

# The Kingdom at Hand

Series: What God Has Begun (Recapturing Our Core Values)

September 20, 2015 – Brad Bailey

## Intro

We've just **begun a series** in which we are engaging the nature of our core...as a Vineyard... **as those who are seeking to know God and grow in God... through what God has begun here.** We are going to hear what God has spoken and sown into our calling.

**The “core” of something is defined as the “essential or enduring part.”**

There are aspects of ourselves that change with trends and time...but others that are core...because they are essential and enduring. Similarly we may have aspects of style that change...but our core is what defines us.

You can think if the core of an apple...it bears the seed...and those seeds produce what??? ...and apple tree. The core determines what you are becoming.

**It's ultimately a part of our personal stories.**

Many have found that they didn't so much join the Vineyard but discovered it reflected what God was doing and shaping in them...what bore witness in their spirits. So we are recapturing what God has spoken into our calling as a church and personal lives.

Today... begin with what is what is **most central... that from which everything else flows.**

## I. The Centrality of the Kingdom of God

The Scriptures declare that the most important news you will ever hear...is that the Kingdom of God has begun. Today it may be hard to understand just what such a kingdom represents.

At the very start of the Scriptures...God describes how we were created as bearing his image in some way...and to reign and rule over the physical worlds with him. But He says...and enemy seeking it's own glory.... Draws humankind into that same self-consumption. It describes how we tried to be like God...and in trying to become more than human we became less than human...we became naked and shamed...hiding. Having given ourselves to the rule of the enemy.....we may not fully realize it...but we are under the oppression of another... who rules over us... and whose destiny we will face.

Some of you may remember the story of Captain Scott O'Grady whose plane was shot down in the Bosnian conflict in 1995...

*The June 19, 1995 issue of Newsweek recounts the details of Captain O'Grady's six day ordeal behind enemy lines. Tearing off his chute on the ground, he hid in the bushes while hostile Serbs shot at anything that moved in the brush. Over the next five days, O'Grady would survive on ants, plants, and rain water, daring to move only at night so he would not be detected. In the middle of the night, he would signal with his hand-held radio with its limited range of forty miles. O'Grady, however, was running out of time and losing the power from the radio batteries and was suffering from hypothermia. As he huddled in a rocky pasture on a clear midnight on*

*June 8, O'Grady faintly heard the voice of another American pilot on his radio. Once he had been found, the U.S. Air Force spared no expense and quickly assembled the finest aircraft worth hundreds of millions of dollars to rescue their comrade in Bosnia.*

We, like Captain Scott O'Grady, live behind enemy lines...where evil is the great occupying power, and that ultimately it claims our life in death.

**We are caught behind enemy lines...** We may not be fully aware of it...but deep within...we are in hiding...waiting to come home.

It is to this condition...that God begins to declare through the prophets that one was coming... coming behind enemy lines to rescue and restore us...and bring about the reign and rule of God.

And so it is that the angels declare that in the birth of Christ...that a savior had come ...a ruler whose government shall have no end.

### **The ground of John the Baptist's preaching**

"Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" - Matthew. 3:2

### **The central message of Jesus' ministry**

Jesus had just been anointed... Spirit... wilderness...and now... with the authority born deep in his spirit in the wilderness, he is prepared for both the popularity and opposition he would face.

### **Luke 4:14-21 (NIV)**

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. <sup>15</sup> He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. <sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. <sup>17</sup> The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: <sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." <sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Here we are introduced God's mission of rescuing and reclaiming ...a MISSION OF COSMIC PROPORTIONS, ...OF ALL CREATION.

Given/or/Turns to Isaiah 61... prophetic and profound words

Year of Jubilee or Release

Indeed... "good news to the poor"... free from their indebtedness

Freedom for the prisoners... captives, literally "prisoners of war"

Recover of sight to the blind... literally, 'opaque, as if smoky... both spiritual and physical blindness (Matt 15:14; 23:16, 26)

In a sense this is **Jesus' mission statement** and **throughout his 3 years of ministry on earth**...and it described what he would soon declare to be the kingdom of God...which means God's reign and rule.

"The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" - Mark. 1:15

"I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God..., because that is why I was sent." - Luke 4:43

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." - Matthew. 9:35

**In the four gospels alone**, the phrase "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" **appears 84** times. (Matthew uses the phrase Kingdom of Heaven instead of the Kingdom of God, because he was writing to a Jewish audience, and like we saw last week, it was considered irreverent in Jewish culture to speak or write God's name).

So we see the phrase Kingdom of God is mentioned 84 times. Just to give you an understanding of its significance, the word "cross" which of course is central to us appears 17 times and the word "gospel" and "good news" appears 23 times.

The Kingdom of God is here, the Kingdom of God is near; the Kingdom of God is at hand... The Kingdom of God is within you... The Kingdom of God is like and he explained it in **2/3 of the parables**. [1]

### **The central mandate given to those who follow**

The 12 were sent out with these instructions: "as you go, preach this message: 'the Kingdom of Heaven is near.' heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons." Matthew. 10.7f; see Luke. 9.1f

The 70 were sent out to do the same: "when you enter a town, heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'the Kingdom of God is near you.' Luke 9.9

It was the last thing Jesus taught them: "he appeared to them over a period of 40 days and taught them about the Kingdom of God." Acts 1.3

The Book of Acts ends with Paul in jail in Rome where, "boldly and without hindrance he preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 28.31

It is the key to the end of history as we know it: "this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached as a witness among all the nations and then the end will come" (Matthew. 24.14).

And it is clear that it wasn't just the words of a message...but the whole of his ministry. It was a declaration that came with demonstration. The Scriptures speak of this as "signs and wonders" of the Kingdom.

## **II. The Ministry of the Kingdom**

**All the miracles** that Jesus performed were **signs & wonders of the Kingdom's arrival on earth**. It was in a sense a demonstration of things to come. The future invading the present, the result of setting the captives free.

The authority of Christ to reclaim God's reign is revealed in...

- **Word and works.**
- **Declaration and Demonstration...**
- **Illumination and Illustration**

These "signs" include....

- **Physical Healing/Restoration**

The Gospels are filled with numerous healings that Jesus performed.

- **Emotional Healing/Restoration**

Jesus came proclaiming that in Him, there is joy, peace, and hope.

- **Spiritual Healing/Restoration**

Jesus came to save and give abundant life. This is the biggest of all healings. When we understand our human condition and recognize that we can't save ourselves no matter how good we think we are. We can then trust Jesus with our lives and begin living for him.

- **Relational Healing/Restoration**

Jesus taught us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. He also showed us how to serve, forgive and live with others.

- **Social Healing/Restoration**

Jesus came to turn the world upside down. He came and spoke about gender and ethnic reconciliation and showed compassion to the weak, poor, sick and marginalized.

- **Environmental Healing/Restoration**

We also see that Jesus had power over the environment and the elements. He turned water into wine, walked on water, and calmed the winds and the waves.

All these signs point to how the Kingdom of God had come, yet there continued to be a cosmic battle here on earth.

As Don Williams once shared...

I boarded a British Airways jet in Los Angeles bound for London. Once seated, I watched a video of Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Parliament and other memorable sights. A steward with a British accent then offered me a cup of tea. The blanket for my feet was Scottish plaid. Here I was in L.A., experiencing a taste of my destination: Great Britain. Similarly, as we submit to Christ as Savior and Lord, God gives us a taste of our destination, his heavenly Kingdom to come. We experience the power of the Spirit, the lost saved, the sick healed, the demonized delivered. The future triumph over Satan and the restoration of all things is present in some measure now. (From John Wimber on the Kingdom by Don Williams)

It becomes clear...that Jesus was doing battle with that which has ruled this world.

We live in the midst of a war... a spiritual war. So another aspect to understand...is...

### **III. The Process of the Kingdom...inaugurated but not fully realized... “now but not yet”... already but not fully.**

A central understanding of how God’s Kingdom has come...is that of how it has broken in but has not been fully established.

There are two kingdoms at work in the world. In that battle we see that Jesus died on the cross, but then rose on the third day. Through the cross and his resurrection he forever triumphed over the devil, sin, and death. The kingdom of darkness has forever been defeated, but is giving it’s last stand until Jesus returns again and evil is destroyed eternally.

**A great illustration** of this truth can be found in the **Second World War**. A decisive battle of WWII was fought and won by the allies on D-Day, June 6, 1944. But the war was not over until V-E Day, eleven months later! In between time, the fighting continued and more American lives were lost during that period than any other time during the war. Although Hitler knew he was defeated, he still continued to fight a losing battle. This is the way it is with us. We are living between D-Day and V-E Day!

This explains why some prayers seem to be answered and others aren’t, why some people are healed and others are not. It explains why one day you feel God’s blessings and another day you feel He is distant. We are living in a time of tension.

#### **This is what has allowed so many of us to discover how God is at work in a way that reflects the tension we see.**

This is the understanding that allows us to move between passivity and presumption...between the passivity of living as if all God had done was in the past...and the presumption of claiming a level of completion of God’s will that is not yet come.

It opens us to that which lies between the safety of mere head knowledge about God...and the dangers of mere subjective experience about God.

It opens to us that which is reduced to mere propositions...and that which is relegated to mere emotional experience.

We can discover that we can pray in faith...as God leads... rather than the presumption of our personal demands. The authority lies in Him.

John Wimber would encourage those who appeared to be healed...that they should go to a doctor and see. This is about reality... with “eyes wide open.”

This doesn’t mean we don’t feel the tension of why God moves one way in one situation and not another...but it allows us to accept that tension without presuming that we will understand or even have to understand.

### **IV. The Community of the Kingdom**

John Wimber was simply one who saw something... this centrality of the Kingdom...and it restored a clarity to understanding the ministry of Jesus...and his calling on us. [2]

In many respects... the **values of the Vineyard flow from the implications** of the ministry of the Kingdom. When we consider what Jesus did...and sent others to do... we discover the values we will be looking at further in the weeks to come:

- A People Who **Seek the Presence of God** – God is present...and at work...and we are seeking HIM.  
(Some mistake this with seeking experience itself...but it is God we seek.)
- A People of the **Word and Spirit** – For we have seen how Jesus spoke with authority rooted in the Scriptures...but also empowered by the Spirit...and said we must wait on that Spirit to be sent to all
- A People Who Gather as a **Reconciling Community** – where the differences that divide us are now united in Christ
- A People Who Seek **Justice and Compassion for the Poor** – where we begin to relate beyond class and power...as we are filled with God's compassion and justice.
- A People Where **Everybody Gets To Play** – because God is moving through all who honor and submit to Him...rather than being limited to the formality of roles or special status.
- A People Who Take Up **Culturally Relevant Mission** – as God moves forward into the world of broader and changing cultures.
- A People Who **Love the Whole Church** – because we see the larger work God is doing...not just growing our "kingdom" but rather joining in the larger Kingdom alongside all who honor Christ and his ministry.

**Finally... we must hear...**

## **V. The Calling of the Kingdom**

The Kingdom at hand comes beckoning, It is not a call to some symbolic identification...but rather a call to participation. God doesn't come to

Consider the ceremonial royalty of England or similar nations... where they are honored with lots of pomp but all real power is now taken up by the politicians and parliament. They are mere symbols that people can find identity in... some unity in. I wonder if we don't often relate to God's reign like those of relate to their symbolic monarchies.... We enjoy the sense of identity they offer...but we believe that the real powers that run things are human. [3]

Here is the truth. Something bigger than anything we think is big has come.  
There has been an invasion.

Imagine that you lived in an openly oppressed country...ruled by tyranny...a State that told you who you were...that enslaved you to serve their ends...and you woke up this morning and

discovered that the rightful king had returned...and he's taking the land. He has defeated the strongholds... defeated the central claim of the tyrant over the land...begun taking it back. He now comes to where you live...and he calls **not for some passive permission** to rule...he comes calling for **active participation**.

> That is the calling of Christ.

It's a calling to join the advancing of the heavens upon the earth.

Jesus taught us how to pray...

**"May your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."** – Matthew 6:10

That is our calling...to make that our prayer.

And it is what we are to carry out into the world.

Jesus said 'GO' and share this... in word and deed.

This is what John Wimber meant when he said **"The meat is in the streets"**...the richest and most satisfying experience of God working is out there.

So we are called to be **ordinary people**... who in **ordinary life**... enjoy becoming **"naturally supernatural."**

#### Notes:

1. Drawn from Jimmy Reyes message "Your Kingdom Come"

2. John Wimber teaching on the kingdom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqxGVCH9qH4>

3. A.W. Tozer – "The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited constitutional monarchy. The king (sometimes depersonalized by the term "the Crown") is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a national anthem. He is lauded, feted, and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions. On formal occasions he appears in his royal attire to deliver the tame, colorless speech put into his mouth by the real rulers of the country. The whole thing may be no more than good-natured make-believe, but it is rooted in antiquity, it is a lot of fun, and no one wants to give it up." - -A.W. Tozer, "Great Sermons of the 20th Century", Christianity Today-Vol. 31, #6+