

Reigniting the Flame

I recently preached this message as part of a double-header at Go Church Pretoria East. This is actually the second message, and the first was a reminder of what exactly took place on the cross, with the intention of rending our hearts anew at the majesty of what was done there. I even titled it, "A Rending of the Heart". Here's the thing - many of us have become so comfortable in our salvation, so comfortable in our understanding of the gospel, that we have almost lost sight of it entirely. We sit with our proverbial ticket to heaven, confident that it's stamped by the blood of Christ, and so our future is sure. So **there is no fire for the things of God** - why would there be? We are secure and that's what matters. We are saved, aren't we? Now we live out the remainder of our days and wait for our glorious inheritance. What could be more wonderful? We feel comfortable enough to take a nap while at the wheel, because we think that the car's destination is already set.

The Lord has spoken to me a lot over the past while regarding slumber in his church. You know how to fall asleep? You get **comfortable**. For the most part, here in SA being a Christian is not a dangerous thing. It's a very comfortable thing! And this is why in places where we feel the gospel has been preached, we don't really have much zeal for the things of God. The fire is on a nice, warm, comfortable setting.

This is why I believe many Christians need to be jolted awake again. And I firmly believe that there is but one way and one way alone to achieve this, and it is going back to the foot of the cross regularly to reexamine what took place there. And I mean **really** took place there. You see a lot of us have been conditioned over time to view the cross purely from the perspective of God's love and forgiveness, which is of course immense beyond description, but we lose sight of the fact that we were headed to eternal punishment. We were under God's wrath. God is not just a God of love, He is also a God of justice. He is the very one who even defines what justice is. The word says the following:

[Hebrews 1:8 NIV](#)

But about the Son he says,

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;

[a scepter of justice](#) will be the scepter of your kingdom.

[**You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;**](#)

[**therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions**](#)

[**by anointing you with the oil of joy."**](#)

When wrongdoing takes place, how is justice satisfied? It's through the guilty being held accountable. For God to be a God of justice, He had to ensure that justice was achieved. Forgiveness is not justice. It can flow along with justice, but in itself it is not justice.

We are all sinners. From the days of Adam, **we have been birthed with wickedness** in our hearts. The wages of sin is **death**. We were meant to pay the price ourselves. You and I were in desperate need of a Saviour. But a Saviour would have to be above these same sins that plague us. They would have to be entirely innocent of them. This is where Jesus, the precious, sinless Son of God, took on the form of a human, our form, and willingly gave up his life as the perfect sacrifice for us. He willingly took on the wrath of God to satisfy the punishment that was fully ours. And now, we have been **transformed into the righteousness of God**. It is a remarkable paradox - the ones deserving of death receive forgiveness and salvation, whilst the innocent one deserving of nothing less than glory and majesty takes the wrath and punishment of God for us.

II Corinthians 5:21 NKJV

[21] For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This is our reality, saints. This is where you and I find ourselves **today**. Today it's my goal to stir up our hearts and make us hungry for all that God has called us into through His Son. All that he makes **available to us right here, right now**.

The Kingdom Of God is Here

Saints, do you know that there is a kingdom of God that is here right now, and we have been welcomed into it? Listen to how Jesus spoke of His kingdom:

Mark 1:14–15 NASB

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand'; repent and believe in the gospel.'

"Preaching the gospel of God" — *κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ*

- **εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion)** means “**good news**” or “**glad tidings**.”
- In Roman culture, this word was often used for political announcements, like the birth of a new emperor. So Jesus using this term was loaded with **royal, Kingdom-centered significance**.
- The meaning of the phrase “is at hand” **ἦγγικεν (ēngiken)** = perfect tense → “has drawn near” → **implies already arrived / begun**.

This is the gospel, friends! God has brought his kingdom near with the arrival of his Son **and we can enter into it**. The kingdom of God is a **present reality for us**. We don't often live like it, but it's true. We instead live in a manner that suggests that the kingdom is only something we enter post-death! What a sad way for us to live, don't you think? We spend our days trundling along, always thinking about how this life is some sort of pre-eternity phase where we just need to do the best we can and when the time comes, we can enter into eternity with Christ. No, friends. **Our walk through eternity with Christ** already began the moment we cast our hope, our belief, our lives at his feet. The day we repented and believed, the day we declared our faith in

His salvation, and submitted to his Lordship, that was the day we started an eternity alongside our Creator. Knowing this, shouldn't our lives look drastically different from what we see in portions of the body of Christ today?

Let's change this, beginning with this passage:

Matthew 11:12 ESV

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, **and the violent take it by force.**

What did Jesus mean here? Now admittedly this is a passage that some have interpreted in a different way (i.e. that the kingdom of God was being assailed by evil men (e.g. Herod, Rome etc), but the most widely accepted interpretation here (and the one most logical if you just read it for what it's worth and in context) is that **the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who forcefully pursue it** - in other words, the **zealous**, the ones who want it so desperately that they seize it with all of their being. The passage implies that a hunger for the kingdom of God results in possession of all that comes with that kingdom. **Are we forcefully laying hold of this kingdom in our Christian walk? How much do we want to see the kingdom of heaven on earth?**

Worldly dissatisfaction

During my varsity days I used to listen to a Christian rock band called Switchfoot. One of their songs is titled "Meant to Live", and it has the lyrics "**We were meant to live for so much more, have we lost ourselves?**" Do you ever think this to yourself? For the last few years of my life I've been feeling an immense level of frustration that I can't do more, be more, amount to more. It's as if all of the avenues of so-called pleasure and achievement are completely and absolutely unappealing to me.

The song continues: "**We want more than this world's got to offer**" - and that is 100% reflective of me at this moment. I look at what the world has to offer, the very best of the best of it, and it just completely lacks any semblance of genuine satisfaction.

Charles Spurgeon:

"You will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else."

I am searching for something so much deeper. Something that is outside of this world, or rather something that is not visible with our natural eyes, or able to be sensed through any of our natural senses, but instead something that exists in and around us and is always present, **but we just don't pay it any mind!**

When I think of the things that the apostles and the early church were doing, something is ignited within me. **An insatiable hunger to want to experience the fullness of the Kingdom of God.** My greatest fear in this world has now become the thought of missing out on all that I

could've walked in if only I had completely and utterly given over my life to God. It's not about missing out on being CEO of my own multi-million dollar company, it's not about missing out on getting that monster R100m mansion, or a Lamborghini, a yacht, a you fill in the blank. It's also not about being something or someone that the world looks up to. It's about knowing that when I was being formed in my mother's womb, God already knew me, He already laid out all the days of my life, He already knew what my calling and gifts would be, what He would make available to me. Today I want to declare boldly that I want it all. I don't want 10% of it, I don't want 50% of it, I don't even want 90% of it, **I want absolutely everything God has for me, not one ounce less.** And I understand that that means giving myself to Him fully. I understand that it means committing my life's purpose to Him alone and surrendering to His Lordship. I'm ok with that. My faith in Christ, my experience in the Kingdom of God this side of eternity cannot be as small as merely calling myself a Christian and attending church regularly. Absolutely not.

I know there are people out there who think that God is just chilling, waiting for the appointed day when Jesus is meant to return. No, totally not according to the Word. Our God works throughout history!

My God is **alive**, he is **powerful**, He is the same, yesterday, today and forever. He is the same God from 2000, 3000, 6000 years ago. He's the same God who set the earth on its foundations, the same God who splits the sea, the same God who rains down manna from heaven, the same God who sends down fire and brimstone upon his enemies, the same God who strikes down giants, who causes the sun to stop shining, who brings down fortified walls, who rescues his servants from blazing furnaces, shuts the mouths of lions, raises the very dead, the firstfruit of whom is his Precious Son. The same God who never sleeps nor slumbers, the same God whose eyes are upon those who love him and put their hope in him. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the one who empowers us, guides us, leads us - He is even now equipping, moving, **working!**

Look, here's the point. God is interested in his creation. He is interested in you and me. Because of this, **He is still working**, He is still seeking those who are willing to serve Him. I am putting up my hand. I am putting up both my hands. I want to be part of the Lord's army. "**Here I am, send me!**". In the context of eternity, what is my life on this earth? It is but a breath of wind, a blade of grass that withers in the sun. I want to take every bit of it and commit it to my Lord and King. There is no other pursuit in this world that could ever yield a greater harvest.

What The Kingdom Means For Us

So what does it actually mean to walk or work within the Kingdom of God? This is something one could spend their entire life unpacking, so this message could never reach the depths and the heights and the breadths available to us in this Kingdom, but there are three broad things I want to talk about today, each of which are fundamental aspects of advancing God's kingdom here on earth **and** living a life within it.

II Corinthians 5:11, 14-15, 20 NKJV

[11] **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;**

[14] For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

[20] Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

1. Our lives take on a new trajectory (sanctification)

The first thing about kingdom living is that our **lives are meant to be changed**. The moment we are saved, the moment we truly repent in our hearts, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and our relationship with sin is changed forever. **We are no longer slaves to sin**. The chains are gone and we are free. However, as any Christian knows, we often struggle to embrace that freedom. Many times we continue being yoked to sin unnecessarily. But this is what the process of **sanctification** is about. Sadly in many churches nowadays, the gospel message ends at the point of salvation. This is why discipleship is so integral to the Christian walk. The truth of it is that salvation is something we work out through the rest of our lives this side of eternity.

Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for **his good pleasure**.

This passage is key:

- We **work out** our salvation (i.e. Greek word “katergazomai” (κατεργάζεσθε) means to **bring to full effect**)
- This refers to the **ongoing transformation** we experience as a result of God's active working in our life
- Note the phrase “**it is God who works in you**” - this is by God's **grace**, not by our performance

So it is a very real expectation for each and every Christian that when we enter into salvation, when we enter into the kingdom of God, we are meant to be transformed. **We become more and more like Jesus.**

II Corinthians 3:18 NKJV

But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as by the **Spirit of the Lord**.

Think about it, if we are living lives that are completely indistinguishable from someone who doesn't believe in God, how exactly are we being transformed? If we look like a non-believer, act like a non-believer, speak like a non-believer, spend all our time with

non-believers, pursue all the same things as non-believers, how exactly are we being set apart? How are we living out that **righteousness** of God that we have been called into?

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 GNBUK

Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, **for it cannot be done**. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together? How can Christ and the Devil agree? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God!

Remember Jesus' words about salt and light. Even if we look like **salt** on the outside, but we have lost our flavour, we would be of no value anymore. As the body of Christ, so many of us have been led into a state of complacency. We have been led to believe that **merely existing as a Christian** is fulfilling the mandate God has given us. That just being present in areas where those who don't know Christ are will automatically bring them to a heart-rending and a calling to Christ. For many Christians, we seem to think that the entirety of the Christian experience is that of the salvation moment alone. Thereafter, all we do is, for lack of a better phrase, **wait for death**. This is tragic. THERE IS SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT!

Here's the thing, you and I are so precious to and loved by God that he doesn't want us to ever cease existing. He wants us to live forever with Him. He treasures you to this extent. What a remarkable thought! Jesus answered, when asked by those who believed that life ends at death, "**God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**" So we are already living out this magnificent reality right here, right now. **We shall not taste true death, friends.** We have no need to ever be afraid of it. And now, within this place, our lives and actions and purposes and goals should all flow from this place of eternal kingdom perspective!

John 17:1-3 ESV

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. **And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

So the first thing that we should see in our lives is a **shift or transformation**. This means that we become ever more like Christ. We begin to absolutely hate sin. We are repulsed by it. And here's the thing, it's so very easy to say "I don't get drunk, I don't steal, I don't murder, I don't do all these obvious things", but remember that **it is the state of our heart that God wants to transform**. The Holy Spirit works within us and begins to shape us through sufferings, trials, periods of obscurity, and discipline. Yes, discipline. Remember, **God disciplines those that he loves**. I don't want to minimize in any way the struggles we face in this world, but saints, **we have to learn to grow**

through them. We have to learn to be constantly becoming more and more Christ-like. Allowing the circumstances and the seasons to achieve their full purpose as God works in us. **Take a look back on your life one year back, 5 years back, 10 years back - have you grown in your spiritual maturity?**

The substance of the transformation in our lives is that we need to radically change our perspective on earthly matters and shift to seeing with **spiritual eyes and hearing with spiritual ears**. This means that we no longer worry about material things, like food, clothes, shelter, provision generally - **God has already promised to provide these**. We learn to trust God and his promises. We learn to live from a place where every word God has spoken is **pure truth**. We find that our pursuits in life shift more and more toward his Kingdom and less and less towards our own ambitions.

There is a reason why the Christian faith is and has always been under assault by the world. It's because we are so different from the world. It grates others when they see us living for purposes that aren't material wealth, success or the like!

John 17:14–16 (Jesus praying for His disciples)

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

This means that our lives begin to take a trajectory that is ever more focused on God, and a life that richly begins to **produce the fruit of the Spirit**.

II Corinthians 2:14-15 NKJV

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

2. Sharing the gospel and loving others

What should be our life's purpose? We often get asked, "**What is God's will for your life?**". We have already seen half of this calling - working out our salvation (sanctification) through fear and trembling, being transformed into the image of Christ and bringing glory to Him through it. But this is primarily inwards or focused on self. What happens outwardly or focused on others? **This is where the Lord's great commission to share the gospel to the furthest places on earth is our shared purpose.**

Charles Spurgeon:

"If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay."

Romans 10:14-15 ESV

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And **how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?** And **how are they to hear without someone preaching?** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Our calling is encapsulated in this:

Matthew 22:37

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind"

The second is like it: **"Love your neighbor as yourself."**

We cannot say that we love God if we are not concerned for the welfare of our neighbour. This is the funny thing - true sanctification, true conformance to the image of Christ yields an outward focus - **a focus on others, a love of others.** This is also where the advancement of God's kingdom through the spreading of the gospel is our mission. Unfortunately, in a great many parts of the world, this is not a primary focus. The goal is to entertain, or to be entertained, instead of being concerned about the millions of brothers and sisters in this world who are perishing apart from God.

What is the reason for why we don't want to pursue a life of pushing into the things of God? Many of us will resonate with the people in this story Jesus told:

Luke 14:12-24 ESV

Vv "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' **But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'** And another said, **'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.'** And another said, **'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and **compel** people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

Does this parable strike a chord in your heart? How often do we neglect the things of God with a simple excuse of being "too busy". How many of us say, I have a business that I am trying to honour God through, so we pray for God to bless it, all the while knowing that the real reason we want the business to be successful is so that we are successful. We have to be real guys. God sees right into our heart's motives.

Our church's name is Go Church. We have been called to **go out** and share the good news of Christ. We cannot keep this blessing to ourselves. There are places in the world being reached now that no one could've imagined. The fastest growing churches are in Iran and China - two of the most unexpected places on earth. Revivals are stirring up across Asia, in Japan, Korea, India! Keep an eye on these places and watch what the Spirit does soon.

Let us fulfil the mandate to evangelise, to welcome brothers and sisters into this glorious eternity we are already in the midst of. Even today, maybe we aren't in a space to go on a missionary trip, but we can pray. **We can pray, saints!**

3. Operating in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Lastly, one of the outpourings and signs of the church walking in the fullness of the Kingdom of God are miracles and wonders. We often think this kind of thing is a mystical thing restricted to times past, or to specific gifted preachers.

[John 14:12 \(NIV\)](#)

Jesus talking about his works (miracles):

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and **they will do even greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father.

We should be seeing **greater and greater measures of the Spirit** being poured out with time, not less! As we proceed to the return of our Lord, we should see more and more power in the Church! What do we currently see? We often see faithlessness regarding miracles. Why is that? We have been assailed in our minds by the rise of logic and "science" masquerading as truth, when the truth is that God created science. Science can practically explain a great many things, but supernatural things can only be explained by a supernatural being, which God has done through His Word!

Let us break free of the mental chains we have taken on through believing in many of the secular arguments and reasonings we hear nowadays and **step back into the spiritual realm**. The realm where **all things are possible**. Where hands are laid on the sick, and they are made well. Where demons are cast out in the name of Jesus. Where the blind begin to see, and the deaf begin to hear. Where the very dead are raised! We will do even greater things than these, through the **very same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead**. The same Spirit who lives in us today.

The kingdom of God operates in these things. They are normal - they are not unexpected or unusual!

Exhortation

Saints. Let me close with this. How can we receive this remarkable gift of freedom, this infinite joy, this eternal hope... how could we receive salvation from the very hands of the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the one who literally created us and created everything for us, the one who single-handedly rescued us from the brink of despair and destruction, the one who gives us breath and life and health each day, the one who gives us our families, our children, our jobs, our every bit of provision... **how could we receive so much and yet give back so little?** How could we have been blessed to this degree and then sit back and say, "Yeah, God, that kingdom stuff. That evangelism stuff. That preaching stuff. That serving stuff. That loving others stuff. That praying stuff. That ain't for me, I'm good."

We have been given the greatest gift that we could possibly ever receive. **The pearl of great price.** The treasure that you're meant to sell everything for because you're so captivated by it. And yet we rest on our laurels and say, yeah I'll accept all of that, but actually serving or doing something for his Kingdom? Nah.

God did not die on a cross for me and you to live out the rest of our lives pursuing money. Jesus was not beaten and bruised so that we can spend our lives obsessing over worldly things. The Son of God was not ridiculed and tortured and lifted onto that tree so that you and I could lift ourselves up and make everything about us.

Saints. **We owe God our lives.** Nothing less. We owe Him our absolute everything. He reached into the depths of darkness and death and set us free from that waterless pit and placed us not just in His light, but he raised us to be seated in the heavenlies alongside Christ for eternity. How could we spend this life now that has been redeemed in this manner, for any other purpose than His?

Hebrews 11:24-26 ESV

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**

Let us take hold of the Kingdom of God today. Let us push into it with vigor and zeal. Let us lay hold of it and never let go. Like Jacob held onto God when He wrestled with Him. Like that lady who reached out and touched Jesus' cloak to receive healing, so too let us lay hold of this and receive power from on high. Let us live lives on fire for God, **thirsty for God!**

Revelation 22:17 ESV

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." **And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.**