

## Kingdom of God – Part 23 – “The Violence of the Kingdom”

1. Review
2. Matthew 11:11-12 *“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it”*.
  - a. This is a very troubling passage...one that doesn't seem to be very clear to the eye, it seems to have hidden meaning under the surface...what did Jesus mean when He said this?
  - b. The Greek interpretation is “seize it like a conquered city.” "experiences violence" or "forces its way" like a rushing mighty wind forces its way through closed doors and cracks in the walls.
  - c. The Kingdom of Heaven advances with not only power but force, violent force, almost irresistible force. It isn't violence as you and I understand it. It is a violence that so powerfully grabs a hold of people and shakes them to the core. The Kingdom comes and conquers our hearts.
    - i. What is wrong with that picture? Is that the reality that you have experienced? If you have experienced “churchianity” I would guess that it isn't what you've experienced. In fact, most of what we experience is passive, weak and powerless.
  - d. Last week I talked about the true gospel comes in power. **If the gospel we preach doesn't impact with power, then we better examine what we are preaching.**
3. Jesus' reference to violence refers both to the intensity of the spiritual warfare that the Gospel of the Kingdom is a part of as well as to the intensity required to be a disciple and follower of Christ.
  - a. **“The kingdom will never be received passively. It is always founded on God's work on our behalf, but God's work will always produce a response in us.”**
  - b. The Greek words for 'violent' and 'violence' in this instance points to someone who lays hold of the Gospel with their whole being in a no nonsense sort of way, fully intending to hear, receive and do what God says.
  - c. Does that describe you? Maybe that was you many years ago...and since then you have grown complacent, lazy, comfortable, and have decided to share your life with other things.
  - d. **What Jesus is emphasizing in Matt 11:12 is that we cannot sleep our way into the Kingdom.** On the contrary, entrance into the Kingdom requires earnest endeavour, untiring energy, utmost exertion, passion, pain, suffering, violent and valiant effort.:
4. Intimacy is the issue:
  - a. I believe that at the root of all of this lukewarm attitude for us is that we have allowed other things to take God's place in our hearts.
  - b. Some of us have begun a study on intimacy with God – you saw the introductory video – **intimacy –means “In to my face”** – which is what God wants with you and me.
  - c. He wants, He desires our faces, our looking to Him with all our being.
  - d. He is jealous for us...meaning He loves us too much to let us seek other lovers.
  - e. Folks, God is shaking me up – this week as I have sought His face, He has shown me just how self-absorbed I am.
    - i. How much I fill my life and space with stuff that isn't going to matter.
    - ii. How much I have filled my life with stuff that isn't worth a single drop of my Savior's blood.
    - iii. I would like you to ask yourself a question...is what I am interested/absorbed in or by – worth the blood of my Savior?
5. I want to show you a video – about 10 minutes long – after which we will have an extended time of prayer in which you are invited to come to the altar or cry out to God for more of Him!

- a. Repentance is changing directions. It means to have a change of mind (metanoia). That is what God wants to do for and in each of us. To change the way we see life, and the way we see God.
  - b. His Spirit is here. God is here. Inviting us to intimacy.
  - c. The violent kingdom of God – is here to shatter you, to make you His and His alone! The cross is violent on the self-led life.
6. Are the things you're living for worth Christ dying for?