

Entering God's Kingdom

by Duane Troyer

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being born again and striving to enter the kingdom of God through obedience and faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Ruth 1:16, Matthew 7:21, John 3:3, Philippians 3:8, Titus 3:5

Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Salvation"

Description

Duane Troyer preaches about the importance of entering the kingdom of God by being born again and forsaking all to follow Christ. He emphasizes the need to start over, re-think everything in light of Christ's teachings, and commit to a new way of living in God's kingdom. Using examples from the Bible like Ruth's complete transformation and Jesus' teachings on the kingdom, he warns against seeking life in the wrong places and highlights the necessity of accepting Jesus' words as the way to live by for true salvation.

Transcript

I greet you in Jesus' name this morning. It's been a blessing to be here. Let's pray. Father, we thank you now for this opportunity to gather together today, for a place to gather, and brothers and sisters to gather with. We pray Lord that you would be here with us today and speak to us . Be with those who aren't with us today. Amen. Last week in that message that I preached I mentioned in the future I'd like to preach another message that linked on to that one about the difference between the kingdom of God or just joining another church.

And brother Steve said to just go ahead this week, and I'm thankful for the opportunity with the things still fresh in my mind, and so I'm going to start where I left off there. That quote from Cyprian, I'll read it again here: It says, There is one God and Christ is one, And there is one church and one chair founded upon the rock by the word of the Lord, another altar cannot be constituted nor a new priesthood be made except there be one altar, one priesthood. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters.

Whatsoever is appointed by human madness so that the divine disposition is violated, is adulterous, is impious, is sacrilegious; depart far from the contagion of men of this kind and flee from their words. Avoid them as a cancer and a plague, as the Lord warns you, they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch. What I want to warn against is fleeing. If all we do is flee... You know, there's that passage about how the devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

There's something I've heard, I haven't studied lions that much, Brother Nicholas said their roar can be heard from a mile away, but I've heard when he roars sometimes he puts his head down near the earth and makes this roar that almost shakes the earth and if you're anywhere close, it is so loud and shattering that you cannot determine where it's coming from and any animal that jumps and runs and wants to flee, he's just as likely to run into his mouth as away from it. That's pretty sobering.

When I think of that, I think the devil does that. He's the author of confusion, the bible tells us, he can set up any kind of counterfeit, any thing to try and confuse people, and people run right into it if they just see what's wrong and flee, he's likely to snare them with his snares or they run right to him IF they have no place to flee. If they have no safe place to enter. If they do not have the kingdom of God or Christ to enter into. So that is kind of what I'd like to talk about.

There's so many avenues we could go down to talk about the kingdom of God, but I'd like to talk specifically about entering the kingdom of God. The scripture talks some about the entrance to the kingdom of God. In light of what I said last week, what happens and how it happens that movements that had light before become dead skeletons, the structures that are propped up to try to make it look like it has life. When someone sees the errors and all he does is think that to join another church is the answer, he will search in vain.

After Jesus died and was laid in the tomb, the first day of the week the women came to the tomb and they were looking for Jesus to do some anointing, and when they came there, He was not there, but there were some angels there who said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Why do you seek the living among the dead? And I think that's too much what happens when people go around and seek for life, and they're seeking in the wrong places. Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find," and this is encouraging, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

This sounds simple enough. Seek and ye shall find. But there's something else Jesus says in Luke and this has always been really thought provoking to me, the people came to Him and asked, "is it true that there are few that will be spared?" And this same Jesus who said, "Seek and ye shall find" this time says "Strive to enter into the narrow gate for many will seek and will not be able" And I think it's because they seek amiss, they seek either for the wrong thing, they spend their life seeking, either they seek for the living among the dead, or they seek for the wrong thing.

I've wondered there in Matthew 24 where Jesus says many will rise and say that 'I am Christ' and deceive many, and if they say, 'He's in the wilderness' don't go there. If they say "He's there" don't go there. I don't know for sure what Jesus had in mind, but I wondered, do we know if so many people around us call themselves Christ? But there's many institutions, many things that rise up and they even profess Jesus to be Christ, but deceive many, I just wondered if He made a reference to a time of many Christ's, of many churches professing Christ and deceiving many.

I don't know for sure, but it's a thought I've had. I'm going to read a passage in Deuteronomy 30 starting in verse 11 says, For this commandment is unto many of you today is not too burdensome for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven above that you should say, Who will ascent into heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear and do it? Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say, Who will go to the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear and do it? But the word is very near you, in your mouth, in your heart, and in your hands, that you may do it.

I'm blessed with that passage. Paul said a similar thing in in the book of Acts 17:26 He says, and he made from one man every nation of mankind that lives on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and boundaries and habitation, that they would seek God if perhaps they might look for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of them. In Him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, so also we are His children.

Last week I shared some of my testimony, but I kind of stopped at the point where I just faced reality and got honest with myself. I'd like to take some of my testimony on from there. We were not too encouraged with most of the people we did see who left the Amish and this made it even more scarier. It was something that was often said to us - "Look what happens with those who left." And I'm pretty sure we made some decisions without being sure what we knew was right, but we were sure we knew that

something was wrong and made some judgments based on that, and I think some of that can be done. But we will probably not enter the kingdom if that's all we do in our life. But I think sometimes we have to do that, sometimes we have to take the step that is right in front of us before we can see the next one. Before God can shed any more light He wants us to make this one step even if the future looks completely unknown. We were definitely influenced and encouraged by...we listened to a lot of messages from what is considered the Charity church or the Remnant church, but we were definitely influenced by that, encouraged by it, it offered some fresh air.

However, it would've been quite a few years down the road from when that Remnant/Charity churches started. About when we went to visit one of the churches, we were not all that encouraged, and I don't know if I could even identify why. But one thing we did, we met a lot of people that had glorious testimonies of how they were born again, how they were converted/saved. Not just in the Remnant churches at all, I'm just saying all around...Ok, remember what I said, we had this belief that Christ has one church, and He has one body, and that His people should be able to fellowship together as brothers because they are children of God with one Father.

And so with that in mind, we meet all these people and we still have a lot of evangelical theology about salvation, we meet a lot of people who give glorious testimonies of how they got saved/ born-again, they could explain grace, faith - all these kinds of things, but then we were left without really being able to give them the right hand of fellowship because they didn't follow what Christ taught. We'd go down the teachings of Jesus that He taught in the Sermon on the mount, and in Luke 6 and Luke 12, and all through the gospels, and it just looked like a denial of these things He taught.

And it was actually becoming a little discouraging. I think I would say I probably got to the point where I was thinking maybe I should give a little bit more credit to the Amish people where I came from. There's something about having a protestant or evangelical idea about salvation and our concept of the church that did not fit together. It didn't fit together unless we were willing to conclude that true obedience to Jesus Christ is not essential to being a Christian. And we could not conclude that, we did hold that.

After a year and a half, I'm not sure how long it was, we met some of the brothers from here and heard what they were teaching, and just re-looked at a lot of theology, and laid down a lot of ideas about theology and... just follow Jesus. And just follow what He had taught and there was something about that message that fit into what we believed about the church like a hand into a glove. This makes sense! I can fellowship with those people. Someone who hears what Christ has taught and accepts this as the way to live, and this is the definition of what it means to be a Christian, This makes sense: I can give a right hand

of fellowship to this.

And it becomes real. A real kingdom with a real King who has a kingdom with real laws and real servants. Jesus and John the Baptist both started their ministries by preaching, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Moses himself, after everything is written in the Law, he says, "Yet one more prophet will I raise out of my people, hear ye him." And then Jesus comes, he says, "The law and the prophets were until now and now the kingdom is preached and every man presses into it."

And He goes on to talk about: You have heard it's been said so and so, but I say unto you, so and so. Who is this man who has the authority to do that? He's a new King of a new Kingdom and it's necessary for every person whether Jew or Gentile to stop in his tracks: this is very important! If there's a new King with a new kingdom who tells us this kingdom is at hand, and that you've heard so and so but I say unto you so and so, He's wanting to get our attention. This is enough to make everyone stop and think.

And it is necessary for every one of us to re-think everything we have ever known and hold it to light in light of what this King has said. We must start over. We must begin again or we cannot see the kingdom of God. Like Paul wrote in Philippians 3 where he had all these credentials, he was a Jew of the Jews, of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the on the eighth day, of the Pharisee, concerning the Law, zealous but he counted all these things as dung that he might win Christ.

He had to completely start over. This was a whole new kingdom, a whole new way of thinking and living. It didn't matter how much knowledge he had, it didn't matter how many credentials he could've had in the flesh, this was completely new. In John 3. The majority of what is known to the name of Christianity today is very well known with John 3, about how we must be born-again and I feel sometimes there's this whole thing built upon this. It's the only place in the gospels that Jesus spoke about this, but that doesn't make it any less important, He doesn't have to say it many times in order for it to be important.

He said, "except ye be born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." I do want to read this here in John 3. I want to be able to read this without a preconceived idea of what it is. Because there's really not too much explanation here. A brother observed this that it could be that Jesus meant the same thing when He said, "Unless ye be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God." It's not the same context, like that wasn't said to Nicodemus, it could be that Jesus meant the same thing.

However, it's something somebody shared with me and I think it's a possibility. But think about it still though. Within Christianity there's this thing... like: "Have you been born again?" "Tell me your testimony how you got born again." or, "These are the born again Christians" or churches, named after the Born again Church. What if there was the same thing built on "Have you become as little child?" "Tell me your testimony of how you became as a little child" "These are the became as a little child Christians" or "The become as a little child church."

He says the same thing about it: "Except you become as a little child you can in no-wise enter into the kingdom of God." Let's just read John 3, starting in verse 1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus the Ruler of the Jews, this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher for no one can do those things that you do unless God is with him. Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he? Jesus answered, truly, truly I say to you unless one is

born of water and spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I say to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but do not know where it comes from or where it is going, so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to Him, How can these things be? And Jesus answered and said to him, are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?

Truly, truly I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify about what we have seen and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God does not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, as the light has come into the world and men have loved darkness rather than light, for their deeds are evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light and does not come to the light for fear that his deeds may be exposed.

But he who practices the truth comes to the light so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. This is a very important subject. Unless we be born again we will not see the kingdom of God, and unless we are born again we will not enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus makes it plain, Do not be amazed at what I say, you must be born again. That we read very plainly, but how this works, or how it unfolds, we hardly get out of this passage. It's likened unto the wind, how the Spirit moves.

And I think to try to put this happening or need of this into a little box is very much like trying to box up the wind. Try to put the wind in a box sometime. One of the early Anabaptist writers wrote about that one time, about the Spirit of God, I think he's talking about trying to define all this, is like trying to put the wind in a box or the current of a river into a jar. In Titus 3:5 Paul talks about the washing of the regeneration and also here in this passage of being born again, Jesus says that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The early Christians and the early Anabaptists had no problem with calling a water baptism a washing of regeneration. They had no problem with saying that we bury someone in baptism and he rises a new man. I don't think they were superstitious about it, I don't think they thought there was some magical power behind it, but they let it be a mystery. They called it the mysteries of God. They were not afraid to call them sacraments. What they did believe is that there was a new King and a new kingdom and unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter into that kingdom.

It was for them a new kingdom, a new King and therefore a new kingdom, therefore, new laws, therefore, a new commitment. It was the new way of thinking that produced a new way of living. It required a starting over and a new beginning by a new birth of a new child that became a new creature. Old things were passed away, behold, all things have become new. The disciples walked with Jesus and heard everything taught and saw all the things that He did, they were pretty earthly minded, and they still had their thoughts on an earthly kingdom and it wasn't until their eyes were opened and they saw the kingdom as Christ had meant it that all these things fit together that He taught.

These experiences that people have that they call a new birth but has nothing to do with the kingdom of God, it has nothing to do with a new kingdom, I cannot find scripturally find the ground to call it an actual new birth, or at least not the new birth Jesus was talking about. And I'm not suggesting it wasn't a work of God, I'm suggesting that these people who have these experiences didn't have an encounter with God, it may well be because God is a good God. He is just to the righteous and the unrighteous and He will hear their prayers.

He will even forgive people who come to Him and ask for forgiveness, and deliver people from sins if they ask Him, without that person necessarily becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. When Jesus walked here on the earth, He healed people. Every person that I can think of that came to Jesus and wanted to be healed, got healed. They had an encounter with God, a supernatural experience, but it did not make them a disciple of Christ at all. In fact, one time He healed ten lepers, everyone of them got healed, but it appears like nine of them really had no interest in Christ.

They wanted to be healed, but one out of those ten had enough interest in Christ to at least come back and thank Him. Entering into the kingdom of God requires the forsaking of all and the picking up of our cross to enter in. And so what if our friends can't see it and they forsake us? Or the rest of the people in church can't see it and they forsake us? Or our brothers and sisters won't see it and reject us? Or our parents, or our children, or our wife? Jesus had something to say about that.

He said "if you love them more than me, you are not worthy of me." I'm going to read in the book of Ruth chapter 1. In the days of the judges there was a famine in the land and a man went from Bethlehem of Judah to sojourn in the country of Moab, and his wife and his sons. And the name of the man was Abimalech and the name of his wife, Naomi and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilean, Ephredites of Bethlehem of Judah and they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

Then Naomi's husband died and she was left with her two sons. They took for themselves wives of the women of Moab, the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other, Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years then her sons died. So the woman survived her two sons and husband. Then she arose with her two daughters-in-law and returned from the country of Moab for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord was watching over His people by giving them bread, therefore she and her daughters-in-law left the place where she was and returned to the land of Judah.

And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. May the Lord have mercy on you as you have dealt with the dead and me, the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." And she kissed them and they lifted up their voice and

wept. And they said to her, "We will return with you to your people," but Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why do you desire to go with me? Are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husband? Turn back my daughters, for I am too old to have a husband, for I say, if I marry and should bear a son, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters. For it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out from within me."

Then they lifted up their voice and again wept. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her people, but Ruth followed her. And Naomi said to Ruth, "Look! Your sister-in-law has returned to her people and to her gods, return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not ask me to leave you or turn back from following you, for where ever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my

people and your God will be my God, and where you die, there I will die and there I will be buried.

May the Lord cause this to happen to me and more also, if anything but death parts you and me." When Naomi saw she was determined to go with her, she entered into conversation with her. Now the two of them went till they came to Bethlehem and the whole city shouted because of them and said, "Is this Naomi?" but she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi, call me bitter, for the Almighty has dealt very bitter with me. I went out full and the Lord brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has humbled me? and the Almighty has afflicted me."

So Naomi returned and Ruth the Moabite woman returned with her, her daughter-in-law who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to that land at the beginning of barley harvest. Ruth was an amazing character and as I was thinking about starting over and beginning anew, and a new birth and entering into the kingdom, I thought of Ruth. This was the birth of a new Ruth. This was the beginning of a complete transformation. It was the transition from one kingdom to another kingdom to another king.

Ruth was ready to leave and forsake her nation, her kingdom, her land, her people, her gods, her parents, her customs, everything she was familiar with, her sister-in-law, all that she was ready to leave. In front of her lay the great unknown. But she was ready to go into it: a new land, a new nation, and new kingdom, a new God, new laws, new people, new customs. She was so ready to embrace it, so committed was she to go there, that when even the native of that land, Naomi, tried to talk her out of it, and told her of the afflictions and tribulations that come with this, she wouldn't hear it.

"Where you go, I will go. Your people are my people, your God is my God, and where you die, I shall die." She came into Israel, she did not try to introduce her customs into this nation. She did not try to bring some of her things into this land. She came, she wanted to be a gleaner, that's all she wanted to do. Just glean what's leftover from the harvesters. God blessed this woman in ways no one could imagine and a great redemptive work was begun there, how Boaz redeemed the land that belonged to Naomi and married Ruth and brought up a son.

That's what it takes to enter into the kingdom of God, a complete willingness to forsake what we had, what we knew, what we thought, how we lived, to embrace the kingdom of Christ. It's really pretty simple. It's so simple, in fact, that some people miss it. What's difficult is, that the devil, and the world and our flesh and blood stand determined to keep us from going there. Christ's message can be heard, understood and lived by any man who has ears to hear, from every land, from every tongue, from every race, whether he's young or old, whether it's a man or a woman.

He hid it from the wise and the prudent and revealed it unto babes. Those who become as a little child will see. It was easily heard and received by tax-collectors, stinky fishermen, prostitutes, it was also heard by people like doctors, like Luke, Nicodemus - these people could hear as well, but they had to be born-again. They had to start over. They had to re-think and enter a new kingdom. There's two kingdoms. There might be 196 countries, but there's two kingdoms. I believe there's around 4200 known religions, but there's two kingdoms.

Apparently there's over 30,000 denominations of professing Christians, but there's two kingdoms. We must forsake the one to enter the other. And I believe this salvation is nothing other than that, of entering God's kingdom. I know we try to give a lot of liberty when it comes to theology, those kinds of beliefs, but I will say this, If someone accepts or believes what Christ has taught, he's our brother, but theology does produce something. Ideas result in actions, and theology does do something.

I had an uncle, he's a preacher in a Mennonite church. I was talking to him about some things one time and he said, "yeah we have protestant idea of salvation and an Anabaptist idea about discipleship and we can't figure out why it doesn't work." There are some things that don't fit together, and this is an important point I'd like to make in this. This has been my observation. When people hold to an evangelical or protestant idea of what salvation is, one of two things happen: either they completely forsake Christ's laws, His kingdom, His teachings, righteousness and holiness, or, in order to keep it, they legislate it, they add to it, they divide it, or they add rules to it to try to keep it and maintain it.

But I think it's because they added the kingdom and the teachings of the kingdom of God to their idea of salvation instead of believing there is salvation in none other than entering the kingdom of God and accepting His words as the way that one must live by. There's no other name, the bible says, whereby man may be saved, but the name of Jesus. And this Jesus, when He came here, He started it by preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. it was the main theme that He preached about the three years that He preached.

There was no other topic that He spoke as much about as the kingdom. And the last thing He said before He was lifted up and was hid in the clouds, He said to His disciples, "You are my witnesses, starting in Jerusalem. You are my witnesses, take this message to the ends of the earth." And the disciples spread all over the earth taking the good news of the kingdom to all people. That's all I had to share.

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