

# The Kingdom of God is at Hand

Pastor James

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Father, this morning, once again, we come to You, Lord. 52 weeks. We thank You. We thank You, Lord. You are there every time we gathered in Your name, every place. It didn't matter where we gathered, which hall, which city, which country, it didn't matter. You were there. We just thank You. We just thank You. We just thank You, Lord. We just thank You. Once more, we surrender ourselves, Lord, into Thy hands. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Speak to us. For You have the words of life. Speak to us. Let every ear be opened. Unblock clogged ears. Let every heart be open to receive life, Your life, the overcoming Zoe Life. Nothing can stand before that Life. That Life is victory. That Life is triumph. That Life is the life of God Himself. Teach us a little more about You, about this is eternal life, that we know You. That's what we come here for, eternal life. For You said the lips of a priest, from the lips of the priest, you shall know the knowledge of God. Speak to us. Speak to us, Lord. For in Jesus' name we pray. Amen, amen, amen.

A little less than 14 hours left. Right? In 2023 we'll be over.

Turn with me now to Ephesians chapter 5, verses 15 to 17.

Look back and reflect, look forward and believe. See that you walk circumspectly, carefully. Not as fools but as wise. Redeeming the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is. So there if you look at it the foolish are those who do not understand the will of God. The wise are the ones who understand the will of God. Redeem the time. That's why today it's over. 2023 is over. Just 14 hours. If you were to go by, yeah, 14 hours and 5 minutes left for us on this side of the globe. What does it mean? It means it's gone. You will never get 2023 back again. It's gone. It's fast. It's over. That's what we call past. Because life is measured in this body on earth, life is measured in time. The evening and the morning was the first day. That's how it is recorded. Time. And what you and I do will be measured in time. And in time what you and I do is called life. So the Bible says, redeem the time. Not only is time passing away, as the verse says, also the days in which we are living, the times in which we are living is evil. Much more evil than the days Paul wrote about. The question is - how do I redeem time? The answer is there. The only way we can actually redeem the time is by knowing the will of God. It is by knowing the will of God. If you know the will of God, you redeem time.

Like we said, like the great man said, two most important days are - the day you were born and the day you discover why. But for us, the most important day is not the day that we were born, because everybody was born. But the day we were born again. And then, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Please remember, if you look around the world, you will see you can be very busy and yet be ineffective. And some of you may look back at 2023 and say, 'I was so busy. I had no time.' Yet you look back, it's ineffective. You could be an incredible success in this world and yet be a failure in eternity. Remember the fool who was rich? You cannot be rich unless you were successful. Rich and a fool. You could have made money, riches, more than any man, had wisdom, and acquired knowledge than any man.

There's a record in the Bible in 1 Kings chapter 4, 29 and 30.

## **1 Kings 4:29-30**

***<sup>29</sup> And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. <sup>30</sup> Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.***

Wealth too, he probably was the richest king in human history. Because he talks about the tribute that came in every year, which was in tons of gold. Yet at the end of Solomon's life, his entire life is summed up in one word, 'empty.' 'Vanity, vanity, vanity.' 'Empty, empty, empty.'

What a waste of all that God gave him! What a waste! Because somewhere along the way he lost his way. And I hope somewhere along this year if you lost your way you will find it back today. Because life is measured in time. And you redeem time by knowing His will.

That's why Pastor Vijay and we, both, came from the secular world, you know, professional, secular world. And we look back and we say, 'thank You Lord. Thank You Lord.' If God hadn't intervened and showed us what He wanted us to do, we would have gone that way. We would have gone that way. All my colleagues, every one of my colleagues are profs in universities, central universities, India, abroad, all like his, all of them. We all started at the same time. I cleared my NEET before them. But at that crucial moment God turned me. He shut doors and turned around and then we look back, 'Oh Lord, would I ever go back there? No.' Because one of the best things about, if you want to call this as a profession, this profession, you never retire. When you retire is the day you die. Because I see my group, people are retiring and they don't know what to do. You thank God, we were not put on the shelf.

So, it's important. And anybody, all of you sitting here, anyone of you, if you find God's will in your life, you never retire. There's no retirement for you. That's why it's important. So one day Jesus ascended up a small hill, it is called a mountain, but a small hill, sat down. And His disciples came to Him. And the greatest words ever spoken by man, were spoken that day by the Son of Man. And in that sermon He says, you know, He uses Solomon. And He will say, 'Actually, one wiser than Solomon is here.' So we heard about Solomon's wisdom. But One wiser than Solomon is here. And He addresses issues that we all face. This is how He addressed,

### **Matthew 6:25**

***<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"***

He says, 'Is not life more than this?' So the Author of Life, when the Author of Life speaks about life, listen. If you can, like a dog, move your ears, move it towards Him. Have you noticed dogs? They can move their ears when they want to listen. So I think Solomon was looking at a dog and says, 'Incline your ear.' 'My son, incline your ear.' So when the Author of Life is speaking about life, pay attention. Because this is what life is for most people. That's what motivates them. We call them primary needs.

In verses 31 and 32, He puts it across even more.

### **Matthew 6:31-32**

***<sup>31</sup> "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.***

So God, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, not to the crowd. The crowds are waiting for another lunch break. They follow Him wherever there is free food. That's why on Christmas day, it's full. Sunday morning, it's half empty. Because on Christmas, there was lunch. And Sunday morning, there is no lunch. You know, it was full packed. Jesus is differentiating between life's needs. He says, 'I know what you need. I created it. I know what you need.'

So here, He is saying, 'Don't let these things define your life - what to eat, what to drink, what to wear? This 'what and what' like I said, everybody, poor or rich, they worry about what all to eat. Poor will worry about what to eat. Rich will worry about what all to eat, what all to drink, what all to wear. The poor tries to cover their nakedness. The rich will open and say, 'I have nothing to wear today.' But it's primarily the same, primarily the same. Need-based life. Need-based life. And generally speaking, generally speaking, that's how most of humanity. So God is telling His children, 'You don't live like that.' Your life will be wasted. It's a waste. That's how Solomon ended. With all his wisdom, every morning he woke up and said, 'What all shall I eat today?' And the Bible, you should read the table that was spread for him. I mean, how can a man eat so much? 'Who all should I marry?'

I used to say in my messages, 300 wives and 600 concubines, till somebody corrected me and said, 'Pastor, no it is 700 concubines.' I said, 'okay, I missed 100.' You see, I call Solomon the Lord of the Flings. 1000. Look at this man. Need-based, pleasure-based, desire-based life. People need lead. And if you look, if you listen to people in the US, the young people, I brought here also, you listen to them. I ask them, 'So what is your plan?' 'So this is my plan. By 40, I want to retire. At 40, I want to retire. And then I'm going to live a life of ease. I have already planned out my life. I want to work like a dog till 40. Save my fortune and 50 onwards, life is a vacation.'

So Jesus is speaking to all people in all generations. But if you study even in the world, like I said last week, successful people, the reason they are successful, because success doesn't just come like, like, you know, for success, there are laws established. And if you study successful people, is that you will see is, first they establish priorities. 'This is what I want. This is what I want.' Then they organize their life, which is time around it, because you only have 24 hours, 24 hours. Okay. So you have to organize your life, which is equal to time, around it. And then you discipline yourself over a time to stick to your organization or your organizing schedule. Like people who want to crack NEET. IIT, JEE, whatever. They have their time table set. First when they start the time table, it is difficult. 4 'O clock in the morning. And they divide their subjects like that.

That's how we all used to do in school time. We divide, okay, most difficult. That we will give more time. The easiest we give little time. We organized ourselves. We organized ourselves. And then work into disciplining ourselves and that organization becomes part of you. That's how people become successful. But that's a temporal success. Eternity, it may count to nothing. You may not even make it into Heaven, if you are not save. And most successful people in the world will not be there in Heaven. Please understand that.

As I said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man. Okay. Because the more successful you become because of all these things, the more you start trusting yourself. And then it is very difficult to come to the Cross because when you come to the Cross, it's the end of self. Okay, so if you remember, success comes with a very high price tag, very high price tag. So if you are successful, let it be God's way. So in Hebrews 12-2, we look to in God's sight, the Man who was hanging 2,000 years ago on a Cross, hanging there, broken, bleeding, on a Roman Cross, naked, hanging over there. But in eternity, we will realize that He was the most successful Man ever.

So let's look unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. Always remember, though we study from Adam onwards to the last one in the Bible, our role model is always Jesus. You learn from Him. And if you look into what He says, He actually made life very easy for us, very, very easy. How to live a successful life now and forevermore. Okay, what did He do in Matthew 6, the same chapter, verse 33, was that He reduced life's priorities to two main priorities –

### **Matthew 6:33**

***<sup>33</sup> But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

Two priorities, like two sides of a coin. It's one coin, but two sides.

He says, 'Seek first.' Now when we say, 'seek first,' it means more than first; it means exclusively. Him alone you shall serve. That's what it means, exclusively. His Kingdom and His righteousness. Two things. Don't seek your own righteousness, but His righteousness. He says, 'If you do that,' He says, 'I take personal responsibility to take care of all your needs all the days of your life.' He says, 'I take personal responsibility.' And you look back, I don't know about you, but when I look back, it was true in 2023, He took care. He took care of us. He says, 'I take personal responsibility for meeting all your needs.' And His own life was a testament to this; His own life' if you look at the life of Jesus Christ. His own life was a proof, testament to this. So He says, 'First and foremost, seek the Kingdom of God.' King, dom. Dom means dominate. It's a place where a king dominates. Dominion, dominates. *Seek first the Kingdom of God*, where He is sovereign. Sovereign. Pure gold is called sovereign. His will, His purpose, His intent, seek that. That's what happens in a Kingdom. And connected to this is His righteousness.

Because that's the only thing that can give us a right standing or a right relationship with Him. So we saw on Christmas Day. Did you forget Christmas Day? The day you ate Haleem. Do you remember? Jesus' encounter with Pilate, Caesar's representative of the Roman Empire.

### **John 18:35-36**

***<sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."***

See, that is our struggle. Our struggle is because His Kingdom is not of this world. If His Kingdom was of this world, it becomes very easy. But our problem is that His Kingdom is not of this world. And for now, His Kingdom is not from here. One day very soon, the Bible writes, in Revelation 13 and verse 15, if I am right, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. But for now, it is not from here. So all of our struggles, all of us who are sitting here, our struggle is basically, as believers, we are caught between two worlds. See, the one who works outside doesn't face so much struggle, because he is only caught in this world. But we are caught in two worlds. And about the world, which Jesus is talking about, which we cannot see, this is what the Bible says, in Hebrews 11 and verse 3.

**Hebrews 11:3**

***<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.***

It's telling us that the unseen is what is real. The unseen is more powerful. The unseen is what controls. We are in the seen, but we are talking about a Kingdom that is not seen. You see, angels and demons do not have this struggle. They do not have this struggle at all. They don't struggle like us. They are in the unseen, but they can see the seen. We are in the seen, but we are told to live by the unseen. In Mark chapter 1, 23 to 25, when Jesus began His ministry, this is what is written.

**Mark 1:23-25**

***<sup>23</sup> Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, <sup>24</sup> saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"***

***<sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"***

You see, they knew who Jesus was, but the people did not know. Did you see that? Now they are speaking through a man, but they are in another realm, and they knew who Jesus was. They knew who he was in the other realm, and in this realm. But the people did not know. So there was no confusion. So demons are not confused.

Angels are not confused, because they live in an unseen world, but they understand the seen world very well. We live in a material world, yet we do not realize so many things that influence us and the entire world events. And 2024 will be even more influenced, because as the Day gets closer and closer and closer, the influence of these two kingdoms will get stronger. Interestingly, people who belong to pagan religions, they are very aware of spirits and demons. So to appease or to protect, they are given different things, which they tie all around themselves. In their house, on their bike, on their car, you will see a lot of things tied. It has got to do with not this realm. It has got to do with the other realm. So religions understand the other realm, but they do not really understand. So it is always about appeasement. Every religion. You cannot survive unless you bring the unseen realm over here. Buddha, who was kind of silent about God, did not explain about God. He was silent. He just brought a religion which is man-based. Do this, do this, do this, do this, do this and left it that after he died, the unseen came in.

Now you go to Buddhist countries, you will see it is not Buddha. There are multitude of other gods and statues and images they worship because you cannot survive. No religion will survive. You cannot survive. So the other realm is there. But what about the Kingdom of God? Jesus said, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.' And that's our problem. Christians know very little about it or actually are bothered very little about it. So when the King came as a Man, as a baby born in a manger and He gives us the Gospel. He dies, He rises, He goes and the Gospel goes. Acts chapter 2, verse 18, He puts it across in terms of two kingdoms.

What does the gospel do when you believe what happens?

**Acts 26:18**

***<sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'***

Something happens over there. Our eyes have to be opened that we move from darkness to light. From the power of Satan to the power of God, we receive the forgiveness of our sins. And then after that as we continue that road we are sanctified by faith in Christ, set apart, more and more and more set apart unto God. That's what you need to look at in 2023, December 31<sup>st</sup> at the end of the year – 'Am I set apart unto God and for Him more than how I began this year? Set apart, set apart by faith.' If so we can believe and hope for an inheritance in eternity.

So God uses images over there light and darkness. Understand in Hebrew and Greek for that word 'darkness' also means 'ignorance.' That's why ignorance destroys you because it's darkness. So light and darkness, Kingdom of God and kingdom of Satan, knowledge versus ignorance, this is the knowledge of God, not the knowledge of the world. So Jesus is introducing something which we believers, I too as a Christian for years after being saved, missed out. If we turn to the Gospel according to Mark the first and the shortest concise Gospel, this is how it begins.

### **Mark 1:1-3**

***<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." <sup>3</sup>"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'***"

***The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.*** So this is the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Person, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."<sup>3</sup> "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

Now you should go to parallel account in Matthew chapter 3, like Mark, straight away begins with John. Matthew chapter 3 verses 1 to 3,

### **Matthew 3:1-3**

***<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" <sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'***"

So the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent why? ***For this is he who has spoken by the prophet Isaiah.*** The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. So John, there, straddles literally between two covenants, the last of the old covenant prophets; the one who will introduce Jesus to us. He also is the one who announces the Kingdom, 'Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is here.' If you go with parallel in Mark chapter 1 verses 14 to 15 this is what the Bible says.

### **Mark 1:14-15**

***<sup>14</sup>Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."***

So if you look at Matthew and if you look at Mark you will feel there are two different usages. In Matthew it says 'Kingdom of Heaven' in Mark he is saying 'kingdom of God.' What is the difference? Kingdom of Heaven is a place. Kingdom of God is more the manifestation of the power of that place, the power of that place. Let me try to explain to you in modern terms which those who once in a while by mistake read a newspaper will understand. (These are all puns indented ok? That's why we stopped the newspaper at GSS because I found every week it was rolled just the way the newspaper man left it. And I think our young beautiful charming girls were using it to line their cupboards without understanding the news.)

Ok? That's a war going on in the Middle East, Israel and the Palestinians, Hamas. And on one side the Houthi militants in Yemen have been shooting drones and missiles blocking all traffic that goes through Red Sea and they are kind of successful because traffic has come down. It affects all of us because if the ships don't come through Red Sea they have to go through all the way around Africa. That means the price of commodities will start slowly going up because overhead costs go up. So nothing happens which will not touch every one of us. Ok? So what happens America's fifth

fleet most of the ships have moved into over there to protect the shipping. Where is America? U.S. it's far away. What is happening over there? The place is far away. The manifestation of power is happening somewhere else. Got it? Is America near the Red Sea? No. America is far away. But what you see is the manifestation of their power. One of the ships that was near India also got hit and three of the Indian frigates and destroyers have moved towards that to protect our shipping. So it's a manifestation of power.

So the Kingdom of Heaven is a place the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk. It's a matter of power. It's a manifestation of the power of that Kingdom. Get this. Get this very, very clearly. Ok? Very, very clearly. So when God is asking us 'Seek ye first the Kingdom' it's a place and there is power connected with that. Our issue is this Jesus did not bring any religion. He never brought any religion. He brought us a way by which we could be related to God, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and enter into the Kingdom. But if you are stuck, like I was, for years in the religion called Christianity what will happen is no change will occur. No change will occur. That's why Jesus said, 'Seek the Kingdom first.'

I've used this example before but let me give you the example again, because next month I will be there. Ok? If you go down West Bengal and go to Silguri and 4 hours from Silguri you will reach the border of the only monarchy around this place. A small country called Bhutan. Ok? On that side is a beautiful little country called the last Shangharila Paradise on Earth; the only nation which does not measure its index by economy; the only nation that grows national happiness. That's how the king said you should measure - the happiness of my people, not economic prosperity. It's a beautiful place, peaceful place. Ok? They have all their vices and all that but compared to the rest of the world it's one of the most peaceful places on planet Earth. So on this side is India finally you come to the border, a place called Jai Gang and on that side is the Bhutanese border town called Funchalik.

On this side it is mayhem because it's a democracy, the will of man, mayhem, absolute mayhem; traffic no order, buffaloes, rickshaws everything, policemen is blowing the whistle, nobody cares. Ok? And then you come to this gate and you cannot walk on the road if you want to enter you have to walk through that smaller gate. Once you enter it's completely different the same lawless fellow here is walking on the pavement very carefully. He was lawless here absolutely lawless here, but on that side is very law-abiding. Nobody crosses the roads, that's the only country where there are no traffic lights, ok? and there are zebra crossings. I mean we know where these things happen but we are talking about around our own area where the zebra crossing is. All I have to do is step down and all the traffic will stop for me to cross. Do you know why? What happened? You moved into a kingdom. You moved into a kingdom where the authority and the power of the government is very visible, very visible, ok? So we need to get, when we got saved a lot of our struggles are that people are sitting there because you thought you were saved but you did not know when you saved you entered into a Kingdom, you are no longer in a democracy. You entered into a Kingdom and God's power is available to transform us.

That's why the Bible says, 'As many as who received Him He gave them the power to become the children of God. The children of the King. He gave them the power to become the children of the King. So if you look at Mark chapter 1, you see it's a very concise picture of the ministry of Jesus capsule in one day. When He preaches, verse 22 will say, verse 22 will say, 'Wow! with what authority!' authority is a word associated with Kingdom. 'What authority! not like the scribes. He's not speaking like the scribes. What authority! He casts out demons.' In verse 27 you will see casting out demons and he says, 'What kind of doctrine is this? What kind of authority?'

### **Mark 1:27**

***27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."***

He heals the sick with authority he commands ok? He heals the sick ok? That's a day's captured - morning till evening; the Kingdom is being manifested. Even when He preaches He speaks with authority, when He commands demons, He speaks with authority. When He heals the sick He speaks with authority. Ok? There is something being manifested over there and then we remember the incident in Mark chapter 1 verse 37 remember early in the morning He arose and He went to a deserted place, He was praying, Peter woke up late and he came looked and said, 'Lord, everybody is waiting for You,' this is His response

**Mark 1:37-38**

***<sup>37</sup> When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." <sup>38</sup> But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."***

We see another purpose of Jesus because we need to understand purpose. Ok? Imagine I did not hear or obey God and I ended up teaching in a university, ultimately college university wherever and I finally at 60-62 I retired and I am happily sitting and then saved happy and then I die or He comes and I realize that God saying, 'I never called you to teach; that was not My will for you,' and I realize, 'Oh my gosh! My entire life was a waste.'

***For this purpose, for purpose I came.*** So He is defining His purpose - ***for this purpose I have come forth.***" But I could say, 'But I am teaching, anyway, in a college, ok? teaching in a college.'

There are a lot of teachers in the world, so we will define it even further. If you come to the parallel passage in Luke chapter 4 verses 42-43,

**Luke 4:42**

***<sup>42</sup> Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; <sup>43</sup> but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."***

So He was not just preaching, He was not just preaching. You go through the entire Gospels, He only preached the Kingdom of God. He was not preaching religion, religion is easy. You can put it away, you are in control. But if you listen to the Kingdom the Kingdom is in control. That's what I gave you the illustration. The difference is, here you are walking as you want, as soon as He entered the Kingdom took over, 'Be careful! This is not how you walk here.'

Now Indian vehicles can get permission and drive through the country wherever you have permit but if you are in Thimphu or one of those capitals and blow your horn the cops will stop you, they will say, 'You cannot blow your horns here. Just wait for the traffic to move. We don't blow horns. No noise pollution here. We don't allow it.'

So what happened is that the kingdom took over, the kingdom took over. This is what Jesus is talking about when He sent the 12 disciples out in Luke 9 verse 1 and 2,

**Luke 9:1-2**

***<sup>1</sup> Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. <sup>2</sup> He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.***

***<sup>1</sup> Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons,*** why? because that is the kingdom of darkness opposing the Kingdom of light, so He gave them power over them, and He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. He says, 'When you are preaching, when you are declaring the Kingdom of God there will be manifestations in the crowd who will oppose it, deal with them immediately. That's the kingdom of darkness, deal with them. Deal with them, and if they are sick heal them.'

So there was a Kingdom stuff that was happening over there and you go through, Jesus never wavered from that message. We all entered into this world by virtue of birth, we entered into this world; we were conceived in our mother's womb and we entered into this world and we have no recollection of that, even Gianna though she had a terrible entry into the world, she will have no recollection other than what her parents say to her as she grows up but if we could remember which we cannot our entry into the world was catastrophic from that cocoon inside 9 months happy, happy, happy, happy, you know no worries bindaas (carefree) life was really, there 9 months bindaas; didn't have to go study, no homework, no waking up in the morning, sleep when you want, sleep as long as you want, wake up when you want, kick your mother from inside if you feel like it. It was bindaas life. And then you came out came out and it was like literally if the parents aren't there the child will die. Child will die, literally. That's why you need parents.

So we entered into the world by virtue of birth, we entered into the Kingdom of God by virtue of being born-again. There's no other way. Religion cannot take you in. There's only one way you can enter into the Kingdom of God. And Jesus told one of the most prominent religious figures of His time, of the Jewish hierarchy, Nicodemus,

**John 3:5**

<sup>5</sup> ***Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.***

<sup>8</sup> ***The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."***

To be born of the spirit you have to be born again. What happens is that's the only way you can enter into the Kingdom all of us sitting here we had no choice about our first birth, no choice; we didn't choose, we had no choice. But we have to choose to be born again there. That choice is left to us, we can hear the message, reject the message. Lots of people reject the message and it will be the most important choice we will ever make. Okay? God won't make the choice for us, you and me, He knows all who will make the choice but He didn't make the choice, we made it. He will set before us all the pros and the cons. He will tell about what eternity is like, what Heaven is like and your Father and your Father's House, all the things He will say and He will also talk about the cons; if you reject what is eternity like; the eternal consequences of rejecting the King and the Kingdom. But I have to choose. That's what the word 'repent' means. An entirely different way of thinking.

And I don't know about you, I know roughly the week, not the day, I know it was the fourth week of October 1983 I chose and the outward to the public, the evidence or the proof of your choice is your baptism. Baptism is like what we say in US, it is more like a naturalization ceremony. You've been in US for a long time, you got your citizenship, on that day there is a ceremony that will take place where they will make you take the vow and you are now showing your allegiance, repeating your allegiance to the United States, to the Constitution, the Country, to the flag, then they will take your passport and throw it away. You are no longer a citizen of India now (if you are from India) you are a citizen of USA.

So we didn't realize that our baptism was of a naturalization ceremony - I die to the kingdoms of this world and I rise as a son, a child of the Kingdom of God. Not religion, not religion of this kingdom. Post that, everything is about how to live as a subject of that Kingdom in this world. If you don't get it we wander and most people wander because what they have done is after being born-again they went back to religion. And Jesus didn't bring any religion. Christianity is not a religion, it's not a religion. This is how Jesus put it across in John chapter 17 verses 15 to 17,

**John 17:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> ***I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.*** <sup>16</sup> ***They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*** <sup>17</sup> ***Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.***

***I do not pray that You should take them out of the world*** ... we all wish, 'Lord, when I was saved why didn't You take me out of the world?' Jesus says, 'But I prayed to the Father not to take you out of the world.' So many people have asked me the question, over the years, in every youth conference, 'Pastor when God saved me why didn't He take me out of the world?' I said, 'because He said so.'

<sup>15</sup> ***I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.***

There is the evil one and his kingdom and his kingdom, then he makes his statement now that we are born-again, what are we? We are not of the world, just as Jesus is not of the world.' We are of another planet, no we belong somewhere else, we are not of this world. Comparison just as Jesus is not of the world. So that's why we have to look at Jesus; to see how He lived. I said, 'He is the Author and the Finisher of our faith and how does it happen? Progressively it happens. How does it happen?

**John 17:17**

<sup>17</sup> ***Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.***



*'Father sanctify them'*, meaning, 'Set them apart from that old kingdom, world, democracy to Your Kingdom further and further, how? By Your Word. *Your Word is the truth.*' Set apart. That's why I said, even in the world or in the Church, even this morning, our priorities will shape our perception and our understanding. If you are a need based Christian you will read the Bible that way. If you are a wealth based Christian you will read the Bible that way. If you are a fame based Christian you will read the Bible that way. If your education is your priority you will lead life that way. If leisure is your priority you will lead life that way. If pleasure is your priority you will live life that way. If the Kingdom is your priority everything changes.

2024 my prayer for the Church here and all around listening is that 2024 let the Kingdom be your priority. If as those date setters say that we have only two years left and you have only two years left, run well, run for the King, run for the Kingdom, finish it. Okay. So all Jesus taught in the Bible, if you look, He will always say - the Kingdom of God was like that, the Kingdom of Heaven was like that, the Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom. Parable after parable after parable all about the Kingdom. He is not talking religion; He is talking about the Kingdom. Jesus taught in parables, almost every parable is about the Kingdom. But one of His first comments about the most important or well known parable is this - in Matthew 13, verses 10 and 11,

#### **Matthew 13:10-11**

***<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" <sup>11</sup> He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.***

It's not given. Did you see that? And the most well known parable, not well known in theological circles, when we teach of course the parable of the prodigal son is the most well known, the parable of the sower is the parable of all parables. This is Jesus' comment on it, in Mark chapter 4 and verse 13,

#### **Mark 4:13-15**

***<sup>13</sup> And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?***

How will you understand all parables? Now, let us read verses 14 and 15,

***<sup>14</sup> The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.***

Now let us go to Matthew chapter 13 to see what the sower sowed.

#### **Matthew 13:18-19**

***<sup>18</sup> "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.***

***therefore here the parable of the sower when anyone hears the word of the Kingdom ...*** the devil is not interested in all sermons; it is not interested in all sermons. If he hears the Kingdom being preached he will come and try to take you because he knows he is in trouble, because those who understand the Kingdom become a threat to his kingdom. Everything else you can preach he is not worried because in every religion same things are preached. He is not bothered, he says, 'I can handle them .I can handle them.

That is why from tonight starting now from tonight when you read the Word, listen to the Word sit with the Kingdom as your perspective, as your priority. So that we will understand the Scripture as to what Christ is speaking to us. ***Anyone who hears the word of the kingdom.*** Why don't we understand it? Because our priorities are something else, priorities are something else, priorities are completely different. When I was young, very young, young little kid like all these little kids over there, living with my parents school quarters, evening after school you are playing like a madman and it is getting darker and darker and you can hear your mother screaming, Santhu! Santhu! Santhu!' calling me, and I am like, '5 more minutes! 5 more minutes! 5 more minutes!' as soon as it gets dark you get home and immediately say, 'I am hungry,' but she was calling you because the snacks were ready but then your priority was different. Okay. Now darkness has set and priority changes. You will see only according to your priority. In literature we call it,

'backgrounding' and 'foregrounding' okay. God says, 'If you want to understand life, if you want to understand Scripture, if you want to be and grow as My child, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Otherwise in eternity you will be a successful failure,' because our priorities will determine our understanding.

In Luke 16:16 this is what Jesus says,

**Luke 16:16**

<sup>16</sup> ***"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.***

Till John is the law and the prophets, because after that what is being preached? John came and said, 'Repent! For the Kingdom of God is near. Repent! For the kingdom of God is here.' You see when Paul and all who understand who will tell us about - *knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men*, religion doesn't talk about that. Why does he say 'knowing the terror of the Lord'? it is because one day before we know, in the twinkling of an eye the Kingdom will be here and after that is judgment. This is not religion, this is not karma, this is judgment. And therefore he says, till John, was the law and the prophets but after that the Kingdom of God has been preached and he says, 'everyone is pressing into it.'

The question is 2023 are you pressing into it? Were we pressing into it? So there is a clash. In Matthew 11 and verse 12 Jesus says,

**Matthew 11:12**

<sup>12</sup> ***And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.***

The violent take it by force. Whole of last week, today is Sunday, last week we had our young pastor leading us in the five days of revival. I don't know you are also busy barbequing on the rooftop while those young people were gathered fasting and praying and listening to a young man. You should have listened to what he was saying, he says, 'We are the resistance army. Our job is to resist the powers of darkness,' and he preached entirely from the book of Elijah, about Elijah from first kings chapter 17 and all the young people were there, they were all there. Every night they were there fasting, praying, listening, he's caught his young flock together very well, mentors them. They were not worried about the world, they were not worried about what is happening around. The pastor said, 'come' and they came. If he says, 'fast' they fast, 'listen' they listen, 'pray' they pray. It's very clear. It's a Kingdom and we are soldiers, we are fighting the powers of darkness and we have to fight so that others can press in and get in, because suddenly the end will come.

So God says that you have to be violent because the old ways of life have to die, patterns of thinking have to change, life has to change. There is a young man in our midst where is Lawrence? Lawrence is right over there, you came last year, he came last year I don't know who brought him, he comes from a catholic family, father and mother died, works for an IT company, came from the catholic family, broken, grieving but he sat here, heard the Word of God, heard the Word of God, made a commitment to the Lord, he got into the Kingdom and once he got into the Kingdom there is hostility from the rest of the family because he left religion and he has got into something else which they don't understand. But before the year finished he said, 'Pastor, would you come to my house?' He's got a little house in Alwal I said, 'I will tell you what to do, I won't do it for you but I will tell you,' I said, 'all these things are idols. It's a new way of life.' and before the year finished he took out every idol, every picture. It's not easy those idols and pictures were put there by his father and his mother, who have passed away, whom he grieves over, he took it all out. He said, 'I want my house only to be filled with the things of God,' and he said, 'Pastor I bought a few books because the rest of the time I will listen to messages and read books.'

Kingdom does stuff and anybody can present, choose to throw away the old ways of life and appropriate a new way of life. It's your choice, it's your choice, because what is happening, the government of Jesus is taking over. It is till the end of our life, this is nothing to be light about, dabbled about. In Matthew 7 and verse 21 this is what Jesus said,

**Matthew 7:21**

<sup>21</sup> ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.***

Because one thing you understand about the Kingdom, unlike democracy is, the Kingdom is run by the will of the King. If you ask in any kingdom ‘what is the law?’ the king will say, ‘Whatever I say.’ That’s why Jesus said, *‘Man shall not live by bread alone by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’* because that’s your law, that’s your law, this is a Kingdom. That’s your law and not that it’s fearsome or terrible, because that gives you absolute liberty, absolute liberty, freedom. You don’t have to worry here because He said, ‘If you do this I will do this. What will I do? What you need in this life I know better than you.’ It’s only when you get older and older you realize how little you needed.

The will of the King. Not everyone, not everyone. Our issue and my issue, often was that, for a long time was, we see Jesus only as the One who set us from the penalty of sin and after that we either go back to the world or we go back to the law, religion is very comfortable. But that’s not what happens. In Luke 17 verse 20 21 this is what He said,

#### **Luke 17:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> ***Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; <sup>21</sup> nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” for indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”***

***When He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come*** because when they are thinking about the kingdom and what Jesus is talking about the Kingdom they are two different things; when they are talking about the kingdom they are talking about David’s kingdom coming, throw the Romans out, etc., that’s why they all shouted “Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!” they thought Jesus is going to come, throw the Romans out and David’s reign is going to start and we will be free from Roman bondage. He said, ‘That’s not what it means. That is Second Coming, that is not the first coming.’

So He says, ***“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; <sup>21</sup> nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” for indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”*** It’s inside; the Kingdom comes into you, even as by rebirth, we entered into the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God comes into us and God’s representative in us is the Holy Spirit. That is the evidence - the personal representative of the King of kings, the Lord of lords got into us. The Spirit of God. Once He comes in, the Kingdom comes in, we are living in the world but we are not of the world, your body, my body becomes an embassy. You and I become an ambassador and your mission in life totally changes.

in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 19 and 20 this is what the Word says,

#### **2 Corinthians 5:19**

<sup>19</sup> ***that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> 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.***

When you get back to your offices on Monday or Tuesday, start thinking - do you know who I am? I am God’s ambassador in this office and through my life with or without words God is imploring the people be reconciled to Christ. That’s who I am. The work I do is irrelevant, who I am is what is relevant. We don’t know what is the kind of work Joseph did in Potiphar’s house. We don’t know what kind of work Joseph did in the prison. But one day when famine came everybody had to go to Joseph and you know what he was doing? He was reconciling people to himself.

Then you will suddenly realize life takes meaning - this is who I am. You know what my body is? My body is the embassy of God on earth. And do you know who I am? I am an ambassador. You know what my purpose is? It is to reconcile. That’s what ambassadors do; they don’t represent the country they are in; they represent the country they are sent from. They only represent the interests of the country that sent them. And that’s what you need to ask. Because I am sure at the end of the year those who come from the secular realm workspace, tired, worn out, are you tired? are you

worn out? Do you feel like you don't want to get up and go to work tomorrow? I wish the boss called me and said, 'Office is closed.' I don't know, do you feel like that? I worked in the secular realm and my last work in the secular realm was the beginning of the century, two years beginning of the century, two years, I worked in the secular realm and now work was physically absolutely tiring, like 4 in the morning till 11.30 in the night, tiring but I woke up every day to go because I knew why I was there for. I was teaching English that was my work but my mission was something else. I get a chance I told you I get a chance five classes a day English and through it, 'Lord gave me an opportunity to represent Your Kingdom.' Then once a month there was what was called lecturer on duty that day he is like the principal, he takes over but the first thing he has to do is that he has to address the assembly of 500 students, everybody panicked, teachers were so scared of that, but I looked forward to that because here I get a larger opportunity.

I told you the week I left, the week I left that institution I did two things - first thing I told my class, 'Your government takes care of your everything, you get free, free, free, but you don't understand there is a principal in the Kingdom, not your kingdom but my Kingdom. The principle is this - it is more blessed to give than to receive. What have you given back? They said, 'Nothing.' I said, 'I will give you an idea, we will do one thing. (It is the time before we had cell phones) I say you know what, do you see the principal always coming out and every time there is a phone call he has to run to his office? Let us get him a wireless phone as a gift and as the first token, here I am; I am putting the first 500 in.' They were excited. These are Kingdom principles and they we collected, we bought and then on that day I first addressed and I said, Sir, college, we have something special for the college today,' and I said, 'You come and speak,' so he said, 'Our sir taught us it is more blessed to give than to receive. So we collected this and we want to give our principal a gift,' and principal opened it and he was very happy. He said, 'Nothing like this has ever happened in my life.' Then I had to speak and I spoke. You have to be very careful in the environment and the last thing I said is, 'Can I bless you? Can I bless you?'

I said, 'Many, many, years ago a priest stood before his congregation and God said, this is how you need to bless them,' and I said, 'this is my last time with you and before I leave I want to speak this blessings over you. He says, 'the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.' Because I was very sure what I was there for. I was very sure.

And you go with that Kingdom mind set, God will open doors for you. He will open doors for you to draw people to Him, to reconcile them. But if you go with other things in your mind, not only will you be able to finish your work, you will be tired and weary because you are a Kingdom person, you are like a square peg in a round hole; you don't fit there or here, because you haven't found purpose. The purpose is very clear - we all have been sent out into the world as His ambassadors and what is His message? Reconcile. *We implore you God is pleading through us.*

Like I said next month three days I have meetings with them and one of my students whom I baptized, she is a mother with three kids, she is bringing her whole church for the meeting, she said, 'Sir, we are so excited, we are so excited, we will see you again. We will see you again.' You go into an institution, where you are not allowed to preach Christianity yet you have converts, you baptized them and you are going back to meet them because you were very, very, clear, what you have come here for.

Did you work harder than all the others? Yes, I did. First thing I told you about the word 'substitution'. First thing in the morning I look and I see I have fourth hour and seventh hour free, I go to the vice principal and ask, 'Is anybody absent today?' He says, 'Why?' I said, 'I have 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> free, if anybody was absent today or on leave today and if they have a class in fourth and seventh hour, give it to me. Give it to me.' and some days I had all the hours and then the underground church in the night. The reason is - you know what you are here for, because you go to the fourth hour in another man's class these are students you will never teach, you will never teach. The subject is the same in Shakespeare and if any book influenced Shakespeare it was the Bible.

You need to go with that Kingdom mindset, 'Lord, I know who I am. This body wherever it goes is the embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven and I am Your ambassador.' You don't have to wear a coat and a suit. I had to wear a coat and tie every day, it was okay. That demanded it, but here you don't have to, it doesn't matter. But don't forget who you are, don't forget who you are. Okay.

So, the mission never changes. Even when you are thrown into prison, like Watchman Nee or Richard Wurmbbrand or millions of others, the mission never changes. They knew what their mission was the awesome letters God inspired Apostle Paul were written from prison. Watchman Nee's gems we still, I started reading Watchman Nee in the year 1988, it's 2023, you are still breaking your head to understand what this man was saying, because these are all revelations you received in prison, in prison. So it doesn't matter what your condition is, you never forget who you are.

### **Ephesians 6:19-20**

***<sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.***

I am an ambassador but in chains, but the chains don't change who I am, chains do not change my office; my office will always remain the same; who am I? An ambassador of Christ. What is my job? To compel people to draw them to Christ, to bring reconciliation, to let them know that God sent His Son, not to condemn, but to save. 'So Lord, let my life be a witness. Let me be a witness.' The nature of that Kingdom, that's what we are talking about – Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

In Romans 14 and verse 17 Jesus says, through Paul,

### **Romans 14:17**

***<sup>17</sup> for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.***

***the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking*** we eat we drink. And hopefully tonight we shall eat, it's okay, it's good to eat. We need to eat but you need to understand the purpose of eating. Yes, you should eat for health, that's a primary purpose, and not for pleasure. You should eat for pleasure but don't eat for pleasure that destroys your health. That's why I tell you, I was there for two years and I knew my mission therefore I never ate from outside. That means I had to cook my breakfast lunch and dinner every day in the middle of all this, every day, because I had no fridge. Every day because I knew I couldn't take a chance of eating from outside and falling ill and then I have to cancel, not my classes because I have leave but I would have had to cancel the meetings for which I have no leave. You get paid for the one, but you don't get paid for the other (meetings).

So, the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; it is righteousness. First and foremost righteous, then peace and joy. Our peace and joy is completely connected with having a right relationship, right standing with God. Always seeking. So repentance means when you hear something new today, when you repent, when you turn and align your thinking and your life with it you have a right standing with God, you have peace with God and you have joy which is not connected with outward things. So the instruction we receive, Matthew 13:52,

### **Matthew 13:52**

***<sup>52</sup> Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."***

Now we need to ask yourself this question, how can, when Jesus taught for days and days and days and days and days and after the resurrection for 40 days about the Kingdom of Heaven, do you think a 20 minute sermon will prepare you for the Kingdom of Heaven, here or there? So that's religion. That's not the Kingdom of Heaven. That's religion. Why don't your parents, who send your children to school, pay through your nose and send them to school and ask the teacher to send them home after 20 minutes? You won't, because you send them for instruction. About what? a temporal passing away world, which is good, you need to be instructed. But when it comes to the eternal Kingdom of God, you say, '20 minutes please.' So what is that? Religion doesn't save you, it makes you only more miserable. So the instruction which we receive is how to function as a Kingdom person here, as an ambassador, a representative of that Kingdom, as a child of the living God, how to influence, how to draw people towards Christ, how to become ambassador of reconciliation.

Do you realize whenever there are hostilities between two countries the first thing the country does is withdraw its ambassador. What do they withdraw? Their ambassadors. What is rapture? Are you an ambassador that He should withdraw you? That's why God says, 'Friendship with the world is enmity with God,' should He withdraw you? When the

anti-Christ dispensation starts coming over, will they be able to say, 'Paul I know, Jesus I know, I know you too. Get him, get her. We know who she is, we know who he is.' or does God withdraw you? You look, the first person who is withdrawn is the ambassador, 'Call back.'

So we need to understand, we are not talking religion and Jesus did not come to bring our religion. We have enough, we don't need anymore. What He brought was the Kingdom. And it is what we are born again into. To be born into a religion, you don't have to be born again. You are born, you are born a Muslim, born a Hindu, born a Christian, born, born, born, everybody says, 'I was born, I was born a Hindu,' 'How can you change your religion? You are born a Hindu,' 'you are born a Muslim'. But into the Kingdom of God you have to be born-again. So we teach faith. Why do we teach faith? It is because there is no other way you can please the King. If you want to please your King that's the only way you can. *For without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6)*. Who is God? The King of kings. There is no other way.

So why do we extol more and more and more about faith? Walk by faith, live by faith, talk by faith, faith, faith, faith, why? because you can please God, not what you can get. That God says, 'I will add, you don't worry about this faith as a getting-business. Look at faith as a pleasing-business, as a pleasing-business.' An incident mentioned about, in 2 Samuel, about the 3 mighty men of David and David said, with longing,

### **2 Samuel 23:15-17**

***<sup>15</sup> And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" <sup>16</sup> So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.***

He looked and realized, 'Oh my God, I was just speaking a desire.' The king just spoke a desire and three mighty men broke through the ranks of the Philistines and they brought water and said, 'Lord, you wanted to drink that, (there was plenty of water with them) you wanted to drink water from your well, here it is my lord.' He said, 'Oh my God, you risked your life for this?' he said, 'pour it before the Lord.' In your midnight watches and early watches, do you hear the desire of your King? Can you break through the ranks of the Philistines and say, 'Lord, I brought Your desire'? And Jesus says, 'I will not drink it, I will pour it before My Father.'

Kingdom! Do you understand Kingdom? Understand this King. We pursue holiness and peace with all men because that's the only way we will see the face of our King. Hebrews 12:14. Why? because no one will see the Lord.

### **Hebrews 12:14**

***<sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:***

Like I said, you have to live in a kingdom. I told you on Monday, about when the king visited the institution, the first time that and then I was young, when I was there in the year 89 he visited, first time I worked there, I didn't know it was the king and they were all so scared to look at his face but because you were from a democracy, another country, you shook his hands and looked at his face. That's the current king's father, it's the only country which has two kings; the first king abdicated and gave the throne to his son. Second time when I went over there the current king was a son. And one day he knocks on the door and I opened my classroom and he was very polite, he said, 'Sir, can I take 15 minutes of your time? I would like to speak to these students.' I turned around and saw, they were all standing with their heads bent low. I said, 'Your royal highness, please.' That's how you address 'your royal highness' and he went in there and spoke to them and they won't look at his face unless he says, 'look up'. He is a very nice person, very nice person. And we have a big greater and more loving King. That's why the best form of administration is the benevolent king, monarchy, a benevolent monarchy. The best form, best form. But if you want to see Him, if you want to see Him, God says, 'Pursue two things.' Do you want to see the face of your King? Pursue holiness with God, peace with all men. Don't pick up fights unnecessarily.

### Luke 9:60

<sup>60</sup> *Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."*

<sup>62</sup> *But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

God says, 'Are you committed? Are you committed?' Remember the guy called 'Ittai the Gittite'? These are Gentiles who blow your mind off. A girl called Ruth, a Gittite called Ittai. Absalom took the throne, David is running out of Jerusalem, Ittai also follows him. David says, 'Hey! Hey! Hey! Why you after me? You are a mercenary, you fight wars for money, whichever king pays you salary. You are a good fighter.' Do you know you have mercenaries all over the world? There are Russian mercenaries all over Africa fighting those wars, they are paid through their nose and they will fight wars. They are trained veterans from old wars. So Ittai is a trained veteran, he joined David's army for money. And now he is running out when David is running out. He says, 'Why you after me? Go there the other king may pay you better.' He says, 'No, where you go I go. Where you live I live, where you die I die. I have seen you I have seen you, I don't want to serve any other king. I don't want to serve any other king.'

The question is - are we committed to the King and the Kingdom? He is talking about the Kingdom. Are we committed that way? Absolutely, totally committed? I know our little children in their school, when they begin their school, probably in the morning, they will say, 'I swear allegiance to the flag and the Bible and God's holy Word,' that is not enough. I swear allegiance to the King. Democracy is you swear allegiance to the flag. In the Kingdoms you swear allegiance to the King - 'Your desire is my command. What do You want me to do?'

That is Apostle Paul, 'What do You want me to do? Who are You?' 'Jesus' 'What do You want me to do?' That is it! He never looked back. Before this day is over, you make your allegiance to the King, and 2024 will be different for you, because He did not bring a religion, He brought a Kingdom and He said, 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' He looked at Pilot, the representative of the most powerful kingdom on earth and said, 'You rightly say so, I am a King. I am a King. For this purpose I came. But My Kingdom is not of this world.'

And when we were born-again we were born into that Kingdom, into that Kingdom. So don't worry, don't worry.

### Luke 12:32

<sup>32</sup> *"Do not fear, (do not worry, do not be anxious) little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."*

You see by the multitudes who enter into the Kingdom of God, by those who show allegiance to the King will become a little flock. They will become little. Many enter and then they go their different ways, pursuing their dreams, never ask the King 'what is Your dream for me? What do You want me to do?' people are afraid to ask and say, 'I will never stop asking until You tell me what You want me to do. Don't tell me that You randomly saved me. I look in the universe I see there is nothing random; everything has a meaning and a purpose. Everything has a purpose, there is nothing random here, absolutely, there is absolutely nothing that is random. Everything you look over here it has got a purpose, then how can I be random? You paid such a heavy price for my salvation and put me in the shelf and say, 'Do whatever you want to do '? It doesn't make sense. What do You want me to do?'

Because if you don't discover purpose after your salvation we will live empty lives, empty lives. Jesus says, 'Don't fear, don't fear, don't fear. It's the Father's, your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.' Because when the Kingdom comes it's going to be an inversion. It's not like what we think.

### Luke 18:24-25

<sup>24</sup> *And when Jesus saw that he (who is this? the young ruler) became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

You know how difficult it is? Because what does money do? It doesn't matter how much money you have or how less you have, when your money comes in, do you ask Him 'what should I do? What should I do?' It's very difficult for the

rich to enter into the Kingdom of God and it's very, very, easy for the poor. If you understand immigration, if you understand immigration, countries that allow immigrants to come in, they want the rich immigrants. You know if you have \$500,000 you will get a green card to US immediately. Most countries in the world Europe will immediately give you a visa to come and stay there, they will give you a passport, 'if your country accepts dual passports you can have ours' they will immediately give you. Why? It is because your money matters. Most countries, even US, if you can invest half a million dollars into their system you have a visa ready for life, if you want a green card they will give you, later citizenship you can have. Almost all European countries, every country will give you, even India will give you. 'We want to invest in India' how much? 'half a million dollars.' Please come! Let us talk, of course here you have to bribe also.

Okay, so rich men have access to every country in the world but not the Kingdom of God, not the Kingdom of God. It's not easy, it's difficult. God said, 'It's not impossible, but it is difficult. It's easier for a camel.' But in the Kingdom of God it is the other way around.

### **Luke 6:20**

***<sup>20</sup> Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said; "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.***

He didn't tell everybody, only to the disciples because they left everything, they left everything - blessed are you poor for yours is the Kingdom of God. Did you see the inversion? Where every country is calling the rich in the Kingdom, Gospel says that the Gospel is for the poor, they will come in. That is why this whole thinking has to change, the Kingdom thinking is different, because the kingdoms of this world runs on money. We need money, God knows that. But He says, 'Even without money I can still work.' We need it, I am not saying that we don't need money. But God can sustain people, nations, without money. He has done, Elijah for three and a half years sustained him in the worst famine and he had no money. 600,000 families out of Egypt they had money but there were no shops God sustained them because their money was useless. God may or may not use money. Change the way you think, change the way you think.

There is an enormous inversion over there. All the religious conflicts in the world, I told you on Monday, are caused by two things - government and religion. January 21<sup>st</sup> there is going to be a big religious ceremony but how did you build it? By breaking down somebody else's. How did he build it? By breaking down somebody else's. These are all facts, but the simple question is - who are you building it for?

Jesus looked at David, if I am right and said, 'Heaven is My Throne, earth is My foot stool, what can you build for Me? What can you build for Me?' So instead, He says, 'You know what, I will come and stay in you; a broken and a contrite spirit I will not despise.' You want to build something for Me, break yourself. Today there were prayer requests, 'Lord, humble me,' He doesn't, He doesn't humble anybody. He says, 'You need to humble yourself, and I have shown you a thousand ways in the Bible how you can humble yourself.' One of the ways is what, we are fasting. We are fasting, and praying and studying the Word. Not, fasting and then playing, that is not humbling. It's a humbling of yourself in various ways. And He says, 'Those are the kind of people I will be there, in them, that is My Temple; I will live in them. I am comfortable there.' And we see in the Bible, Old Testament specially, various people over whom God's presence, His anointing rested but He was still looking, looking, looking, looking, and then one day His Son came and the Holy Spirit came and rested on Him. He said, 'I've found the humblest of them all; My Son.' And that Son and His Body becomes God's Temple.

So you have to change your mind. Because all problems are created by human government and human religions and the kingdom of darkness meddles with it; they love violence, they love death. They do it and Satan told Jesus, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said, 'It's given to me, I can give it to whomever I please, just bow down and worship me.' He says, 'No. Only God alone you shall worship and serve Him alone.' We need to understand how these things work. Even in your homes, those who are married, husband and wife, parents and children, what are you trying? Are you trying to draw the, let us say, unbelieving spouse or defiance spouse or rebellious spouse, draw them, through the ministry of reconciliation, to Christ? Or trying to win arguments? How do you see yourself wherever you are? Conflict or peace? Ambassador is always trying to bring peace, not conflict. Sometimes peace can only come through by dealing with issues, but it's very clear, the issue here is that we need peace, that is the objective. Ask yourself, how do you see?



Because government and law and religion are all different; the law will say, 'hate your enemies' the Kingdom says, 'love your enemies' how do you reconcile religion and faith in the Kingdom? It doesn't work. Because in the Kingdom God says, 'Love your enemies. Don't curse them, bless them and if they are hungry feed them.' That's Kingdom. That's not religion. That's not religion.

### **Acts 1:3**

***<sup>3</sup> to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.***

He didn't preach any religion. He didn't start any religion. He's not the founder of any religion, as Wikipedia will tell you. He didn't find, He wasn't the founder of any religion. He says, 'I have come to tell you about a Kingdom that is from everlasting to everlasting; the Kingdom that was there before the foundation of the world, and the Kingdom that will be there after this world has disappeared. And I'm just coming to present to you a Kingdom before that Kingdom comes down to earth, make peace with the King. And I have come so that you can make peace, because you don't know My Father, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You don't know His righteousness. The demand of His righteousness is that every sin has to be addressed, every sinner has to be executed. I understand Him but I also know My Father He loves you so much, so I have come to meet His justice. I have come for that purpose, that I will be the substitute; I will die for your sins and if you believe in Me you will be forgiven and you can enter into the Kingdom and once you have entered,' and this group has entered and He is teaching them things pertaining the Kingdom, so that they can go and teach others.

### **Acts 8:12**

***<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.***

He preached about the King and the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God. Repent! For the Kingdom of God is coming. 'Oh Lord! What should we do to be saved?' Believe in the name of Jesus Christ. They were baptized. Acts 14 verse 22 Paul is going around, now believers have come in, trouble have started in their lives, the governments of this world is always after these people, who belong to God and he goes encouraging everybody,

### **Acts 14:22**

***<sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."***

He says, 'Don't give up! All this is temporal, when death is not an end, it is a beginning of everlasting presence of God, everlasting departure from God. Death is just a transit cap, you just go through it. It's like the wardrobe in Narnia you just enter into another world. Don't worry about it, don't worry about it.

### **Acts 20:25**

***<sup>25</sup> "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.***

This is his beloved church in Ephesus, with tears day and night he says, 'with tears, day and night day and night.' When I talked about that person who got baptized I still remember those days were difficult days, baptism is a very dangerous thing, because the religions understand baptism. They understand baptism very well. Once you are baptized they know what baptism means. So we have to baptize them secretly, twice it happened; first time we decided on a day for baptism we have to get a national holiday because Sundays are all busy, we went up a hill, I took all the ones who have to be baptized, I said, 'We will go down there, the river is there, we will get baptized,' but the problem was that previous night a boy got washed away by the river, so all the cops and the forest guards were searching the river, so our baptism plan went out of the window. So somebody said, 'There is a plan, we can go up the hill, there is a little river water coming down, what we will do is that we will dig a hole.' So they went there, nobody there in the jungle, we brought the spades and everything and we dug a hole neck deep, then channeled the water, filled it and then baptized the people in it. Because what is baptism? Death to this world and entering into, official entry into another Kingdom. Another time we

drove somewhere else, another town and inside forest area where a person had a small little resort but there is no electricity, power, nothing over there, but you have a wooden sauna it is wooden like a bathtub filled with water, with another small portion with holes, where the water flows through and you heat stones in the fire until they are hot, hot, and then you put it into this closure, so the water gets warm, so you can baptize the people.

Baptism is a very interesting experience because you know what it is; you are transiting from one camp to the other camp. So they baptized them and Ephesus was one of his favorite churches and for three years he was teaching them things connected with the Kingdom, three years, day and night and his final verse is in the Book of Acts about him, it is written this way, Acts 28 verse 23,

**Acts 28:23, 31**

***<sup>23</sup> So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.***

Can you sit, from morning till evening? verse 31, remember he is under house arrest, he cannot leave, so he cannot go. So what does God do? He sends people to him. He can have visitors but he cannot go out. But the message is still going on,

***<sup>31</sup> preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.***

If you don't get the Kingdom in your mind, you will not understand the teaching. What is the teaching all about? Why are we so this thing about teaching? It is because we are preparing a people for another place - how to live as a Kingdom-person now, as an ambassador, and second, so that when you go there it won't be a strange place, strange place. You don't have to learn the customs of that place; you will fit in because you are a Kingdom-person on earth. That is your natural habitat once you enter. It is about the Kingdom. At the end of the dispensation this is what God will say, in Matthew 25 and verse 34,

**Matthew 25:34**

***<sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:***

See the Kingdom was prepared for us even before the world was formed, even before we were born, there was a Kingdom prepared for us. And on that Day what will King Jesus say? All judgment is in Jesus' hands; He is the One who judges, when everything is over He will hand the Kingdom over to the Father and the Father will rule from the top and He Himself will voluntarily come under the Father, by teaching us 'I am equal to the Father but submission is not a bad word in the Bible, in the Kingdom, it's a good word. It's a good word.'

So He says, 'Come! You blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' What all is there as our inheritance in the Kingdom, we don't know. Eyes haven't seen nor ears heard what God is preparing for those who love Him. So 2024 get your priorities very, very, clear, when God puts it very clear.

**Matthew 6:33**

***<sup>33</sup> But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

Prioritize, then organize your life around that, because we are, it's very difficult for today's generation, because you are a generation of multitasking. It is good only if you know your priorities. If you know your priorities and your priorities are in the right order and you can multitask, then good. But otherwise it is a terrible life to live, we have to learn what is important in the Kingdom. That is non-negotiable. That is why we learn from Jesus, the disciples later learnt it. That is why I like Mark 1:35 - *early in the morning when it was still dark he arose and went to a deserted place and He was praying* (what is He doing? what is He doing?) connecting to the King and the Kingdom - "My day is beginning, My day is beginning. I need to hear from You. I need to hear from You. I need to know that You are with Me. I need to know that everything is right between You and Me. I need to know that Your presence will go with Me and then it doesn't matter what I face through this day, be it storm or hail or typhoon or multitudes or sick or the demonic, I know I can handle it

because You are with Me.” That is a priority, non-negotiable priority in a Kingdom-person; your prayer closet is your priority.

2024 decide! And your age is irrelevant, maybe you are hearing it for the first time today. It is irrelevant, Moses heard from God only at the age of 80 and his life changed completely, completely changed, absolutely changed. Because he heard and his priorities changed completely. Then only he understood, at the age of 80, why he was born, why he was saved, why he was chosen, he understood the purpose of his life at the age of 80. Better get to know the purpose of your life at 80 than never know it. And then that old man standing with a stick is standing before the greatest empire then in the world and says, ‘Let My people go!’ who says, ‘My God says; the God of Hebrews says.’ And Pharaoh asks, ‘Who is the God of Hebrews? I do not know.’ He says, ‘Don't worry, by the time He is finished you will know.’ because this is a Kingdom of power. You will know, you will know.’

By the time he left, the Pharaoh says, ‘Bless me and go.’ Okay. ‘Bless me and go.’ You have to believe. You have to believe. That is what I said, if you go in as a Kingdom person, you go in as a Kingdom person, you will have favor. Like I had favor every place I worked, I always had favor because the mindset was always that ‘this is why I am going, Lord.’ So I finished, I came back to India, a year later I went back to that same country, this time I heard that my principal was in another, the most prestigious institution in that city, the big one where the king's children all study, the big one. It's called YHS, he was there. So I said, ‘Hey!’ I asked my church kids, ‘Do you know where Sir is?’ They said, ‘He is the principal there.’ I said, ‘Oh! Cool! Let me see if I can go and see him.’ I just wanted to drop in casually to see him. So when I went to the office, they was a really long line of people sitting there, waiting to see him, and I said, ‘Okay, okay, I may not be able to meet him.’ Then I said, ‘Okay, wait a minute!’ I took a small piece of paper and just wrote on it, ‘Sir James is here,’ and I told the peon, ‘Would you give it to sir.’ The peon went in and just gave the note to the principal, the principal immediately said, ‘Call him in!’ He left the entire crowd waiting outside over there and he sat with me and we talked for half an hour and then he asked me, ‘Sir, if I take you to these classrooms, would you speak to my students?’ I said, ‘Sir, no. I'm no longer a teacher. I'm no longer a teacher. I don't teach Shakespeare anymore.’

You have to believe who you are; what the Word of God says who you are. Don't lose your identity after being saved. Don't lose your identity. This is who we are. Pray every day! According to your shift timings, because you work in different and difficult shifts. But whenever your day begins; if your day begins, whatever shift you work in, put God first, and say, ‘Lord, when I go through this day, You have put me in this office, You put me in this place. Help me to be an ambassador to reconciliation. Use me, Lord, without words.’

Like I told you, I sat in a staff room with 30 other lecturers, of which 5 were nationals, the rest were all Indians, mostly Hindus, Muslims and a few Christians, all of them. And every time they call me for the weekend and I said, ‘I'm not free.’ They asked, ‘What do you do, sir?’ I said, ‘I'm not free to tell you that.’ Then you will always see on Sundays, they would be all in the town, Sundays people are drinking and then, they see me, I got this crowd bigger than this, of young people with me going from one meeting to another, they all have guitars and all that, they all look at this and say, ‘None of them are his students. These are students from other colleges, who is this dude who came in just yesterday?’ But that's my church, going from one meeting to another meeting, because you knew your purpose, it just opened up for you.

Then the second time, like I said, after I finished, I went back to that college to see and they were all so happy to see and the Muslim guy had got married and he said, ‘Sir, you need to come, sir. I've talked to my wife all about you, sir.’ I said, ‘I cannot,’ then all of them said, ‘We know now why you came.’ I said, ‘Oh really? Why do you think I came?’ We heard what you are; a preacher.’ I said, ‘Oh!’ then they asked, ‘Are there other churches here?’ I said, ‘Maybe’ they said, ‘Sir, will you come and speak to us?’ I said, ‘Tomorrow is Sunday, I have 7 services, will you wake up at 6? That's the only time I am free.’ They said, ‘We will.’ For the first time in their lives, on a Sunday, all these non-Christians gathered at 6 in the morning and I sat with them and told them, ‘For this purpose I came. This is the God who can save.’ There were Hindus, Muslims, all of them listening, ‘this is Jesus.’

You have to believe that He will open doors for you. You have to believe that He will make opportunities for you. Like Praneeth said, ‘We all have our testimonies.’ You should have testimonies don't go into the world as a worldly person; go into the world as a Kingdom-person. And that's the first thing we hear about Joseph, everyone saw and recognized and said, ‘His God is with him.’

One of those rare parties, any time the college parties where it was on a week day, where I was there, principal would always say, 'Sir James, give him lime juice. He doesn't drink.' and I was the only one who did not drink. That itself becomes a witness, because they will ask you, 'How come you don't drink?' You have to learn to answer, you don't say, 'I am a teetotaler from childhood,' No. you say, 'Because my body is the temple of the living God. This is Kingdom property.' You have to bring the Kingdom in. You need to know how to answer. You say, 'In this Kingdom (you are living in another kingdom where everybody drinks but in this Kingdom) you don't put alcohol in. That's why you don't smoke, you don't drink because this is not my own; it is Kingdom property.' And suddenly you will realize, 'I can witness. I can speak. I can really speak.'

So God says, 'Get your priority right. Put God first and purpose will start flowing,' then you will realize, you may be tired in your body but you won't be a weary. You will realize there is meaning to life after salvation. There is purpose, Matthew 5:10,12

#### **Matthew 5:10**

***<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness. When you start seeking righteousness, in most settings, trouble will begin. But not because of the righteousness of the Law; this is His righteousness; the righteousness of Christ. Trouble comes. And what does God say? 'You are blessed.' Why? It is because the Kingdom of Heaven is yours.

#### **Matthew 5:11**

***<sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.***

You took a stand for Him, for His righteousness. You should be able to say, either, 'It is written' or 'Jesus won't do it'. And both are the same. Then what happens?

#### **Matthew 5:12**

***<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

There are rewards waiting. So righteousness is not an easy thing. Righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of the religion is easy. It's not difficult. The righteousness that comes by faith and faith alone is not easy, it is difficult. You stick out like a sore thumb. And that is where you have to learn to be very, very, kind. Like Peter says, 'Even if they speak harshly about you, they actually do not have a reason to speak harshly about you, because they see who you are. Don't be obnoxious witnesses. Some people are obnoxious witnesses. We are not trying to persuade anybody. We are just telling them, this is the truth; let the Truth convince you. I always tell people, 'Try Jesus on your own; whether He works or not. I bet you,' I said, 'keep calling upon the name of Jesus and see if He will not answer you. I challenge you. If He is real He will speak to you. Keep reading the Bible as an atheist and see if it will not convert you. I challenge you. Because this Book (Bible) is not any ordinary Book; this is breathed in by God Himself. This (God's Word) has power. *For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk; it's a matter of power, that you yourself is convinced by the Kingdom.*

#### **Luke 14:25-26**

***<sup>25</sup> Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.***

I am trying to change my tone because I know that's probably the way He said it, not angry and tough, but very gently, He knows that the people love their father and mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters. So He says, '*if anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, his own life he cannot be My disciple.*'

#### **Luke 14:27**

***<sup>27</sup> And whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be My disciple.***

“He cannot be My disciple.” So He set a condition for followers becoming disciples. And then in Luke 8:9-10 He said,

**Luke 8:9-10**

***<sup>9</sup> Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?” <sup>10</sup>And He said, “To you it has been given in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they many not understand.’***

***<sup>10</sup> And He said, “To you, to you alone. That category of followers, who are disciples, you alone will understand the mysteries of the Kingdom. Others will float through life saved, never understanding the mysteries of the Kingdom because they are not willing to pay the price for discipleship. It is a Kingdom of mystery. So many mysteries. So many mysteries. All of eternity we will be understanding. If this whole world, down to a human body, that we are astounded by the intricacies of the human body, we are still discovering and discovering and discovering and discovering and dazzled by the brain alone of the human being. And this created universe, then what about the Kingdom of God? What the unseen realm is like. If the seen realm baffles us, what do you think is the unseen realm?***

God says, ‘It is not given to everybody. It is given to disciples.’ So 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2023, decide - ‘I will be a disciple. Lord, I want to be a disciple. Here I am. And I am going to prioritize my life. Your Kingdom and Your righteousness. Then I am going to organize my life around it. Then I am going to discipline myself into it. Lord, if I have to wake up in the morning I will set a time, You set a time for me, you wake me up. I will be up every day. This is not a religion, this is not a Law; this has got to do with me and You. And one particular day if You don't want me to wake up, when I wake up You will tell me, ‘Go back to sleep’ I will go back to sleep, because this is based on a relationship, personally with a King. This is not a Law. It is not a Law. If You ask me to fast I fast, if You tell me to eat I eat. It is a relationship, it is not a Law. It is not a Law. The disciples did not even know that Jesus was fasting, they didn't know, but He cast out the demon and said, ‘This can go only with fasting and prayer.’ They were like, ‘Oh! You were fasting? We didn't know.’

It is between you and God. There are corporate fasts which we finish tonight, there are very personal things. A very, very, personal thing. 2024 let it be very corporate and yet a personal walk with God, because the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, it is a matter of power. And when you come to powers of darkness, the other realm, Revelation 12 and verse 11 says, *they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, the Word of their testimony and they did not love their lives even unto death.*

**Revelation 12:11**

***<sup>11</sup> And they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.***

That is loyalty, loyalty. They all said, ‘We will all go and die with Him.’ Peter said, ‘Even if all leave I will not leave You.’ But they all ran, but the end of the story is that they all died for Him. They all did. The difference was the Kingdom. When they all said, ‘We will go and die with Him’ it was the flesh but when they all died for Him the Spirit and the Kingdom had come in and they died for Him. That's the difference. Words may be the same but the difference was made by the Kingdom, because righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, that is the Kingdom of God.

My prayer is that everyone of you personally, and every home of yours, experience that peace and that joy that passes understanding. It's got nothing to do with what's happening in the world, or even happening around you or in you, it's got to do with the Kingdom. You have a right standing with God, and that's only possible through repentance. He says, ‘Put away,’ you put away, when He says, ‘turn,’ your turn, then you have a right standing with God; you are considered righteous by God, and automatically the other two will come in; you have peace and you have joy. Peace and joy. The Kingdom will manifest itself in different ways. Like the prison in Philippi, two ambassadors in chains, stripped and whipped. Their legs put in the stocks, in the midnight hour and they were praising; the Kingdom was being manifested. They knew that they were in prison, not because they did something wrong, but because they did something right, according to God's Kingdom. They rejoiced and they were exceedingly glad and the power of the Kingdom came in. And the whole place, the Bible says, the foundations of the prison were shaken. The Kingdom came, in all around they could hear sounds, chains dropping.

Do you know why? You can trust this (the Word of God); these are the words of a King, who died for you and me. He died for you and me.

As I close, let me tell you, long ago in a Spanish city was under siege by the Muslim invaders. And the Muslim invaders in one of their attacks captured the king's only son. And he sent word to the king, 'Surrender or we will execute your son.' Now this is a decision only the king can take. The counselors, nobody could say anything, everybody is shocked. The message is – 'surrender or your son dies!' You know what the king's answer was? The king's answer was, "Let my son die so that my people may live."

There is a King greater than him and He had a Son, only Son, whose name is Jesus and that King said, "Let My Son die so that you and I will live." Paul says, "Now that life we have, we will live towards Him. If He wants He can make us all obey Him; He can break our legs, change our hearts, change our minds, He can do anything but He won't do it. He says, "If you love Me you will obey Me. This Kingdom runs on love. If you don't love Me after all this, leave it alone! Leave it alone!" there is coaxing, there is no force, there is no compulsion. All that is in the kingdoms of this world, but the Kingdom of God, no.

Amen? Shall we stand up? Shall we pray?

Be sober the whole of next year and the years to come, be spiritually minded because to be carnally-minded itself is death. You don't have to do anything, you have to think that way and you are dead. Don't live for pleasure, live for purpose because the widow who lives for pleasure is dead while she is living, this is all Scripture. These are people without purpose. We are not people without purpose; we are people with purpose. Men, that's why I keep repeating the same word over and over again - what you need to do? Surrender! I give my allegiance to the King. Many, many, many, years ago He had a different Bible, I went down on my knees and told, "Lord, I don't understand but I surrender to the words of the King." Then He opened my eyes. The King doesn't speak until you surrender. You may say, 'Speak to me I shall surrender.' He says, "No. first surrender and I shall speak to you," because the King never wastes His words, because if He speaks to you without you surrendering, the result is dangerous. We don't want that.

So this is 31<sup>st</sup> morning, let's say, "Lord, here I am. Bid me, here I am." Isaiah said, "Here I am." Joseph said, "Here I am." Just surrender and see how God will change it all around. One day at a time, it won't happen in a day, but every day by the time you come to the end of 2024, you will realize, 'I didn't know on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 when I had actually surrendered from my heart and then kept on doing it, I didn't realize God could turn my life around 180 degrees, absolutely. I had no clue what God could do. All I did was say, "Lord, here I am! Here I am! Help me Lord!"

*Closing prayer:*

*Father this morning, we just come to You. Lord, we just want to thank You. Thank You for dying for us. I see nothing in myself for You to die for me. Nothing Lord, nothing. But I thank You that You died for me. Now that You died and rose and You are seated on the right hand side of the Father and is the soon-coming King. I personally, and we all of us here, surrender our lives back into Thy hands. 2023 is behind us, so many goof-ups. Sins, shortcomings, transgressions, whatever You name it is what is true. Our words may be euphemisms, but You have the actual word for it Lord, and we call it as You call it. No white washing, nothing. You are proved right when You judge us, Lord. And we acknowledge, as David said, 'Our sins are before Thee,' but Lord it's Your blood that cleanses us. We seek Your mercy, if we were to list; if Your Spirit were to show us, He would have to start from the midnight of last 31<sup>st</sup> all the days, every day the list would be so exhausting but Lord, we ask for mercy, mercy, mercy, we confess, we believe, the Blood of Jesus cleanses us of all unrighteousness. And we have a right standing with You today. When we leave this place we go with a right standing, starting afresh, putting Your Kingdom first and Your righteousness first. Believing that You will start speaking to many, if not all, giving them purpose and as they work out their purpose they will realize that life is not so difficult, everything actually I needed for life my God is adding and I am satisfied and always there is left over, an overflow to give away, because my God is not a miser; His hands are so big and I can become like Him more and more; a Giver and not a taker.*

*I bless Your children in Your name, everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, everyone, every family here, every household, the ones who do not know You in their household, I pray for salvation this coming year, I pray for healing, for deliverance, for restoration. All things are possible with You, all things are possible with those who believe. I pray Your*

*children will believe. When we come back in the evening we will come back even more determined to follow You all the way. Touch Lord, touch, touch Your children, touch. Touch us, Lord. Touch all of our churches, all of our pastors, every congregation, everywhere, everyone who is tuned in listening, let the hand of God touch them, deliver them out of all their troubles. We just once again thank You for this year, thank You, thank You Lord, for Your loving kindness and Your everlasting mercies. We thank You Father. Lord we praise You, we worship You, we glorify You, Lord. For in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us. Amen.*