

Sermon Title: **Kingdom Endurance**

Series: New Year 2022

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Text: Luke 21:10-19

Introduction

For the last three years in First Century Israel, many men and woman have had their lives changed because of Jesus. There were those who were healed or delivered by Him, those who cautiously followed from a distance to those who were called closer to learn and do all that He was doing. Many were encouraged by How Jesus represented God and His Word to the people without respect to their sex, social standing, or sense of worthiness to qualify or disqualify God's presence and purpose in their lives.

Yet now, in our text we find Jesus preparing those who would choose to continue following Him. It's odd to think of following Jesus like that, right. To *continue* following Him? We have this tendency to think in absolutes; I started therefore I'm fully in. I said Yes today, so this rolls over into tomorrow. Listen to this statement from Jesus,

"By your endurance you will gain your life." -[Luke 21:19](#)

Wait- Jesus this doesn't sound like a done deal! I don't understand- we've walked with you for three years now and your telling me I may not make it?! **Endurance** here is a very rich word embodying an **upward**, **consistent**, **contagious**, and **outward** motion that goes against the current. It is swimming upstream after Jesus.

Rather than looking at this as if God is trying to make it hard to follow Him, or eager to see us fail, instead see Jesus, who is warning us that this world is broken because of sin and is against its maker and His Kingdom rule. There is resistance to Jesus and His message, as they would soon see with His betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The journey to continue with Jesus is one that will require us to bear our own cross as we follow in His footsteps. There will be times of great challenge, but also moments of incredible joy.

Ultimately, God's Kingdom will come, and we will be with Him, together, forever. Until then, what does it look like for you and I to continue following Jesus with Kingdom endurance?

I. Upward Endurance (Matthew 4:1-3;11)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came...

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

[-Matthew 4:1-11](#)

After His public baptism, Jesus is led in the Spirit to face the god of this world, the ruler who stands in His rightful place to detour Him. This is significant for us this morning and I want to pause a bit on this place of temptation Jesus is in for it is where we find ourselves and plays into the significance of what repentance and following Jesus means.

First, Jesus is *led of the Spirit*. This act of leading is a verb, meaning *leading upward or into a higher place*. It is important to note that the Holy Spirit will always be leading us higher in Christ, to the High Ground, to stand firm as beacons of God's love and power that has overcome the world! As we are led, like Jesus, we find obstacles to this effort.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. [-Philippians 3:12-16](#)

The *devil* here is a general term ascribed to *one who stands and opposes the cause of God, acting the part of the devil or siding with him*. This is how Jesus could say to Peter, *Get behind me Satan* when Peter tried to prevent Jesus from following the Holy Spirit toward Calvary. It is here we see the effort of the enemy to resist God's work in us- why? Because it will prevent God's work through us. A little more on that in a bit.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesian believers,

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

[-Ephesians 2:1-3](#)

Because of sin, we are all naturally bent to flow in the current the stream of life moves in. It is a downward flow. Life without God flows away from Him and all that He is, leading into the fruit of life without Him- brokenness, disease, possession / enslavement, murder, rampant lust, etc all leading into death. The enemy tends the waters to ensure we all swim in this downward direction.

Governments, agendas, laws, education, religion, social structures, etc are built on this reality. Compliance allows things to move forward in a direction that the dominant power desires with promise of benefit to those who fill their streams. To be contrary to this flow, *to flow in a different direction*, or rather, *upstream*, we upset the way things are.

And that's Good News because the way things are, they are not the way they were designed to be and are not leading to life but in fact death.

However, when we flow in a different direction, we catch the attention of those around us. Jesus flowed in a different direction and caught the attention of the enemy of God and those created in His Image. He stood to detour Jesus from following the Holy Spirit and gaining the High Ground.

Tempter here is a verb meaning trial to bring out what is within. As in Jesus' case, it is good for He is without sin, filled and led of the Spirit in the Will of the Father. In us, while even in Christ, still have sin and may have sinfulness come out that complements turning from God in areas of our lives. However, when we give Jesus our YES!, the battle always belongs to the Lord!

Into the Wilderness, meaning a solitary, lonely, desolate or not naturally inhabited place. I want to focus on this because this speaks into the way the enemy works. Our fears and doubts tend to touch us when distractions are no longer around. It is in these moments of being or feeling alone that the soul faces some of its darkest hours.

It's not the temptation I want to look at this morning, but all that surrounded it. Any time we commit to follow Jesus, we are going to be led by His Spirit ***upward***, toward higher ground. Higher ground in every part of our life- even the parts that go kicking and screaming at times. Jesus empowers us to follow Him, and we are now swimming upstream. We need to understand this.

In this work, the enemy will labor to prevent us from moving forward. He will strive to cause us to quite. However, if we resist him, stand strong in God's Armor, the enemy will flee from us, as He did Jesus.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [-James 4:7](#)

II. Consistent Endurance (Matthew 4:12-17)

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." [-Matthew 4:12-17](#)

Upon hearing of His cousin's arrest, Jesus withdraws from Galilee and moves to *Capernaum* in the territory of *Zebulun* and *Naphtali*. This is interesting on many levels- chiefly because the names are rich with meaning for Matthew's text. Note:

Capernaum means *place of comfort*. **Zebulun** means *habitation or home*. **Naphtali** means *wrestling*. Think about this, Jesus after enduring the temptation in the wilderness, after hearing of His cousin's arrest, chooses to move to a place called *comfort because I live to wrestle!* Imagine that on a t-shirt! I love this because this defines not only Jesus, but also our own walk with him. There is joy in the struggle of upward endurance because we are transformed and comforted in the process of it!

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. -Ephesians 6:12

Why, because we are being led of the Spirit to Higher, heavenly places passing them on our way up as they are on their way down!

The prophetic nature here is also important. God moved His Son, by His Spirit geographically to bring forth His Will (the *Submitting to God* James talked about). *Imagine God moving you from a home, job, career, state, nation, etc- all for His Glory!* God had promised the light would begin to shine from His Kingdom into Israel through the Prophet Isaiah in this region- cities that were ravished by Assyria and then Babylon. *The first to experience the dominion of Gentile Nations became the point God begins to shine His light of invitation...to repent.*

Repentance is a word that has taken very negative shape throughout the years. We have come to see it as a demand rather than an invitation. Or perhaps we see it as a *command*, such as God commanding light to come out of darkness?

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. -2 Corinthians 4:6

Here, Jesus means **to change one's mind**. It's an active, ongoing transformation. Consider the preaching and teaching Jesus did. He brought incredible layer and depth to God's Word that reached into everyone's heart that heard. Some to draw closer in transformation; others to draw back into the natural flow of life's stream.

It's *knowing* the truth, and then *following* it. *Living* it. *Doing* it. **As we walk with Jesus, we are transformed, old things pass away, new things come.** We bear fruit through our lives that resembles Jesus' life and ministry.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to

this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” -Romans 12:1-2

Ongoing repentance is the consistency that strengthens our endurance as we press onward and upward in Him!

III. Contagious Endurance (Matthew 4:18-19)

Jesus walks into the daily rhythms of life around Him, all the while swimming upstream. He calls those amidst their daily routines to stop and follow Him.

Follow me. This in the Greek is an imperative, meaning *command* in a sense. It is as natural a flow of invitation as repentance or light coming out of darkness.

God calls light from the Darkness.

The Spirit calls us out of sin.

The Son calls us out of the crowds.

To *follow Him*. As He leads us out of the kingdom of darkness, out of our sin, and into His Kingdom of light. This is a daily process, in implication here in our text and for our lives today. We daily need to make the decision to get up and follow Jesus.

As the other Gospel writers will note, those called by Jesus to follow Him went and told others about Him which in turn brought more to Jesus.

What began with one person swimming upstream, has now become many swimming upstream. Kingdom endurance is contagious!

IV. Outward Endurance (Matthew 4:23-25)

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. -Matthew 4:23-25

The work Jesus is doing within us is designed to flow out of us into the world around us. The Ministry of Jesus, the Gospel, is a work in both *word* and *demonstration*. This had to have been such an incredible time for those who followed Jesus. God's Kingdom was coming into this world one heart at a time, reversing the effects of sin and demonstrating the power and authority the Son has as the Creator of the World.

Jesus is the rightful King.

This pace of ministry defined the life of Jesus over the next three years and would continue through the lives of Jesus' followers up into our lives as His followers today.

V. Kingdom Endurance (Luke 21:10-19)

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers[a] and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

-Luke 21:10-19

This brings us back to our focus this morning on Jesus words, *by your endurance you will gain your lives.*

The world has not changed much since Jesus' day. There are days it is easy to get up and follow Him. There are days it is hard. Very hard. There are seasons we give up. Then there are moments we bump into Him while we are "casting our nets" ie doing our profession. However, for those walking with Him for any period will look back and confirm it has not been easy. But it is worth it.

Jesus wants His followers to understand it may not look like we are having an impact. I mean, even after Jesus' resurrection Rome is still in power, the Temple is still contracting out to harm Jesus' followers, and many lose jobs, families, health, and life to continue to follow Jesus. Even in the greatest times of conversion, it seems like most of the world is still swimming downstream to death.

This downstream swim will continue to bring wars, division, brokenness, famine, pestilence- things that will continually strike fear into our hearts to jump back into the waters and swim right alongside the rest. But we cannot if we are following Jesus; Jesus is an upstream swimmer.

Because of this, what happened to Him will happen to us. The world does not want to repent; does not want to change. Even in moments where there might seem to be growth, the enemy is there to pluck it up and turn them back.

This time will serve as a wilderness temptation for us. The enemy desires to bring our retreat from within us. The Spirit is laboring to seize this time as opportunity to bring out God's

Kingdom from within us. For it is within this place of wrestling, we bring the comforting light of God's love through Jesus Christ into the places God leads us into!

However, the cost will intensify. *Adversaries* are those who stand / position to stop us; against us. With each step upward, the cost becomes more and more. It's one thing to expect people to be against us for following Jesus who are not close to us or know us. But when it is family? *Delivered up* means much more than just handing over; in the Greek it is betrayal. It is the same word used for Judas' act against Jesus. *Hated* is to pursue us with disgust, such as slander and hateful gossip / reputation.

It is this we swim against when we choose to follow Jesus. However, the reward is life with Him in His Kingdom. Life. (Greek *God / Life Breath*)

Kingdom Endurance is swimming after Jesus upstream, going **upward** with **consistency**, being **contagious**, and **outward** focused in declaration and demonstration of our faith.