeing each other Sunday by Sunday, being physically present in pews does not provide the opportunity for the redemptive working of God in the church for the shaping of character and life by which we can live in the spirit of humility, truth, meekness, love, peace, obedience and have a conscience that is without offense both to God and to men. The church needs to be a demonstration. The thing in itself.

An expression already of a kingdom come. Not for some future millennia, but now. It's remarkable when you begin to pursue this subject you see what a hash the church has made in its millennial views of the kingdom.

Because it could not believe that God intended the Sermon on the Mount for now. Because it's too radical in its demands. Because we did not think that God really intended we should turn our other cheek or walk an extra mile or love our enemy.

It was relegated to some future millennial time when the church itself would be absent from the earth and the Jews that remain will somehow fulfill the requirements of the sermon when the Holy Spirit has been taken from the earth. It is an insanity. It is a cowardice.

It's an apostasy. It's a heresy. God intends the fulfillment of these things now through the body of Christ which is a covenanted community of God.

This is more than the issue of doctrine of atonement. This is more than soul winning. This is more than proper orthodoxy.

This is more than Pentecostal distinctives. This is more than salvation as a private experience. This is corporate reality.

Something demonstrated by the church in its corporateness in such a way as we can say to an unbelieving world repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. One of the books in which I've been reading in these days called *The Community of the Spirit* written by a Mennonite states that our social definitions and presuppositions inherited from the previous century have largely blinded us to the reality and dynamics of an organic or spiritual community and it is precisely such a community which is designated as church in the New Testament. The very fact that we think that community is an option and for most of us it's an undesirable option or a kind of an experiment that maybe might be of interest to a few shows how much we have dismissed what God intends by church and the only kind of church that can reveal the glory of God and show an alternative to men.

Our social definitions and presuppositions inherited from the previous century have largely blinded us to the reality and dynamics of an organic or spiritual community and it is precisely such a community which is designated church in the New Testament. Because we have not believed for a kingdom we have satisfied ourselves with the definition of church which is other than and less than God's own intention. We have not been willing for the inconvenience and the demand that is required in going from house to house daily.

We have not given God his opportunity to work the deep redemptive things in character and life by which he uses us toward each other in the frequency of daily relationships that God intended for the church to live its life. The fact of the matter is we like Sunday services and if we're sports we'll come out on a midweek but we are not willing for the more total and demanding requirement of God by which church is church and which makes it more a community of God's covenantal people than a casual aggregate of souls who happen privately and personally to be saved. If we want a kingdom come this is what is going to be required and I hope to say something more about that as we go on.

The church is more than an aggregate of saved individuals. The church is not intended to perpetuate itself as a movement but to bring its purposes, its realization within the whole social order of which it is part. It's not an entity unto itself fulfilling its own requirements and seeing only to itself perpetuation.

It's intended to be a salt in the earth and a light unto the world. It's intended to permeate the world. And I want you to understand this.

I'm only recently coming to understand though I despise and I hate the world as a system I hate the world system but God wants us to be reminded tonight that God still so loves the world. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and those that dwell therein. We have a kingdom mandate and a dominion mandate to the world and in the earth.

And the fulfillment of it is going to require a quality of life and relationship and commitment with ourselves to each other that is beyond what has been presently understood as church. It's a demonstration of the new reconciled order society under the rule of God that needs to be brought to the largest social order that it might become a reality in the life and history of the world. And it's this that I think is meant in the scripture making disciples of all nations.

Not just plucking a few brands from the fire but expecting and laboring toward the conversion of nations of bringing the divine perspective of God to the attention of entire societies. Not tolerating this sacred and secular distinction by which we safely stay on our side of the line and conduct our Sunday service and let the world go to hell because it has not a wisdom that can only come to it from on high. To those who embody institutional power and authority the powers that be the church announces the fact of God's rule and calls them to fulfill their respective roles in submission to his authority and plan.

The Anabaptists confronted magistrates with the biblical requirements of their office conscious that the activity of God was not limited to the church and that his rule extends over all men whether they recognize Christ or not. All authority is going to be brought under his feet from the very beginning of the increase of his government and of his peace there shall be no end. No end.

There needs to be an increase and that increase exceeds and extends beyond the borders and the parameters of the church itself. Of the increase of his government and of his peace there shall be no end. The church therefore rebukes dishonesty injustice, violence and selfishness in the public administration of the social order and it calls men and institutions to follow the way of righteousness, love and peace.

If this were not so Paul could not have made his statements to the Athenians that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. For what shall they be judged if there is not a requirement for them even now to live according to a certain minimal requirement of righteousness, justice and peace. Because God is the creator of the earth which they inhabit and he's a purposeful God and he's intended that righteousness exalt nations.

Isaiah 2 in which God speaks of the nations coming to the mountain of the Lord's house that the word and the law of the Lord shall go forth out of Zion that nations shall walk in the light of the new Jerusalem. These scriptures must not be dismissed for some future millennial kingdom or spiritualized away into meaninglessness. A glorious church is an active church and one must be militant before one is victorious.

We can sing about marching on to victory but unless there's an activity unless there's a conduct unless there's an engagement of our life unless there's a pursuit unless there's a battle unless there's a land actually being taken there is no triumph. If nations shall not come up to the mountain of the Lord's house to walk in the light of the new Jerusalem what of our locality is now? If we cannot bring Chaos Lake and Guthrie to walk in the light of the new Jerusalem of God how shall we expect it in New York City or Moscow or Paris or total nations? God says that nations shall walk in the light of the new Jerusalem of the holy city the heavenly phenomenon which is what the church is intended to be. That's not going to happen by some magical sweep of a wand in some instantaneous moment in the Lord's coming.

His coming is going to fulfill a kingdom that has already been in preparation for Him by which Guthrie and Cass Lake and La Porte and Detroit Lakes and these communities have already been swept into the kingdom of God and know His righteousness and His requirement and are walking in that light. A glorious church is an active church. God so loved the world and still does it is not His desire to forfeit it to the devil.

He's broken the devil's power. He's made of him an open spoil. And it's waiting for us as the church to make manifest the triumph that has already been wanted to cross.

Something has been left and remains for us to fulfill the power of which was broken at Calvary. But if we ourselves do not believe it and this is going to be my third and final message the centrality of the cross we're not going to fulfill it. God has reserved for us the final demonstration of the glory of the cross by which the Satan's head was bruised but the destruction of that head and all of the works remains for the church in the final chapters of time.

And even the demonstration through the church of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers and rulers of darkness in the air is reserved for us. There's a cosmic purpose that is reserved for the church. There's a mystery reserved for the church that has more to do even with the earthly fulfillment of things pertaining to nations and men about which I've already spoken.

But you want to know something? We'll not fulfill the earthly things. We'll not touch, cast, rake or report unless we both see and consciously seek to fulfill the cosmic intention for the church to demonstrate to the principalities and powers of the air the manifold wisdom of God. What that wisdom is and how that demonstration is to take place I believe is going to be revealed in persecution and in martyrdom and I'll speak of that tomorrow.

It's not God's desire to forfeit the world to the devil. To occupy till he comes means the progressive taking of the land from the usurper whose kingdom was destroyed and power broken at Calvary. It is for us to make manifest that triumph that dominion, that godly authority and rule in every area of life, thought and action.

It is for the want of a challenge of this magnitude that the church is presently asleep. I see it so clearly. I wish you could see it.

There is something wrong. There is something grievously amiss. There is something wanting for which the church stumbles on in its lackluster matter-of-factness from service to service punctuated by the novelty of some visiting speaker or some other distraction.

And what is wanting is the largeness of the mission and the task that God intended for it. Namely, taking the land fulfilling the dominion mandate filling the earth with the knowledge of God and His glory bringing the knowledge of the righteousness of God and His law to nations and demonstrating as a nation within the nations what that means in terms of the actual conduct and life of people who are living outside of the world and above it in a transcendent way even while they are yet in the earth for they are citizens of heaven. It is the failure to see this, to take it seriously and to do it that explains why it is that our services are so sleepy why our churches are so lackluster why we can hardly manage the energy to do our visitations.

We have not seen what is the mission and our task to challenge the magnitude that God has intended. Our services, Bible studies, programs, visitations, prayer meetings and their condition is the symptom of our unfulfilled mission. The church is conducting a holding action we are hanging in there until we are raptured.

We are escapist. We want to get by or we want to get out. We have no intention of remaining.

We have no stomach for suffering. We have no desire to experience affliction. We have no desire to demonstrate or to prove.

We just want to hang in there until we shall be conveniently relieved of any further responsibility and escape. It is amazing that that heresy which is about hardly more than a century old and was never understood by the church fathers has become so sacrosanct today that even to question it is to put yourself in the place of being suspected of being heretical. The hope of the church was not escape in times past.

The hope of the church was a kingdom come and a king coming to rule and to reign in the earth with his saints. And that hope needs again to be revived. It needs to be restored as the true hope which will bring to the church an electric, a dynamic, an expectancy and an atmosphere that God intended to prevail in our life.

I want to suggest there is a reason why we take the millennial and theological views that we do. It's not because there are air-tight reasons for it as given in the scripture. But I think that in the last analysis we choose that view that is comfortable with our timidity, with our fear, with our cowardice, with our reluctance, with our desire to avoid confrontation.

It's not the love of the truth that has determined why it is that we take a millennial view of seeing some future kingdom age that will take place independent of us. We choose to believe that and we enjoy subscribing to it because it absolves us of present responsibility now. Our cowardice has more to do with our theology than our love of truth.

And we need to examine the theology or the cosmology and the understanding of that which prevailed with the first church fathers. They had none of these notions. They did not see millennial views.

They did not see dispensations. They saw an unbroken continuum. They didn't see a god of an old testament and a god of a new.

They saw a god of law, a god of justice, a god of righteousness, a god who has been fulfilling his purposes in the earth before the foundations of the earth were laid and a lamb that was slain because sin took place in the heavenlies before it was ever manifest in earth. They saw a cosmic purpose of God and they saw the purposes of the church. They had a view which we lack, which needs to be restored, which we have cut up into convenient pieces in little categories and the sum result of which has unfitted us to be a kingdom people for we have no kingdom expectation.

It's some future thing and therefore it never comes. We have chosen convenience over confrontation and passivity over proclamation. We have preferred to be the church invisible rather than the church triumphant.

We have surrendered the world to Satan so long as our small portion goes unimpaired and the things pertaining to our security and pleasure are not threatened. Just allow our Sunday services to continue, allow the parsonage to continue, our income as ministers, our lifestyle, allow those things to continue and let all the rest go to hell. We need to see how cowardly we have been and how comfortably we have allowed the world to define our circumstances so long as our self-interest is not threatened and we have sufficient by which we can justify our conduct because after all we're bringing a Sunday service and we're bringing a sermon and we visit someone sick in the hospital.

We have fallen below God's kingdom intention. We are not fulfilling our mandate. We have preferred to be invisible rather than triumphant, convenient rather than confrontational, passive rather than proclaiming.

We have surrendered the world to Satan. The writer says this is not Christianity, it's Manichaeism. That's an ancient heresy by which things are divided into that which is spiritual and that which is earthly and the earthly thing was thought to be so beneath our content and our interest that our view was solely taken up with the thing that was spiritual.

That is a heresy. God expects his glory in the earth. Made visible through men and the practicalities of their daily life in the earth.

That's the faith. The other thing is a false spirituality. It's a heresy.

It's more than a heresy, it's an apostasy. It's a forfeiting of the faith. Therefore repentance needs to begin in the house of God.

God will judge the earth. He will judge the church. And it's out of our repentance that brings the kingdom of heaven to hand.

So these are my first and opening remarks just to give a sense of what the prevailing condition is. Why it is that we're without a sense of the past or an expectation of the future. Why it is that the Holy Spirit has been relegated to improving our services or to renewing our denominations.

That we have not seen it in the context in which God intended, namely as the enablement for a kingdom come. Why it is that we have dismissed martyrdom as some historic phenomenon out of the past, completely irrelevant to our life. I want to end with a prayer as I began.

That God will stir our hearts. Break our hearts. Show us how much our theology has been conditioned by our cowardly hearts rather than a love of truth and a desire to see God's ultimate intentions fulfilled.

How quickly we have condescended to theologies of convenience that have absolved us of responsibility. So precious Jesus, save us my God from a Christianity that invokes sessions of Congress by platitudinous prayers. Save us from being a bunch of patsies that the world is willing to tolerate so long as we do not threaten its interests or press upon them a view that requires them to acknowledge God in truth.

My God, enable us to be proclaimers because we are demonstrators. Show us to be kingdom men and women because there is a king who is consciously sought whose will prevails in things small as in things large. Precious God, bring us into your seeing and into your view.

Bring us again to the cross. Bring us again, my God, into the acknowledgement of the place of suffering and the issue of glory. Speak to us and deal with us through the night hours, Lord.

Break us up in the deeps. Break up our little categories, our bitter views, our notions, our religious understandings, the kinds of things that have prevailed that have been conventional, tame, insipid, unthreatening and without consequence in the world. Help, have your way with us in these days, my God.

Change our minds. We thank you and praise you for assembling us and speaking and stirring our hearts, Lord. Help us to take these things into our hearts, to ponder them and prepare us, my God, for all that you shall intend yet to speak and to do.

We thank you and praise you. May we leave this room and this hotel at the conclusion of these days with the ringing shout of faith, Thy kingdom come, Thy kingdom come, in earth as it is in heaven. And a willingness to suffer, my God, to see that realized.

And we'll thank you and praise you for our privilege and for our calling. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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