

The Kingdom of God (1 of 2)

by Paul Ravenhill

The kingdom of God is a heavenly kingdom that we must possess by leaving our own world and seeking God's salvation, and by living in a state of repentance and dependence on God.

Duration: 38:10

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-5, Matthew 5:10, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 5:48, John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Hebrews 10:5

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of understanding the word of God and its relevance to our lives. He emphasizes that God repeats the history of the world in every generation, just as Jesus spoke of those who rejected the kingdom of God. The preacher highlights the process that God follows in blessing, delivering, and revealing Himself to His people. He also acknowledges the presence of both good and bad influences in the world and encourages believers to seek a deep understanding of God's work and to rely on Him for guidance and strength.

Transcript

Thank you. Really appreciate your love, the identification which goes without love. Identification with us, with the work of the Lord in Paraguay, your prayers, your concern.

I'm sure someday when we get to heaven we're going to see that beyond what we call prayer, the flow of the heart, the interest, somehow is all wrapped together and we're somehow, maybe transmitting would be the word, transmitting either something positive or something negative every moment of our lives toward those things which interest us, either for life or for death, for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of the enemy, and in this case for the kingdom of God. I want to thank you for your love, your interest, your sharing with us down through the years. Really appreciate it.

I'd like to talk a little bit tonight on the kingdom of God, Matthew 5, words of Jesus. It's a theme that's been on my heart for a number of months, and with different emphasis as the weeks go by, with different illumination on different sections. I just want to briefly try and include you all in.

Speaking of Jesus says, Seeing the multitudes, he, Jesus, went up into a mountain. When he was said, his disciples came unto him. He opened his mouth and he taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. The thing that God's been bringing to my mind briefly before we start, just to kind of place us in the scene, is the fact that God has a kingdom to be possessed.

That kingdom is a heavenly kingdom, a realm of spiritual relationship, a realm of revelation, a realm in which the powers of the kingdom of God are released to us. He has a realm of comfort, a realm of the ministration of God to us and within us, deliverance, liberation, transformation, the works, the graces of his spirit. And then beyond that there is an external earth realm, the things round about us which challenge us, the things which somehow God has left us in this earth to a great degree to keep us in touch with reality.

Even living in this earth, I think many times we get out of contact with reality, so easy when our emotions are stirred, so easy to be influenced, so easy to get carried away, so easy to become mystical, in the wrong sense of the word. And so easily we forget the things which are round about us, the things which challenge us, the things against which our faith has to test itself, the kingdom on earth which God desires for us to possess. Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. I think many times it takes years for us to begin to be able to relate to the word of God and what God really means for us to understand why this word, why this word was given, why it was written for me, the sense in which the history of the world is repeated in every generation. Jesus spoke of those who rejected the kingdom of God, and he said, upon this generation will come the blood that was shed right from the blood of Abel all through history.

And I think in a sense God repeats what Nehemiah said about the work of God. He said every generation the corn of seed has to fall into the ground, it dies. Every generation it dies, and every generation once again has to plant a seed, every generation has to care for that seed, every generation has to bring it forth.

The works of God, the movings of God, the movements of God, the Methodist movement, the different movements that there have been down through the ages, all endure for a time, and then there's a new generation. We read in the Bible of David and others serving his generation in the will of God. That which was before him was not his responsibility, that which was ahead was not his responsibility.

Indirectly, of course, it was, to leave a seed, which would be an example for them, but his direct responsibility was his own generation. Our direct responsibility is our own generation. Our direct responsibility is our life.

There's a sense in which the history of the Church not only repeats itself in each generation, I think the whole scope of revelation, the whole scope of God's demands and God's workings and the outworkings of the Spirit, should find their fulfillment in each life. The Apostle talks about different ministrations but the same Spirit. The Bible speaks of God having prepared for Jesus a body.

I think I spoke about that one time here. We get so wrapped up in trying to be like someone else. We get so frustrated for the things we can't do.

We're always trying to do that thing, and this thing which God has given me the ability to do, somehow I despise it. I want to be able to do like the pastor, or do like the bishop, or do like somebody else. I want to be able to do it the way they do it.

They've got such a grace, they've got such an ability, they've got such an anointing. If I could just do what they do, and God says, there's something else you can do better than that. I've got people in Paraguay, and when it comes to working with new people, I'd rather they do it than I do it.

I know God's with me, I know I can do a work, but I know that person's got a special grace for that work. So once again, there are different graces, but this is for all of us, because there's the work of God in each of these three spheres for all of us. The chapter before speaks of Jesus starting his ministry.

It says, At that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the again, think, and you learn to see there's a kingdom which is far vaster than any earthly kingdom. There's a realm which is far beyond the mechanics of our religion. You know, and as I come--if you'll excuse me, I live in the boondocks--but as I come up from South America and back to civilization and back to the Christian countries, and see a tape here and a message there and a magazine there and what God's doing here and there in Australia and England and the United States, in the midst of all the good, I realize there's a lot of mixture of the bad.

And we can so easily get upset about the working of the enemy and about the inroads of human thinking and human ways and human operations out there, and yet it's so hard to see it here. I can't see the speck that's on the end of my own nose. I can see the one that's on everybody else's.

And somehow God, and only the Spirit of God, can bring us to see the living reality of his work. As I was thinking about this this afternoon, came to mind the setting of the scene. Jesus saw the multitudes.

I said before, when we read the Word of God, it's so hard for us to understand it. When a musician gets a piece of music and reads the score, they are one of the old masters. There's something beyond the the notes, and something beyond the purely mechanical timing, and something beyond the emphasis which are written in there, which that person needs to find and needs to be able to transmit.

We hear about interpreting music, and this one interprets it one way, and this one interprets it the other way, and the critics write. His interpretation had fire. His interpretation was slow and plain.

And each one tries to imagine and interpret what he conceives to be the thought of the person who wrote the music. Now, when we come to the Word of God in a far greater way, in a far more sublime way, and with far more serious consequences, we need to understand. We need to see it as God sees it.

Otherwise, it's words. We've got people like the Jehovah's Witness, we've got people like the Mormons, we've got different churches. They use the Bible.

We need to see it as God sees it. This is what Jesus is saying, repent. Leave your own world, because there's another world, and thank God there is.

And there's a way to see this as God sees it. His Spirit was sent. We're not alone.

It's not up to our minds. It's not up to our abilities to compare scriptures and weigh one thing with another thing. His Spirit was given that we might know.

His Spirit was given to teach us the things of God. And if there is that repentance, and it's not just an act, it's a condition, it's a state, it's a place we live at. It's a dependence on God.

It's a saying, God, I can never. As I've left my world, I must leave it daily. As I've left my own abilities, come in seeking your salvation, so I must leave my own abilities as I seek to learn about the kingdom of God.

Repentance is a place you live at. It's a condition. So Jesus calls the people to repent and says, seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain.

He'd been ministering to the multitude. He'd been ministering to all conditions of humanity, starting there at the baptism, beside the Jordan, coming in the midst of that multitude, seeing before him the heavens open, going into testing, coming back, starting to minister, ministering the grace, the mercy, the deliverance of the kingdom of God. So Jesus went about all Galilee teaching and preaching and healing at the end of chapter 4. Teaching.

Not that teaching which, once again, if you'll make a comparison, I think there's a lot of teaching today which is explanation. Jesus' teaching, I believe, was illumination. It's a totally different thing.

When through that word you see a path and I know my feet can walk that path. The teaching of the spirit of God. There is no cold truth in God.

All his truth comes to me that I might possess it. Having possessed the truth, possess a spiritual reality which that truth represents. So he came teaching.

Once again, let me stress this a minute. Let's just take a second out here. He never gave his disciples to teach.

He never sent his disciples to teach. He sent them forth to preach. He sent them forth to heal.

He sent them forth, he told them, raise the dead, deliver the oppressed, but he never sent them forth to teach. There's one place where they do come back and they tell him what they taught, but that was them. Maybe their personality got away from them.

He never sent them to teach. By the time they were ready for teaching, they'd been with him three years, they'd seen him crucified, their whole world had caved in, everything had come to an end, they'd gone through the darkness of night, they'd gone through the time of his persecution, the time of his betrayal, their Jesus, their visible hope had been taken away, they'd seen him risen from the dead, they'd received the baptism of the Spirit, and then they were ready. They saw it all in a different dimension.

Only then were they ready to teach. But Jesus came teaching. It says preaching, and the word in the New Testament means proclamation.

He's telling them of a truth which is. They're living in a world where things are touching them. He's telling them beyond all these things, there is another world, there is a power which is above every power.

There is a kingdom which is above every kingdom. There is a dominion which, in the measure in which it enters into our lives, must reign over every other thing. In the kingdom there is a king.

Where there is a king, there is a ruling. He's trying to make this real, something which has application. You know, we hear so much about the kingdom of God as though the kingdom of God were, as it were, a bunch of rules, almost like the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, as though the kingdom of God were things you do.

The kingdom of God were attitudes. The kingdom of God were reduced to feelings and understanding, and it's something beyond that. The kingdom of God is power.

The kingdom of God, read there in Luke, when Jesus talks to the Pharisees, they're asking about the kingdom of God, and he compares the kingdom of God, and he uses a different phrase. He says, The day will come when you'll desire to see the days of the Son of Man. And the Son of Man, and the manifestation of the Son of Man he talks about there, that is the kingdom of God, when God himself is manifest, when God is manifest through his Son, when God is manifest in our midst.

It's not a theoretical thing. It's not an ambiguous thing. It's not something removed from the realm of our experience.

He wants to bring it all down, now it all down. And that's our challenge there on the mission field, and that's our challenge here in the United States, that the kingdom of God be possessed by the people of God. And yet the first step that Jesus takes here is a step away from the multitudes.

Seeing the multitudes, he leaves the multitudes. Seeing all those people who have been healed, seeing all those people who have heard his words, he doesn't try to lead them a step on. He doesn't call Peter and say, Peter, bring your boat again, I'm going to sit down, I'm going to try and teach these people.

He turns right around and he leaves the multitudes. And I think symbolically it's important for us, because it's the same process that he follows today. There's a place where God blesses us.

There's a place where God delivers us. There's a place where God starts his work in our lives. And then there's a place where God reveals himself and reveals the principles of the kingdom of God.

Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, up into a mountain. We've got hills in Paraguay, they're not mountains. But I imagine maybe the climate there in Israel was similar, hot climate.

There comes a time when you're climbing uphill, it takes everything you've got. There comes a time when you feel like somebody just drained all the energy out of you. There comes a time when you feel like your legs have turned to rubber, and you're trying to get up that hill, get up to the top of that mountain.

You know, we're so prone to believe that God wants to give us, that we forget that it demands something of us. There are places, David was talking last night about the dwelling of God. There are places where God will dwell, and there are places where God will not dwell.

There are places where God will work, and there are places where God will not work. God has his conditions. This kingdom is, once again, above every kingdom.

And I possess it in the measure in which it works in my life, in the measure in which it becomes reality in my life. Believe me, to make it become reality is a long, long process. He leads away from the multitudes.

Think of the multitudes down there in the valleys. Think of the cities down there on the plain, all their commerce, all their movement, all their petty activity from day to day, the little things they get involved in, the little things they get wrapped up in, the problem of the immediate, that which is today and tomorrow is gone. Jesus wants to lead them all away from that.

Jesus wants to lead his people away from all of that. You know, it's so easy. I say many times to our people down there in South America, we can never estimate the power of an atmosphere.

We can never estimate the inroads that the thinking of this world makes within us. The Apostle Paul talks there in Romans 12 about, Brethren, I beseech you. Even he can't command it.

I beseech you. Because every man must give himself willingly. But he pleads and he yearns.

He says, Brethren, I beseech you to give yourselves to God that you might be transformed. And he says, Be not conformed to this world. And there are only two positions.

I'm either being transformed day after day, month after month, as I climb up that mountain, or as I'm living in the valley, I'm being conformed. You remember Lot there? Once again, when the Pharisees asked Jesus about the coming of the kingdom of God, and he referred them to the days of the Son of Man, he said, Remember Lot's wife. Remember that woman typifying the church who was born, who lived in the valleys, who was wrapped up in human existence.

They were destroyed for their sins, but he doesn't mention their sins there. He said, They gave, they married, they gave in marriage, they bought, they sold, they built, they planted, and so on. They're all human things.

They're all human priorities. They're all the things of the valley. They're all the things which are legitimate for the dwellers of the valley, but they're not legitimate for the children of God.

Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. And if his own belonged to his kingdom, which world did they belong to? This one? No, they belonged to that one, too. In the Old Testament, the fact that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob--and we were hearing a little bit about them yesterday, and maybe we should all preach tonight.

But anyway, the fact that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived in tents and lived as pilgrims--you know, it's not just, Well, God had to start out somewhere, so he got these people, and they didn't have anything, and so they start out in tents. He started out with a principle that the one who's called of God has no permanence in this earth, has no place in this earth. And Abraham, who apparently was a rich person even when he started, was called out, Leave.

Leave that home. Leave that dwelling. Leave those walls.

Leave those courtyards. Leave those offices and places all around and the cattle. Leave them all and move out to live in a tent.

Once again, we read about it. But I can imagine going through the desert with animals, the choking dust, the blinding heat, day after day. Abraham must have been black by the time he finished, burnt to a crisp.

And then Isaac, and he still was no dwelling place even for his son, and the father had wandered for years. And Jacob, Jacob's whole journey until the end of his life is in exile as far as the physical land is concerned, but he possessed the spiritual. And as somebody said, he even went beyond Abraham as far as his faith was concerned.

There came a time when he blessed Pharaoh, and the less is always blessed by the greater. And Abraham, in the presence of Pharaoh, had been afraid, entered into deceit and fear. He came into the presence of Pharaoh and blessed Pharaoh.

And yet the three of them dwelt in tents, God underlining, as the Bible says in the mouth of two or three witnesses, underlining the fact that his children have no dwelling on earth. And Abraham, who is the father of the faith, and Isaac, his son, and Jacob, his son, they lived in tents. They wandered.

And the apostle says in the New Testament, those who have as though they had not. When we reach there, we start qualifying a little bit for the revelation of the children of God. When we start in our minds, in our thinking to leave the valley, it doesn't mean I've got to give everything away.

It doesn't mean I can't live in a house. It doesn't mean I can't drive a car. It doesn't mean I've got to buy a tent and a camel.

I'm not talking about that. But it means in our mind, there's got to be a divorcing from all of that. There's got to be going up the mountain.

The thing that's in front of my eyes should not be the things of the valley. It should be the things of God. Maybe I'm living in the valley, but my spirit must live in the mountain.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. It doesn't say he called them. He just went.

And those people who saw him leaving, there were those people who saw that he wasn't going to stay with them. You know, we want God to come to our world. Lord, come here where I am.

Lord, help me here. Lord, your kingdom come. But right here, the Lord says, you come out where I am.

You come out where I am. Come up. There's a mountain to climb.

There are things you've got to leave behind. Once again, I repeat, there are places where God will not dwell. He will not dwell in the valleys of human existence.

He will not dwell in the dwellings of man. He will not dwell where the priorities of this world are ingrained in the minds and spirits of man. Led them to a mountain.

It says when he was set, his disciples came. His disciples came. Not the multitude.

The multitude stayed in the valley. The disciples. The disciple is the one who is teachable.

The one who desires to learn. Once again, I don't know if we realize how deeply ingrained it is in all of us. The thought of human sufficiency.

You know, we'll confess our need. We'll confess our insufficiency. You know, I don't know how to, well, what, sing in the choir.

I can't sing. But if we're going out and somebody else is saying, did you hear how so-and-so was off key? You know, right away there's something within us. Or I can't teach.

No, I can't teach Sunday school class. But if I hear somebody else after I've given my class saying, oh, wasn't that terrible? You know, right away, wait a minute, wait a minute. Right? Right? And in all spheres.

I mean, as adults, of course, we can kind of cover it over. Hmm. We don't, you know, we don't act like the kids and put on a pout or say something, but inside there are things that hurt.

God wants to bring us out beyond all of that. We possess one kingdom when we let go of the other. Hmm.

It's a very simple truth. We're able to take hold of that when we let go of this, that which we have rules over us. That which we have is not that I hold things.

It's that things hold me. There's no things in themselves had a certain power. And I suppose they have in the, in the spiritual world.

There's a sense in which the immaterial things in the spiritual world become material. And even the material things somehow become spiritual. And the enemy works through things.

You've seen certain people that have a certain desire and it tempts them and it tempts them and they, they yield and they go and they possess it. Maybe it's something good. And yet when they possess it, it possesses them and back of the thing, the kingdom of the enemy, the power of the evil one taking a life.

And then they wonder why God doesn't come, why God doesn't talk, why faith seems so far away. Why peace is so mixed with unrest. You know, when John wrote his gospel there in the beginning verses, he says, said in the beginning was the word.

The word was with God. The word was God. And in Hebrew, he wasn't writing in Hebrew, but Hebrew was the language of the nation, the language of religion.

He just said that in Hebrew. And maybe he was thinking in Hebrew as he wrote it. The word, word, and the word reality are one in the same.

And he's saying in the beginning, before ever there was destruction, before ever there was death, before ever there was sin, before ever there was condemnation, before ever there was unbelief. In the beginning, there was a reality whose name was God. And this is the kingdom of God.

This is what God wants to bring us back to. To possess that reality, which is unmixed with earthly things. How long it takes for God to purify our faith.

And Peter talks about the purification of the faith. He says, not the faith is more precious than gold, but the purifying, the trial of our faith is more precious than gold. It's not more precious than gold that I have all faith so that I never have problems.

It's more precious than gold that the waters be up to here. And I don't turn back. I keep on walking into the depths somehow.

The trial of our faith. When it seems that things are caving in, because it's only at that time that I'll cry out to God. It's only in those circumstances that I'll feel a sense of need.

It's only there that my spirit will be released from earthly things. And so Jesus starts to lead them here. Before he ever talks, he leads them away from earthly things.

And it says when he was set, his disciples came. And they came right there where he was. And then, and only then, did he start to teach them.

And he said he opened his mouth and he taught them. Once again, that teaching which was illumination. He's starting to unveil now the mystery of the new covenant, the new pact, the new testament.

Everything which had come before, even the most beautiful passages of the old testament, were all prophetic and they were all through figures and a seeing through a veil, a faint glimmer of that which was to be. And now Jesus comes and takes the veil away. The apostle talks about God who, having spoken in the times passed by the prophets, now was spoken to us by his son.

And here's the unveiling. Here's him telling if you want to know what the kingdom of God is, if you want to know what the principles of that kingdom are, if you want to possess it, this is the way. His very first words of teaching in the new testament says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Once again, as I said, this refers to the whole heavenly realm. I don't want us to limit it down. One thing that calls my attention in the new testament when I read the references that the apostles and Jesus himself made to the old testament, they always apply it in a lot wider scope than what we do.

He said, blessed are the poor in spirit. The poor is he who does not have. Said, blessed is he who knows.

Who knows, he knows, he knows that he does not have. That he cannot do. That there is no ability, there is no capacity, there is no reserve, there is nothing, because when he knows it.

Believe me, it's a long process until we know that we know nothing. I think the Arabs have a saying, something about there are people who know and there are people who don't know and know that they don't know. But the saddest case is the person that doesn't know and doesn't know that he doesn't know.

There's nowhere where it's sadder than in the things of the kingdom of God. There are a lot of people that don't know that they don't know. Some of the wisest men have come to the place where they realize, I know so little about my field, whatever it is.

The astronomer comes to a place where he realizes he knows so little about the heavens. And the scientist realizes he knows so little about the laws of science. The doctor knows so little about the development of the diseases, and he tries and he's struggled and hundreds of them for years, and they're seeking for a cure for cancer or some other thing.

And yet, it's so strange. So many times we come to the kingdom of God and so many people in so many areas. You know, we read it, oh yeah, I understand it.

Once again, allow me to go back a moment to the teaching. Really surprised me some years ago, how many young people are teachers. It won't work.

A young person, a person who has not yet had the processes of life to teach him firstly, how small is man. Unless I see how small man is, I can never see how great God is. How can he teach? We're like the little boy who goes to his first science class and sees the simplest experiments of the whole agenda, and then he comes home and says, Mom, I know what science is all about.

And down the road, there's a scientist and a group of scientists, and they're 50, 60 years of age, and they're exploring the mysteries of the atom, and they shake their heads. We don't understand. You know, as we come to the kingdom of God, may the Lord help us.

All of us. I'm sure when we get to heaven, the blinding flash of that life, we're going to say, God, I didn't know a thing about it. I didn't know a thing about it down there on earth, and I thought I knew so much.

It's going to be so much vaster. It's going to be so much pure. It's going to be so much, much more real than we ever imagined on earth.

Her brother Wilkerson, one day, telling how he went to a revival that was taking place in Argentina. The missionary there that had prayed for years, and God had given him a real gift of faith and a spiritual authority. He said in this meeting, a man came, and he had no eye.

He had just a hole, horrible, in his head. He said the missionary put his hand there and prayed, and he said, I believe in miracles. He said, but when you see it happen, all of a sudden, there was a white mass, like a ping-pong ball, where there'd be nothing.

He said then the iris and the pupil and the whole eye started forming little by little. And the people were shouting and yelling and everything else, and he was right back on his heels, because we believe it. And yet, for God, how many times does he do that? With every baby that's born, he does that.

How does he keep us living? How is it that the things, I mean, we eat good things here in Charleston, but I mean, the things I eat on Brother Bill's table, how can they give me life? I mean, how can it be that somehow, you know, my heart keeps beating, my blood keeps flowing, my nerves keep moving? How does nature go on year after year? The time when all the trees apparently die, and then the spring comes, and it bursts forth. It's not one leaf, you know, and it's not that God has to send down an angel to drag out the leaves in the springtime. It's just burst forth.

Millions and millions and millions of them. When the brain falls, each drop with that fullness of life of all the other millions and millions and millions of drops that are falling. And yet, when we come to the kingdom of God and the mysteries which are beyond nature, you know, we want to reduce it all down two plus two.

Yes, I understand that. Blessed is the poor in spirit. That means you've got to come to God and say, Lord, I don't have anything.

Please do it. You know, you know how long it takes us to realize that? I suppose when we get to heaven, we won't have fully realized it, any of us. Because Jesus said, if you can believe, all things are possible.

And I know today, and each one of us know today, there are things which I cannot yet believe. And thank God for the things which I can, but I know there's a vast realm out there. There's a heavenly kingdom.

He starts to unveil it here. He said, blessed. These are the New Testament.

They're not like the laws of the Old Testament. It's not keeping us from evil, not closing the doors so I don't fall into hell. It's opening the doors so I can go into heaven.

There's a tremendous difference. He's opening the doors so I can go into heaven. He's saying, blessed are the poor in spirit.

You'll never find that in the Old Testament anywhere. Blessed are the poor in spirit. He's making it all clear.

And you start to realize what the cries of the soul of the psalmist meant when he's crying out to God, God, the waters have gone over my head. Lord, my enemies have multiplied. Lord, I have no strength.

Lord, I'm a worm and no man, and here it is. What are they doing? Somehow instinct is reaching out, and here it is unveiled. This is the doorway.

This is the doorway to the kingdom of heaven. You know, it's easy to say, Lord, we need you. It's another thing when God marked it deep in my soul and I'm trembling before him.

God, lead me not, forsake me not. Lord, there is no life. All is death, and it comes in in the instant that life leaves me.

Lord, I need that unveiling of the kingdom. I need the flowing of the virtue of life to my life. There's is.
There's no other condition than this. There's is.

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