

THE KINGDOM OF GOD MARCHES ON

MARK 1:35-45

35And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter. ESV

Introduction

The fame of Jesus was accelerating throughout Galilee. The multitudes were searching Him out and following Him wherever He went. Some became believers and followers of this young Rabbi.

In this passage, we are in the wake of an incredible day of teaching, healing and casting out demons for Jesus. And even though the day is drawing to a close, there is more to be done for the kingdom to advance against the powers of darkness and the forces of evil.

The Apostle Matthew quotes Jesus: Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

What exactly is the “Kingdom of God?”

The phrase 'kingdom of God' is used more than sixty times in the King James New Testament, mostly in the gospels of Mark and Luke. A phrase that closely parallels it, which references heaven, is in the KJV thirty-three times. Interestingly, it is found exclusively in the book of Matthew.

The message of Jesus Christ follows that of John the Baptizer. However, since it is the Son of God who is making the declaration, it has a much deeper meaning. The difference between John’s and Jesus message can be boiled down to two areas:

1. John’s message was thoroughly wrapped around the phrase, “Repent.” The message of Jesus is that repentance brings salvation.
2. Jesus’ message is that the Kingdom is not just at hand, but was a reality, that the Kingdom would not only appear in the immediate future, but was already present. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God for all that would accept Jesus.

There are, in reality, three primary ideals concerning the Kingdom of God. (1) Christ’s authority, or his rule on the earth would be an everlasting kingdom; (2) the blessings and advantages that flow from this rule are present and tangible in the lives of believers now; (3) there will be a future appearance of Jesus at the end of the age, where believers from all generations will experience a perfect kingdom under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ.

Three clear aspects emerge in our text, and it is instructive that we find the essential elements of prayer and preaching. Without both, the advance of the kingdom would have stopped dead in its tracks.

The Kingdom of God Advances through Prayer

35And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Though He had been up late, Jesus still rose “very early” the next morning, “*35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day*”. He left Peter’s home alone, going to a place of solitude and privacy. A place for restoration and fellowship with His Father was what He needed and desired. Peter and those with him sent out a search party. Apparently the crowds had returned for more miracles. Peter’s words almost have the sound of a rebuke: “Everyone’s looking for You!” We are so much like Peter, not understanding the ways of God and how His kingdom will come. Yes, there will be healings and exorcisms. But, there must also be prayer.

The Kingdom of God Advances through Preaching

38And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Jesus, as He so often does, responds to Peter in a different and surprising manner than we expect. He will not return to those who are looking for Him. Rather, He says, “Let’s move on. Let’s go to the next town. I will preach there also. This is why I came” (see v. 38). Neither the crowds nor the disciples understood why He had come into the world. But He knew! Jesus came to preach, to herald, to proclaim the gospel of salvation, a message that is both *by* Him and *about* Him. Indeed, He is the gospel!

The Kingdom of God Advances through Cleansing

40And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;44And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

As He was traveling and ministering, Jesus was met by a leper. This encounter is startling, provocative, and even offensive. In that culture, a leper was considered an outcast, a man deemed by the law as unclean and by the people as cursed by God. That he came near to Jesus, so close that Jesus could touch him, was to do the unthinkable. The touch of Jesus speaks more loudly than any words ever could, and His words must have thrilled this man’s soul: “I will” (v. 41). Unlike any ordinary man, the Lord Jesus is not polluted by the leper’s disease when He touches him. Instead, the leper is cleansed by the gracious touch and contagious holiness of the Son of God.

Conclusion

Jesus’s life illustrates the advancement of God’s kingdom in the world through the ministries of prayer, proclamation, and the healing of the hurting. It is why Jesus came. He will take on Himself our

sin, our sorrow, and our shame. In return He gives us His forgiveness, His holiness, and His righteousness—praise the Lord! What an exchange!

Bob Crowder