

Change

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon highlights the transformative nature of the kingdom of God, emphasizing that true salvation involves significant personal change through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 56:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:23, Mark 4:1-8, Romans 8:13, Romans 14:17, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:24

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

Description

In this sermon, Jesus teaches the crowd by the lake using parables. He tells the parable of the sower, explaining that the seed represents the word of God and the different types of soil represent different responses to the word. Some people receive the word but it is quickly taken away by the enemy, others receive it with joy but fall away when faced with trials, and still others are choked by the cares of the world. However, those who receive the word with a good and honest heart bear fruit and multiply abundantly. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the parable of the sower as it is fundamental to understanding the kingdom of God and the concept of change.

Transcript

We come unto you this morning in Jesus' name. Lord, we do appreciate your goodness to us. You're so wonderful, Lord, and we thank you for your attention to the details of our lives and all the many blessings and deliverances, Lord, that have come our way.

We really appreciate them, Lord, and we pray for each family representative here, Lord, that your hand now of protection will be on their homes and there'll be health there and peace and the presence of the Lord. Be with the little children as they're being taught in the children's church, we pray, and help us together, Lord, to pursue that which the Spirit is saying to us today. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated. Excuse me, Jeannie isn't here. I could use some water this morning.

I'm still fighting a cold. Every time there's a convention, I get sick. That's wonderful.

I'm getting a lot of sack time, time to pray, while Stan and Lisa and Audrey and Brian and Abby went out. I got the upward look a good part of the time, which can't hurt. All right, we're going to be in our Bibles reading today, and you can read with us.

From the NIV, it will be in Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 8. Thanks. Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 8. Again, Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge.

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teachings said, listen, a farmer took his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil.

It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow, but when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil.

It came up, grew, and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times. Now, Jesus goes on with the interpretation in verses 13 through 20, but I want you to notice 13 in particular. Mark 4.13 in particular.

And Jesus said, don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? Now, he did not say that about any other parable that it was so basic to our understanding, but the parable of the sower has meant a great deal to me over the years because it really is the basic understanding of the kingdom of God. If you don't understand the parable of the sower, you will not understand the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is change, and what I'm talking to you about this morning is change, how important it is. In fact, change is the kingdom.

It is change that is the kingdom. We have gotten the idea of thinking, well, if I'm saved, that means I'll go to heaven. Well, there is certainly a heaven and there is a hell, but that's not what the kingdom is.

The kingdom is change. If the kingdom were going to heaven, you couldn't tell much about it now, you could just hope that you go there when you die. But because the kingdom is change, you can tell right now whether you are in it.

You can tell the progress that you are making. When you understand what the kingdom is, you can tell the progress that you are making right now. No mystery.

Alright, and he said, the first kind of seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Now the seed is more than the written word of the Bible. The seed is the living word, which is Christ himself.

What God is sowing in the earth is Christ himself. Doctrine has an important part to play, but the reality of the kingdom of God and of salvation and of eternal life is Jesus Christ himself. And as much as you have of him, that much you have of salvation.

I want you to get away from thinking of salvation as going to heaven. There is a heaven. Salvation really means in Bible terms being rescued from God's wrath.

That is in 1 Thessalonians 1.10. We might look at that for a minute, but we'll be back here on the sower. But I want you to see, because I don't want your mind confused about what salvation is. Salvation is deliverance from God's wrath.

It means that God is not going to destroy you. The opposite of salvation is to be lost. And to be lost means that you will never again have an opportunity to have God work with you, to save you from yourself and

from sin and from the devil.

To be lost means God is through with you. Just like he is with Satan. The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels.

Unfortunately, there will be people in it. There is no question about that. And there are people who cross that line.

So when you think of salvation, I don't want you to get mixed up with the parable of the sower, or with the kingdom of God, or with eternal life. These have to do with God's dealing with you as a person. The kingdom of God is within you.

It is Christ in you. And so you can tell this morning just about how well you are doing. It's no mystery.

You don't have to say, well I don't know whether I'll be saved or not. That's not the issue. The issue is where you are today with Jesus.

That's the issue. There's no blindness or no hoping against hope or anything. Either you're living in Jesus, and Jesus is living in you, or you are not.

It is as simple as that. Now, when the word came, the living word came, and came out through the spirit, there were some people that heard it, but their hearts were so hard that it never germinated. It never took root.

It never went down into their personality and began to bring forth light. And so there it lay on the surface of their life, maybe in their memory, or in their brain. Maybe they talked it over with some church people, but it never penetrated.

And so the devil came and took it away, and it was as though they had never heard it. The second time, now we're down in, let's move down to 4.14 of Mark, 4.16 of Mark. Others, like seeds sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.

Now, this is talking about Christians, people who have heard the word of Jesus Christ. Not just the written word, but the living word. Christ is the word made flesh.

The living word, I mean you can hear doctrine, but nothing happens until Christ touches your life. Is that true? Nothing happens through theology, that's fine, you know, there's a place for it, but nothing happens to you as an individual until Jesus Christ touches you. And here he had touched someone, and they were very happy with what they had heard, but in verse 17, they had no root.

It was all on the surface. Their Christianity was on the surface, it didn't really get down and take root in their life. They went on with business as usual, but the seed had actually germinated, but after a while.

That's why I think it's not too good to judge the results of the work of God by the initial response of people. You have to wait to see what's going to happen. So, it's good to keep that in mind.

As someone said, they're fast, but they don't last. Alright, since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word.

Trouble or persecution comes because of the word. When they first received it, everything was fine. In fact, it lent itself to their lifestyle and proved to be nothing but a blessing.

But then, they came to a choice, and it was, if I hold on to this profession of faith I've made, it's going to cost me. It's going to cost me. So, if we have persecution in the United States in the days ahead, we may see a lot of people rethink their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Our commitment to Jesus Christ has to be to the place that though it cost us everything, it makes no difference. Because we didn't receive Christ for what we could get out of it, but out of our love for God. And therefore, if we lose our money and our health and our family and our very life, it makes no difference.

That isn't the basis on which we receive Christ. This can happen to people whether or not they receive Christ. So, our acceptance of Christ and our life in Him and with Him is not based on our being happy.

It is based on the commitment and integrity of our character, a choice we made, and if we're people of integrity, we don't change it, even though it proves very unpopular. Can you agree with that? You see what I'm saying? You can't say, oh, hard things have happened to me, therefore God doesn't love me, or something else. Your commitment to Christ is independent of the things that happen to you like that.

If joy comes, that's better, but if sorrow comes, that we made out of our love for God. Hallelujah. I don't know whether you're quiet out there or whether my head's stuffed up.

I think both are, so don't be too quiet because I'm up here in a vacuum. My head's still stuffed up. All right, still others.

Now, this is the third kind of ground. This is the third kind of ground in which there's actually a germination of the seed. This is the second kind of ground in which there's a germination.

They're sown among thorns, hear the word, but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things choke the word. Now, that means that it actually germinated, it actually started to show signs of life, but notice the three things. Worries.

Worries. That is concern. We Americans are great worries because we're relatively wealthy.

We've got a lot to worry about. Other people don't have to worry about what suit they wear, what dress they wear, or what they're going to eat for lunch. The only worry is, am I going to get anything to eat for lunch? So, the more stuff you have, the more you're going to worry about your stuff.

Okay? So, worries, the deceitfulness of wealth. Now, people say, I want to be rich so I can give to the church. Have you ever heard of, a lady accosted me one time, where I was preaching in Jerusalem about this prosperity thing, and I said, that's not of God, that's not scriptural.

And then she came up afterwards and says, oh yes it is, we have faith we have God and give to the church. I thought, but it didn't say, sister, you wouldn't give a nickel to the church. But even if you did, I wouldn't want you to sell your soul for what you're going to give to the church.

Riches are deceitful. They deceive you. They give you a false sense of security.

Riches really are a substitute for God. And there are people who are gifted to make money, and I understand, I appreciate that. The church needs money to operate.

But more important than that, is the soul. And riches are deceitful. And they give you a false sense of security.

Because when push comes to shove, they can't save you. So you have to be very careful if you're fairly well to do, or you have aspirations to be fairly well to do. Just remember that the scripture says, riches are deceitful.

They will deceive you. And cause you to think and do things which are not sound. So, and then it says, the desires for other things.

I need something else. It's not enough that I have Christ's uncontent. I have the desires for other things.

Come in and choke the word. They choke the word. They make it unfruitful.

So we see here, two classes of Christians. Those with stony heart, and those with weeds, that bore, that started to bear fruit. Christ had germinated in them, but it bore no lasting fruit.

So much for eternal security. It's not a good idea to give people the impression that no matter what they do, they're alright with God. That's not true.

You can tell how well the word is doing in you. We'll look at the fruit in a minute, God willing. Then, there's only one kind of ground here that bore, and it bears after its kind.

And there was only one of the four kinds of ground, which were impacted by the word, excuse me, which bore any lasting fruit. And this fruit is the kingdom. This is the parable of the kingdom of God.

It is the basic parable of the kingdom of God. This is what salvation is. It's change.

It's change in us. Because our personality receives the person of Jesus Christ, and then fruit begins to come forth. And that fruit is not from our Adamic nature.

It's from the divine nature of God. And so the result is a change in our thinking, a change in our speaking, change in our attitude, our imaginations, change in our hopes, change in our actions. It produces change.

And this change is salvation. This change is eternal life. This change is the kingdom of God.

And so you can assess today, you don't have to think, well, you know, am I saved or not when I die? You say, on this day, this month now, April in 1999, how am I doing in the kingdom? Is it growing, is it actually growing in me? Or is something hindering me? And here we find that of this only one kind of person who was impacted by the gospel seed, bore any lasting fruit. And of those that did, they bore it to three extents, not percentages. Multiplication.

Some got, we'll just say, 20 barrels, 20 bushels to the acre. Some got 50 bushels to the acres. Some got 100 bushels to the acre.

It's the extent to which salvation or eternal life or the kingdom of God or Jesus Christ is formed in you. It varies from person to person. Think of it.

Just think of it. I've done some thinking on this, excuse me, because it's come to our, come to my attention how misleading the Christian religion can be in terms of actual salvation. And I mentioned to you the battle between the Christian Catholics and the Christian Protestants in Ireland.

It's a battle between religions. Jesus Christ doesn't go out and bomb people, shoot people. So religion was worthless.

Religion can be worthless. But I saw this last week, the illustration to end all illustrations. Here we have this president of Czechoslovakia who is causing an unbelievable amount of suffering to human beings for whatever reason.

He is causing it. And he requested that we stop bombing Yugoslavia so they could observe Easter. Now I don't know if you can see the irony of that.

I don't know if you can see it. But it is so totally, it's such a total illustration of the uselessness of religion as such. I don't know what church they observe, a Greek Orthodox church I expect.

And they ring their bells and they do their thing. But they go on killing people. And James says, 1 John, 1 John, and I don't know the verse Brian, but in 1 John he says, if any man hate his brother, he is a murderer.

And you know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him. So here's all these religions for 2,000 years that have fought each other, have killed people, have tortured other Christians as well as non-Christians, but the Bible says they have no eternal life in them. So I'm telling you there's a vast difference, a vast difference between the Christian religion and salvation.

Salvation is a personal experience with change caused by Jesus Christ living in you. And it must be attended to. He said produce a crop 30, 60, or even 100 times is Jesus Christ.

What will be brought forth is Jesus Christ. Now, I want you to compare, compare 2 verses, Romans 14, 17, and Matthew 6, 33. Romans 14, 17, and Matthew 6, 33.

It'll be on the board in a minute. And I want you to compare these 2 verses. Now, in Matthew 6, 33, there's a very familiar verse.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Now, that's interesting because God's intention is not that we seek to be prosperous in things. God told us what to seek, and the promise is if you seek what I tell you to seek, what? These things, the wealth of the world, whatever your need is, and people have different needs, whatever your needs are, and in some cases your desires too, shall be given to you.

Alright, seek first. Now, compare that with Romans 14, 17. It tells you what the kingdom of God is that you are to be seeking.

It tells you what the kingdom is. This is what you and I are to be seeking. The kingdom of God is first what? Not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness first.

Because God will not work where there is no righteousness. Now, remember he said seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That is, not our religious efforts at righteousness, but the righteousness that comes as Christ is being formed in us, and as we are seeking to keep the commandments of Christ and his apostles, which we do by praying and going to the mercy seat.

Now, I want to accent that for a minute. If there is a more profound area of ignorance in all of western religion and philosophy, it has to do with the commandments given by Jesus Christ and his apostles. I've

said that before.

But it's fresh in my mind because I have received an email from a person who's been here in the church and asking in a very sincere and godly manner, because in one of my present essays of this last week, I put in there that Christ will not be formed in you unless you keep the commandments of Christ and his apostles. First we keep those, then Christ is formed in us, then we keep them by nature. But to begin with, we have to keep them by guts, golly, and prayer.

You have to do what the man said. So, men said, and also ladies too, I'm sure. So, this dear sister wrote to me and she said that she had read that, but she said she was not aware that there were any commandments in the New Testament other than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and love one another.

Dear Jesus, there's got to be at least a thousand commandments in there. So, I wrote back and I said I would make a suggestion that you start with the book of Romans and go through and write down all the commandments that you find. And I said, let's begin with Romans chapter 6. The commandment is, count yourself dead, crucified with Christ, to no longer be a slave to sin.

And it goes on, there's several commandments just in the sixth chapter of Romans alone. Well, you say, why don't you start with Matthew? Because it wouldn't be as clear, because the commandments that the Lord gave, many of them are by inference. For example, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

Do you see how that's a commandment by inference? What is the commandment? Be a peacemaker. But Christ, being God and wiser than we, just moves past the whole show and says, this is the consequence. The Lord is so gentle and loving, instead of saying, be a peacemaker, he said, if you're a peacemaker, you'll be called the son of God, which is neat-o.

So, a lot of the commandments of the Lord are by inference. But the apostles, not being God, just shot them off. Do this, don't do that, do the next thing, do this and don't do that.

And I'm sure by the time our dear sister gets through about 150, she will be satisfied to quit racing and start jogging, because they must be up over a thousand things. Not to mention all the ones by inference, or the ambient or the surrounding verses that tell us how to be righteous. Just the straight things, do this and don't do that.

Put to death the deeds of the carnal nature, it says in Galatians 5. There are so many commandments, but for whatever reason, I do not know. Oh, there seems to be a feeling in the Christian church that there are none, but there are. And when we start off in Jesus Christ, we are saved, then the purpose of the church is to teach us of those commandments, and show us that we can't do it in ourselves, but we can pray and the Holy Spirit will help us.

Isn't that true? Ever had the Holy Spirit help you keep a commandment? Until Christ is formed in us and our nature is changed, and then it becomes ever so much easier. I'm sorry to people in Tape Land, I felt the Lord wanted me to preach this morning, but I'm aware also that's hard to listen to on the tape when people are coughing all the time. So, the righteousness, the kingdom of God is this Christ in us, and that produces righteousness.

So the kingdom of God, I mean, I could say seek first the kingdom of God and His joy, but seek first the kingdom of God and His peace, but righteousness is so important that the Lord said you do this before you

do anything else. I'll take care of your needs, you do this before you do anything else. Alright, so what is the kingdom? The kingdom is righteousness, and then peace, and then joy, all sponsored by and developed in the milieu, in the environment of the Holy Spirit.

And the more the Spirit of God we have, and the Spirit of God has to be cultivated each day, the more we're going to behave as we should. Now let's look now at Galatians chapter 5 verses starting with verse 19, and we'll probably go through the end of the chapter. I hope I'm making myself clear here, do you see, do you see what I'm driving at this morning? What God is after is change, not religion.

Religion, church leaders have pondered why, after the work of the gospel, including Pentecostal gospel that has taken place in Africa since the turn of the century, the extent that the gospel has permeated Africa, that a few years ago they could have such a disaster in which, I don't know, a million people I guess, how many were slaughtered when the Hutus and the Tutsis, or however it's pronounced, were after each other, and they still are, and other places. These people have had the gospel for decades, and they've had the Pentecostal gospel, worship, spiritual worship, gifts of the Spirit, but it didn't make the difference. See, religion doesn't always produce change, but change is what the kingdom is, that's what the kingdom is, it isn't religion, it's change.

I see that here in Galatians 5, 19. Is anybody out there? Good, I have a hearing, I'm a man who lives by hearing, and when my hearing goes, I'm in bad shape, I have to play the piano by faith. Then watching Bob Portellian stick.

All right, Galatians 5, 19, don't you love that? The acts of the sinful nature are obvious, sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage. Hello? Selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, that means splitting up into groups, you know, our group and your group. And envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

I warn you, as I did before. Now look what it says. Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now he's talking to Christians, there's no use saying it, and it's so obvious from the book of Galatians, he's talking to Christian people. And he's warning them about something. Now I want you to notice something very carefully.

It does not say, those who do such things will be lost. And the Bible has a way of saying what it means. How many believe that? Has a way of saying what it means.

And the Bible really is a book of law. And God will stand behind it, he is a judge. Alright? It does not say, those who live like this will not go to heaven.

Because see, that's the question in people's mind. Yes, I know all this, and all that's fine, but will I go to heaven? Right? That's why I'm talking about it. I'm trying to get you to see something.

The issue of the gospel is the kingdom of God. And we saw that the kingdom of God is, what? Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And we started out by saying that the primary parable of the kingdom is growth.

Growth within you. That's what it's all about. Not where you're going after you die.

It's what you are. What you're becoming in Jesus. This is it.

This is what the kingdom is. You can tell right now, here this morning, whether or not you're in the kingdom. Oh yes, my brother Thompson, I did the four steps of salvation.

Super cool. Super cool. But did it fall on hard ground? Has it been choked out by worry? Did you quit when it got unpopular? See the issue is not what you did when you took the four steps of salvation.

The issue is, what's happening in you today? What's happening in you? That's the issue. And the only issue. And if God wasn't into changing you, you wouldn't be alive.

He doesn't clutter up the earth with useless people. You're here because Christ has a purpose in bringing you into his kingdom. Now the issue is, where is it in you? Where are you with Jesus today? Is the kingdom growing in you? Because things are so dynamic today in the spirit realm.

That it's either growing or getting choked out. Things are dynamic. The demonic pressures are enormous.

Will not inherit the kingdom. You'll not inherit it. Now let's get down and see.

But, verse 22 of Galatians 5. The fruit of the spirit. Now remember, the parable of the sower is about fruit. And this is what the fruit is.

And these are personal characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not only his only personal characteristics. There are other characteristics of Christ such as courage.

That are not mentioned here. But these are the ones that will tell you. These are indices we might say.

Marks that will tell you this morning. Right now. Whether or not you are in the kingdom of God.

There's no guesswork to it. This will tell you. Right here.

This is the kingdom. This is eternal life. This is Jesus Christ.

This is salvation. Change. Because none of these things are native to the Adamic personality.

The Adamic personality is what we just read. Sexual immorality, purity, debauchery, idolatry. That's what's in us.

Varying from person to person. But the fruit of the spirit is first love. And that is not human love.

Human love is very frail. Human love will turn into hate in a moment. Did you know that? You know, I love you so much.

Oh, I can't hardly stand it. And then your beloved does something wrong. Maybe she has bad breath or something.

And all of a sudden it turns into hate. What did I ever see in you? That's not love. You say, what is it? Well, it's one of two things or both.

It's either physical lust. Or a romantic spirit. Or both.

But it's not what the Bible means by the love, the fruit of the spirit. Because that doesn't turn to hate. That comes from God above.

And I mean, it'll get through bad breath and everything else. Oh, people for the love of God have done wonderful things in the earth. Gone down into the Congo.

And worked with people there. Insane people. In their things they have for them.

Their Catholic nuns giving their life. Like Mother Teresa did. That's love.

God puts love in there. Love that doesn't change. Comes from God.

Stronger than death. But it's not the fruit of man. And it'll never come from man.

It's the fruit of the spirit. It's the fruit that's born as the seed of God grows in your life. And for the seed of God to grow in your life, you must nourish it.

You must give everything for it. You must see to it each day as watered with prayer. You must be obedient to God.

You must cultivate around it with the Word. So that when there's something wrong you can chop it out. There's a lot of things in this life that work against the growing of that seed in you.

And it's up to you to make sure that nothing stops the development of God's love in you. It comes from the spirit of God. It does not come from your intention to try to be a nice Christian.

It's supernatural. It's from the nature of Christ. It's from the living seed.

All right, now judge yourself right now. Index number one. Where am I in this thing? Are you showing to everybody a hateful, critical, angry, wrathful, miserable spirit? Is that what you are? How you are known? Mr. and Mrs. Picklepuss.

You know, when you go near that person, all you're going to hear is a lot of anger. They're angry about the liberals. They're angry about the government.

They're angry about that. They're angry, angry of everybody in the church. They're angry with themselves.

You're not in the kingdom. But am I saved? Are you saved from wrath? 1 Thessalonians 1.10. Have you been rescued from the anger of God? That I cannot tell you. I do know it's possible to cross the line.

But God will save you if He can. But you're going to have to do a few things on your own. And one of them is this morning is admit to yourself, I don't have this in me.

I don't know what I've been doing all these years. But I certainly haven't been showing love. Well, that's a start.

Then you can say, but Lord, I want to. I just want you to be aware that you can keep yourself, that when hatred is acting in you, you are not in the kingdom. You are not a child of the kingdom.

Period. Oh, brother, talk for 50 years. Well, you may have been a pillow of the church for 50 years.

But that doesn't, you can't go against the Bible. The fruit of the Spirit is love. And when it isn't there, the Spirit isn't there.

Period. Oh, for simplicity. It is the gift to be simple.

Joy. Are you totally miserable this morning? Sometimes in our Christian life, there are many things that happen to us that prevent our really feeling great. Going around with a stupid grin on our face.

The joy of the Spirit works very deep within you. And it'll be there no matter what. We're getting ourselves into a mess there in Yugoslavia.

And older people can see the way it's going. Ain't good. But it doesn't touch our joy because our joy comes from the Spirit of God.

It doesn't come from the fact that a year from now, where we'll be or whether the world comes to an end or anything. The joy comes from the Spirit. And if you don't have that joy and peace in your heart, the kingdom is not there.

The kingdom will bring joy to you. But it won't come from your natural assessment of things. Sure, if the rent's paid and you've got enough money, you know, and you've got your tidy little nest egg.

Maybe you're a millionaire. There's millionaires coming up on the scene every day in the United States because of the inflation of the stock market. Millionaires, oh goodness, they're all over the place.

That doesn't bring joy because the minute everything collapses, your joy will collapse. There went my joy with the stock market. The Dow plunged and down plunged my joy.

Went down faster than the Dow. Well, if that's where your joy is, is going up with the Dow and coming down with the Dow, the kingdom is lacking. It's an index for you.

Are you basically a joyful person? Listen, I'm with you if you're in trouble. Lord God, I've had enough of my own and I know people have enormous problems. I appreciate that deeply.

But there still can be a joy there when they're carrying in on the gurney. Believe me, there can be a joy there in your heart if that seed is working in you. And if not, then you can come to the altar after I'm through talking here and say, Lord, I don't think the kingdom is in me at all.

I just got religion in my mind, but not much of salvation in my heart. And third index is peace. Do you have peace? Are you fretting yourself about what's going on? Jesus isn't.

He's in control of everything. He's in control of everything. He's the Prince of Peace.

That's something you can't buy with money. Peace. Peace.

The kingdom brings peace. How many Christians have been burned at the stake? All kinds of things have happened to Christians. Look what happened to Jesus Christ.

I'm talking about supernatural life, eternal life, salvation, the kingdom. Change. Because the normal state of the Adamic nature is unrest, except for frantic times of fun.

The normal state of the Adamic nature is miserable, misery, miserable misery. Patience. The first three letters of impatience spells imp.

Are you a patient person? Are you known for being patient? Or do you have to get what you get? Now I've got to have it now. If I don't have it now, I don't want to play. I'll take my fire engine and pull out of the sandbox.

Patience. Christ has been waiting for his bride for how long? God has been waiting for what he wants for how long? Patience and the kingdom of God go together. Change.

We Americans tend to be impatient. We're not exactly Buddhist, sitting by the hour, gazing at the statue. That's not our style.

I saw something that amazed me. I saw a church, a Pentecostal church, worshiping God, and they had go-go girls. And I thought, after I saw that, I said, nobody's going to say anything about our banners.

I don't want to try that around here, but for those that go for it, amen, praise the Lord. They're in God's hands. We're not a meditative people.

And so sometimes that leads to impatience, doesn't it? Like standing in front of the microwave and tapping your foot. But it comes from God, and boy, you cannot, it's associated with the kingdom. And I mean, God tells you something.

You've got to wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait to the 10th power. You just wait. How many things have been spoiled in people's lives because they didn't wait for the 10th camel? Nine came in.

You know, nine can come in today, and that 10th camel doesn't come around for 50 years. Wait for the 10th camel. Don't jump the gun.

Just be patient. God knows what he's doing. He knows what's best for you.

And kindness, some people will find this easy. Some find it very difficult to be kind, generous spirit, an index of the kingdom. Goodness is doing good.

Jesus went around and did good and healed all that were possessed of the devil. When he saw something that needed to be done that was good, he wants us to have a sense of goodness. James says, pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction.

That's goodness. Goodness. The Lord will lead you in that.

Faithfulness. There's not a noun in the English language more characteristic of God and Jesus Christ than faithfulness. We don't realize it, but we count heavily on that.

We depend heavily on God being true to what he said, don't we? Hello? God wants us to be faithful. Faithful when we take our marriage vows. Faithful when we make commitments to God.

I'm going to do it, Lord. Told you I was going to do it. I'm going to do it.

Help me. I'm not quitting. Faithfulness and integrity are almost exact synonyms.

It's so important Jesus Christ has it written on him. Two things. Will they ever be faithful to what they said? Will they ever be the truth? And God wants it in us.

And he wants you to be a true person and a faithful person. And that doesn't come out of our Adamic nature, because when old Adam is pushed hard enough, he caves. Oh, Jesus didn't cave and it's a good thing for us.

Faithful. Faithfulness comes from the Spirit of God, not from our Adamic nature. God make us faithful people.

Gentleness. So much of the church work, I'm afraid, becomes crass. It says, we got the answers.

We's the people. Didn't you know? We's the people. Oh, you're unsaved.

You're out there. You're out there. But we are marvelous.

And if you'll just listen to me and do what I say and join our religion, then you will not go to hell. I mean, we're just too crass about it. I need to be kind to people.

You know, there's nothing like being kind to people without telling them you're a Christian and that's why you were kind. There's a lot of opportunity. Just be kind to people.

And I remember that. It's a good thing. Somehow they'll find out from God where it came from.

But God wants you to be kind. Is God kind? Wow, we're being made His image. What we're talking about is the kingdom of God and change.

And what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be saved. This is salvation. Kindness is salvation.

It's eternal life. It's the kingdom. And without it, there's no inheritance.

And finally, the first step on the ladder. How many know when you're climbing a ladder, the bottom rung is the one to start on? How many knew that? People try to start at love. Well, good luck to you.

Better take a flying leap and go for the top rung. This is the first rung. Self-control.

I use that when I taught the fifth grade. I used to talk to the kids every year about self-control. It's very easily defined.

You know what self-control is? Control yourself. But, you know, kids have a problem with this. Not that adults do, you understand.

But kids do have a problem with it. And I say to them, you know, when you get a chance and somebody says, come on, we're going to go out and we're going to drag a little or whatever they're going to do. And you think, boy, I'm scared.

I don't want to go there. I'm afraid to crack up and drink beer or something. Do something or smoke.

And I've read about that and I've heard about AIDS and I've heard about all these things. But I don't want to be called a chicken. You know, I don't want to be one of them.

And I talk to kids about that because I say, the moment that you do something that you are fearful about or you feel is wrong, but you do it because of group pressure. Hey, you've lost control of yourself. Something else is controlling you.

And you won't be a leader that way. And it shows that basically a fearful personality. If you're not doing what you're doing because you believe it's right.

You get in the car and going, you know, they're going to be dragging, you know, they're going to be playing wrinkle fender and everything. And you're scared out of your wits. And what are you doing it for? I don't want the kids to think.

You don't want the kids to think. Well, then who's running your life? Anyway, it's helped, I think, with some kids to understand that. I mean, if you're such a weak person that other people can move you by their opinion and you're living for what other people's opinion of you is.

That's not the best. And you might get hurt and you might get AIDS and you might have a real bad trip and end up coming down to the hospital somewhere because you didn't do what you felt was really the right thing. I really shouldn't be doing this.

When you're saying that to yourself, say, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to lose my self-control in favor of having somebody else control me. And it's true.

If you're driven by your flesh, I know I shouldn't do it. But oh, it feels so good. You lost your self-control.

Your self is telling you, don't do that. But you're not in control of yourself anymore. Something else is in control of you.

And that you need to analyze and think about. I wonder if, are you doing something this morning that you don't feel you really should be doing? The kingdom is missing. You're critical and argumentative.

The kingdom is missing. You're miserable. The kingdom is missing.

That doesn't mean you don't have any of the kingdom. You lost the whole show. It means God has more for you.

And you don't have to wait to go to heaven to find out it's operating now. Shall we stand? Praise the Lord. I'm glad I came to church this morning.

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