

The Kingdom of God – part 16

Spreading the Kingdom of God.

1. Review

- a. 2 lists – God, family, work, me, etc. is how we traditionally view life.
 - i. But Jesus placed exclusive demands upon us that we are called to have only one thing on our list.
 - ii. God is our sole source of life, meaning, value and worth.
 - iii. The other stuff of life, although good, valuable and even God given, were never meant to give us life. **We were designed to draw life from God alone and then to give it back to these things and people.**
 1. When we get it reversed, we “use” people to get our needs met, to feel better about ourselves, etc.
 - iv. Imagine a tree, over an immense aquifer (God) drawing its life from the Aquifer. The other stuff that generally occupies our lists and that we value so highly, was never meant to be the “water” that feeds the tree, but rather, they were meant to be the fruit from the tree’s life in Christ.
 1. When we try to get life from the stuff instead of God, we end up polluting our waters of life.
 2. Examples: Empty nest syndrome, layoff depression.
- b. What happens when our meaning and value come from anything other than God? We shrivel up inside, we pervert our self worth and we invite the devil to lie to us about why we exist and what we exist for and whether or not we matter.

2. Genesaret Demoniac:

- a. Genesaret was southeast of the Sea of Galilee. So Jesus travels back and forth across the lake. What is he doing and why? He is spreading the good news of who He is and what he shall do, and **Jesus is visibly demonstrating what the Kingdom of God is like to everyone he meets.**
- b. *Mark 5:1-20 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" For Jesus had (been saying) said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man - and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed."*

- c. Jesus goes across a lake to a region called the Decapolis (10 cities) inhabited mostly by Gentiles, In Luke chapter 8:22 – this journey is the one in which Jesus is asleep in the boat and a storm comes up and rages against them, threatening their very lives. Jesus stands up and calmly quiets the storm.
 - d. Upon arriving they encounter a demon possessed man who comes to “meet” Jesus. I wonder what that meeting must have looked like! The story says “when he saw Jesus from a distance, he RAN...”
 - i. You are a disciple and you see this picture: You have just completed a long and arduous journey rowing across a lake – a journey of maybe 15 miles. So with weary arms and legs, you step out of your boat and the moment your foot touches the ground, a naked, filthy man, covered with vomit, filth and self inflicted jagged cuts all over his body, with matted long tangled hair, with the remnants of chains and shackles attached to his hands and feet comes running and screaming at you. What is your reaction? I can image Peter grabbing an oar to defend himself. Maybe you jump back into the boat. .
 - e. He screams at Jesus **“What do you want with me, Jesus!”**
 - i. That is a good question. Jesus only ministers to one person on this side of the lake and it is an oppressed, naked, crazy man who has so many demons his demons have demons. Jesus ministers to no one else, heals no one else, actually is recorded as having spoken to no one else but this guy who is out of his mind.
 - ii. What does Jesus want with you? People often ask Christians. "Why don't you Christians just leave me alone?"
 - 1. Our answer? "It's because God doesn't want you left alone."
 - 2. Why is that? Why does God get involved in your life? It's a good question. Because God loves you, because you are valuable, you are special, so special that God sent His son to bear an unbearable cross to take all that was separating you from Him and nail it to his body (sin). You are that valuable and that loved.
 - f. The man, possessed so deeply by these spirits, already knows the name of Jesus and that he is the son of God. How does he know this? Because the demons know it. Demons have access to information. They recognized Jesus. And they couldn't even stand, but rather, they bowed in submission before Him.
 - i. Notice Jesus had already been speaking to the evil spirit(s) before the man even reached him. I
 - ii. Remember, **Jesus came to destroy (do away with) the WORKS of the devil.**
3. What did these demons do? Look at the result of this affliction:
- a. He wanted to destroy himself.
 - b. He didn't feel like he was worthy to live.
 - c. His pain was so great that he cut his body. Just as an anorexic is filled with self-loathing, and engages in self-destructive behavior, so this man also. He was filled with pain. I am sure the townspeople didn't help any by chaining him to some tombs (so that he might die).
 - d. Just like every human being, he bore strong negative feeling of self-worth and value.
 - e. We talked about this last week...**where is your value coming from?** What you accomplish? What you look like? What kind of friends you hang out with? What you own? Take those all away and many folks would be just like this man. Lost, alone, with no sense of purpose and value.
 - f. Jesus rebukes the demon and has this conversation with them. They ask not to be cast out of the REGION (regionalism and principalities). Satan is not omnipresent like God. He cannot be everywhere and neither can his minions. Jesus would deal with these demons at the cross in a short while later, but for now, he sends them into the pigs to make clear what their real mission is...to steal, kill and destroy.

- i. For those who think Satanism is not a big thing...they do not understand the goals of their master. It is not a trite thing to play with, because demonic possession is a frightful thing.
 - ii. If you have ever been oppressed to the point that you are tormented, you understand what it is like to be “oppressed.” Possessed is 100 times worse. Don’t mess with the enemy or he will make you his puppet.
4. “*And they were afraid*”:
- a. The townspeople see a crazy man no longer crazy, a naked man, no longer naked, and they were afraid. What?
 - b. The townsfolk were more afraid of a free man than a possessed man. When they saw the man in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, they were afraid.
 - i. Part of their fear was found in the fact that *their superstitions had been shattered*, and they didn't know what to make of it all. According to their superstitions, the demons should have had the upper hand over Jesus - but they didn't at all.
 - ii. Fear is a powerful and divisive force.
 - 1. Jesus didn’t argue with them nor did he confront their fear.
 - 2. Jesus could have explained to them all of the theological implications of what had occurred, but Jesus didn’t say a word to them. He spoke only to the man.
 - 3. Jesus knew you cannot argue with fear. That is like trying to herd cats. You can’t do.
 - 4. Fear is unbelief packaged up in a good looking suit. You don’t deal with fear and unbelief with explanations. The way God deals with it is through encounter.
 - 5. Folks...you may have someone you are witnessing to, trying to get them to believe in Jesus. What they need is an encounter with God, not an explanation of what God is. **Encounters always trump arguments.**
 - c. **Why were they afraid?**
 - i. Let me suggest they were a bit like us...they looked in their bibles and said, “*geez, God never did anything like this before, it can’t be God.*”
 - ii. Is that a valid response or a good way to use scripture? It was in fact the way the Pharisees used it...in response to Jesus healing, raising people from the dead and most of all, “forgiving sins.” Much of what Jesus did HAD been done before...but instead of recognizing the hand of God, they focused upon what was new and condemned it and Jesus.
 - 1. We do the same thing. People see us clapping in church after we sing songs and say we aren’t biblical (because they didn’t clap in the bible).
 - 2. Or we pray over the sick and they are made whole. Well, that’s in the bible, but it makes me fearful.
 - iii. Others were upset that Jesus had upset the status quo. They weren’t afraid of the crazy guy in the cemetery. That’s just Joe howling at the moon. Everything is okay as long as Joe is running around naked and howling and cutting himself. Everything is normal. But get Joe in his right mind, with clothes on...yikes, that’s scary!
 - 1. How do you feel at the prospect of Jesus stepping into your life and changing things? Are there some things you will not give Him to change? Your job? Your life-style? Your income bracket? Your hobbies? Your forms of entertainment? What you purchase, how you spend your money? How you spend your week-ends? Your traditions of worship? Your boyfriends or girlfriends?
 - iv. Others, like the pig herders could care less about old Joe. They were concerned more about their income than about the sanity and value of a man who was oppressed beyond our wildest imagination.

- v. The last thing I can think of about these townfolks is that they hadn't come to grips with the concept that God really loves them.
 - 1. Maybe they had been told that God only cares for your soul and not your body.
 - 2. Maybe they had been told that God didn't heal or deliver people anymore, because that was for the time of Elijah and Moses, it isn't for today.
 - 3. Or maybe they had been told that deliverance and healing were for signs and surely, there hadn't been any prophets in over 400 years...so signs were obsolete too.
- d. **Jesus rebukes the demons** and they ask him to send them into a herd of pigs (lest they be tortured – whatever that means).
 - i. He obliges them and the demons do what demons do, they steal, kill and destroy, and they cause the herd of pigs to run over a cliff, like a bunch of lemmings. (I wonder are lemmings demon possessed?).
 - ii. Just last week, there was a report of somewhere in England where cows were hurling themselves off a cliff. Definitely demons.
- e. Anyway, this man gets free of his demons! He is restored to normal, and doesn't need counseling...wow! You know when we pray for deliverance we feel we must counsel the person for a year or so to make sure they are stable and have the tools to survive. And then we disciple them to make sure that they won't believe any bad stuff. (which are all fine and good). But look what Jesus does:
 - i. When Jesus got into the boat to leave, the man who had been demon-possessed was so grateful for what He had done, he begged him that he might leave and go with them (v. 18)
 - ii. Go home to your friends and tell! What the Lord has done for you! if He is real to you!
 - 1. We make our congregations think that they need to attend this course on evangelism, and that course, but in reality, all we need is to be excited with what God has done for us! We only simply tell what the lord has done for us, and how he has had compassion on us.
 - 2. We think we need to be trained to lead people to God...when all we need is a testimony! A story about How Good God is to us!
 - 3. This man didn't go home and say, "the preachers job is to share the gospel" – he went home to his family and friends and then to the 10 cities and told EVERYONE what Jesus had done for him.
 - 4. His message: I was the crazy guy who was naked, now I'm whole. Jesus saw me and had compassion on me and set me free. He can do for you what he did for me."
 - 5. When the people see how God has worked in the persons life, and how he has transformed them, then they have no excuse, they cannot deny the power of God.

EPILOGUE:

- 5. Jesus returns to the "other side" – his home town! You'd think he would have a welcome there. But nope. They reject him, and the bible says that "Jesus cannot do many miracles there (CANNOT!!!!) because of their lack of faith."
 - a. Then Jesus sends out the 12 in vs. 7-13 to heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom around the region of his hometown of Nazareth (lower Galilee).
 - b. This is followed by Mark 6: 39-44 and the feeding of 5000.
 - c. And then in Mark 6:45-52 Jesus sends the disciples to go on ahead and to re-cross the lake to the place they had been before (several weeks or months probably passed), and then after praying on a mountain, Jesus walks on the water across the lake (and was about to pass them by).
 - d. Then finally, in Mark 6:53-56 they arrive back in Gennesaret (where the man with the legion of demons was, and where people wanted Jesus to leave them alone) "*When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. 55They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to*

wherever they heard he was. 56And wherever he went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed."

6. Do you have a story? If you belong to Jesus you do. You and I are called to demonstrate the Kingdom of God (show the love and mercy of God) to others by telling and praying and declaring. We confront the darkness where we go and we bring the light of Jesus.
7. Perhaps you have a friend or co-worker or neighbor that has come to you with a problem. They know you are a church-goer. They just don't know you know the King. Let's visibly demonstrate and encounter with God by inviting God to show up and minister to their needs. Yes, you might have to pray with them...you might have to tell them what God did for you...but what if God uses that and you see someone come to LIFE as a result? You have only eternity to lose for that person by your silence!