

Embracing the Gospel of the Kingdom

by John D. Martin

The gospel of the kingdom is the message of salvation and the establishment of God's rule on earth through the church's corporate expression.

Duration: 59:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-20, Matthew 6:33, Acts 19:8, Acts 20:25, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Colossians 2:8

Topics: "Kingdom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses three reasons why we should not lay up treasures on earth. The first reason is that our heart follows our treasure, so if our treasure is on earth, our heart will be too. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus always referred to the gospel as the gospel of the kingdom, which means that God wants to save human beings and have them express His kingdom on earth. To have the kingdom, we need a kingdom focus, which means our focus should be on the king. Additionally, the preacher highlights the importance of gospel economics, which is a command of Christ that many have failed to obey. The sermon references Matthew chapter 6 as a basis for understanding these teachings.

Transcript

The subject before us is following Christ and embracing his kingdom. Now, my concern with this message is that we would dispel a detour that our Anabaptist churches took in the last century. As I was growing up, the gospel that I heard was basically what I call a save me gospel.

I don't think I ever heard a message in all my growing up years on the kingdom. Now, the word kingdom of God was used very loosely as it is in many circles, but this morning I would like to make it clear what we really mean when we're talking about the kingdom of God. It's not about us.

And I think that's where the problem came in the shift of the focus when I was growing up. The main thing in the messages that I heard was we need to get saved, and that certainly is true. But that's a means to an end.

It's not an end in itself. But it was made an end in itself, and much revival preaching was focused on that. So this morning, we want to talk about the kingdom, and I want you to understand when you leave here what the original gospel of Jesus Christ was.

It was the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus began his ministry by saying, repent, and the classic words that would follow that would be repent or you will be lost. Repent or you will go to hell.

But Jesus didn't say that. He said, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It's right there for you to grasp.

It's at hand. Six verses later, after calling his first four disciples, it says he went about all Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Do you know that Jesus never called the gospel anything else? In every instance where you find the content of the gospel described, it is the gospel of the kingdom.

Every time, I find no exception in the entire gospel record. Jesus' two most important statements were the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. And both of them begin and end with an emphasis on the kingdom of God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The Lord's Prayer.

And speaking of the end, Jesus said, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come. I ask you this morning, has the gospel of the kingdom been preached to the ends of the earth or has it basically been a save me gospel? Now I'm going to make one thing clear. God uses imperfect means and I think the kingdom has been expressed beautifully in many places of the world, perhaps despite a wrong emphasis.

But that is the gospel that is to be preached. All right. All of Jesus' parables, almost every one of them, focus on the kingdom.

The kingdom is as a treasure in the field. The kingdom is as a merchant man. The kingdom is as a net cast into the sea.

The kingdom is as a mustard seed. The kingdom is as leaven. And if I were to ask you this morning, when Jesus said, gave the parable of the sower, what did he say the seed was? That's what most people say.

And it certainly is true that it's the word of God, but specifically it says the seed is the word of the kingdom. I never noticed that till recently. We are so used to reading the Bible through certain lenses.

And I would have said the same thing you said, brother, probably six months ago. And then it's interesting to notice that in the parable, the tears, when Jesus interprets that passage, he says, the seed is the children of the kingdom. That excites me here are what they're supposed to be around 400 seeds.

I don't think they're all here this morning. 400 seeds of the kingdom. And what should happen is every one of these seeds should go out there and be planted.

And what's going to grow up a kingdom expression of the gospel, not just personal people getting ready to go to heaven, but a kingdom expression of the gospel should grow up around every kingdom Christian because you are the seed of the kingdom. But when we turn to the historic church, it isn't very long till the whole emphasis begins to change. How many of you can recite the apostle's creed? Raise your hands.

Few of you. What's the word the apostle's creed begins with? I. That's interesting. The prayer begins, Our Father.

The apostle's creed begins with I. And you go down through the creeds of the church through all those first centuries, and not a single one of them say anything at all about the kingdom. That's interesting. Except for the creed of Constantinople.

At the end of that creed, it says, And he shall come again to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. So it places the kingdom out there somewhere, says nothing about the kingdom presently. All right, so the result is a difference in a person's outlook.

That's what happens. If the focus is on me, then the preaching I heard all my life is gospel preaching. It's important.

Most important thing in the world is for me to get saved. Now, I don't want you to leave here with, I don't want you to leave with a misunderstanding. That is a very important thing.

And heaven and hell are two very important realities that we've got to reckon with. But that's not God's most important concern with the present age. What God wants, He wants a corporate expression, a society of the redeemed, if you please.

And so salvation is a very important means to an end, not an end in itself, because God can't express His kingdom until He has redeemed people. But He wants a group of redeemed people to show to everyone what the whole world would look like if everybody obeyed the King. That's what this is all about.

We're talking about community. We're talking about society. We're talking about corporate relationships so that the world looking on can say, Wow, just like the Queen of Sheba said when she came to Solomon's kingdom.

What a great God they must have. What a beautiful kingdom. I can't believe what I see.

I did not know that human beings could actually live together this way. That's what kingdom is all about. But you see, if you concentrate only on your personal salvation and you don't really make that the heart of your understanding of the gospel as Jesus taught it and as Paul and all of them labored to teach it, then you have all the splits and splinters and fragmentation.

And I wonder what the world does see. Now I stand here with all of you. We've all been involved in this.

And one of the reasons is because we have not been taught that the end of our salvation is to be involved in something larger than ourselves. And that is God's purpose for his gospel. All right.

It's the society of the redeemed. But as I told you, the gospel was lost very early to individualistic salvation. And the last century was basically that in our churches.

I know that. And then we wonder why we have so much individualism now. It's the fruit of a distorted gospel.

We need to get back. And this is a burden of my heart. And it's why I'm so glad I'm here to talk to a whole group of young people.

You're the next generation. I'm 66 years old. I may have 10 years.

I may have 15 years at the best to preach. And then it's your turn. And I want it to be a kingdom gospel, not a save me gospel.

That's what I want it to be. All right. Jesus used the word kingdom of God at least 124 times in the gospel.

And like I said, he never called it anything else. It's always the gospel of the kingdom. Now, Jesus would never have focused on something marginal.

If Jesus focused on that, then that was the centrality of his message. He said in Luke 4, 43, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also for there unto I am sent. That's why he came.

So is the kingdom of God ever taught? Well, in dispensational circles, it's relegated to the future. You know, I think the devil has used every stratagem he can think of to get the focus off of the kingdom. I really think he has.

So the dispensationalist has put it out there. It's coming someday later. And then the things Jesus taught will be relevant.

They're not relevant today. That's what some people do with the kingdom. Other people like Augustine and Calvin made the kingdom the central theme of the gospel.

They made the kingdom the central theme of their teaching. But it was a carnal kingdom ruled by force. So you have these two distortions or these two wrong concepts of the kingdom.

And in the meantime, the message is lost. Now, why did Jesus focus his message on the kingdom of God? Well, that's because that was God's original purpose. That's why man was created.

Salvation was not the main theme of God's original work with man. Man was not lost. His original purpose, he states very clearly, was that man would have dominion.

That he would express God's authority on this earth. That's what he said. And the first use of the word kingdom is in Exodus 19, verse 6, where it says, And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests.

Now, that makes it very clear what this is all about. We are a kingdom mediating God's rule. He is the king.

Christ is the king. We are not the kings. We simply are his subjects expressing his rule, expressing his authority, first of all, in our own personal lives and in our relationships as a kingdom fellowship, and then even bringing his authority to bear on the world around us.

That's what's happening with Brother Ken right now. This is God's purpose, all right? It's a kingdom unto me, not a kingdom unto us. And the purpose is to show God's benevolent rule through us.

Do you know the world does not understand God? They have a very ignoble concept of God. When they think about God at all, they think of him in a negative concept, in a negative way, that he's some sort of a grumpy sovereign out there that likes to give difficult rules to his people, and he's a hard master, and his ways are not good. If you follow those, you certainly will never be happy.

That's their concept of God. And God's purpose is through this society of the redeemed, this little window, this little colony of heaven, if you please, here on this earth, for the world to get a real concept of the king and have a desire to respond properly to him, all right? Now, the devil, of course, perverted the whole

concept of kingdom, and that's why people have difficulty with the idea, because we have people like Hitler and Mussolini and Mao Zedong and Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein who perverted this and made it an awful thing, all right? So, in the Old Testament, God wanted a nation. First of all, he wanted all men to be a kingdom of priests.

That was his original purpose. That purpose got lost, and so God called out a nation. And we're not going to take the time this morning, but it'd be an interesting study for you to do, and I often do it publicly, to go through the Old Testament and see what God had to say about what he wanted to do with that nation.

He said to them, I want to lift you up on high so that all the nations will say, my, what a God they had. What nation has such wonderful laws? What nation is so blessed? He said, I will make you the lender and not the borrower. You will be number one among the nations if you keep all of my commandments.

See, that's the only way that people will ever be blessed, by a total surrender. Now, I told you that the fragmentation that took place is because we misunderstand. We don't understand a total submission of our lives to each other.

We don't understand that the way we should. All right, well, we come into the New Testament. That was God's purpose in the Old Testament, to have a kingdom that would demonstrate to the whole world what a nation would look like if God was the Lord.

That's what he wanted. And only briefly did the world ever see that. Under David, somewhat under Solomon, and that was it.

So, we come into the New Testament. And I want you just to turn, just to show you, I told you that Jesus' message was the gospel of the kingdom. I just want to prove to you that it didn't end with Christ.

So let's just turn to a few references. Acts 19. I guess I want to send you all out here as passionate church builders.

That's what I want to have happen in this meeting. I want you to forget about yourself. I want you to get your relationship with God established, and then lose yourself in something bigger than yourself.

That's what I would like to see. That's the purpose of this message. Acts 19, verse 8. What did Paul preach? Well, it says, and he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

That was Paul's message. It was not a save-me gospel. Look at chapter 20, where he takes his leave of the Ephesian elders.

And what does he say in chapter 20, verse 25? Where am I here? I was in the wrong chapter. Just a minute. Verse 25.

And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching, the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. Now I ask you, when you preach the gospel, is that what you preach? Do you preach the kingdom of God? I hope so. And if you haven't, I hope you start.

Would you turn to Acts 28? We're coming to the end of Paul's life. When he got to Rome, he had an appointment with the Jewish elders, and they came to him. Verse 23, and when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified.

Let's all say it. That was the message. And then, of course, he ends up in prison, or ends up in his own hard house as a prisoner.

And what's he preaching to the people who come to him? Let's look at Acts 28. The very last verse of the chapter. It says, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hard house, receiving all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God.

Now I think if Paul's gospel was a save-me gospel, it would not be stated that way. I don't think it would be. All right? So that was the message.

Now, this kingdom is a present reality. And we have the effect of this kingdom shown in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. I wish you would turn to that.

1 Corinthians 14. This is what should happen when the kingdom is genuinely expressed. It says in verse 23, if therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say, you're mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.

And so falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is in you of a truth. That's the kind of authority that the gathered body has when it's functioning as a true kingdom expression. Psalm 89.7, even the Old Testament says this, God is greatly feared in the assembly of the saints.

What is the church? Well, the church, the term for the church is ecclesia. If you ask most people what that word means, they will say the called out ones. My question is called out for what? I mean, they're just called out to enjoy each other's fellowship.

I want you to turn to a very unusual usage of this word in the New Testament. Would you turn to the book of Acts again, or back in the book of Acts to chapter 19. And this is that uproar at Ephesus.

And you remember, they all stood and cried for the space of two hours. I think great as Diana, the Ephesians, and the town clerk comes on the scene and he says, we're going to be criticized. We're going to be judged for this disorder.

Now, if there's something that needs to be resolved, there's a way to resolve it. Verse 39. But if you inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

And that word is ecclesia. If you had gone to a Greek town and you'd have said, take me to the ecclesia, they'd have taken you to the town council. It was a governing body.

Ecclesia means a body of people called out to govern. Now, suppose you went to the United States Congress and you talked to the people coming out and you said, what happened in the Congress today? And they said, oh, we had a wonderful fellowship together. We were so encouraged.

We had a fellowship meal and it was just wonderful. You should have seen that potluck supper dinner we had. And I just was so glad I came to Congress.

I was discouraged when I came, but now I'm really, really inspired. Unfortunately, maybe that's what happens. I'm sorry.

You said don't speak disrespectfully, but anyway, you would say that's not why you were there. You weren't there for yourself. You were there to help understand the laws of our country and bring them to bear upon yourself and this assembly and the nation.

That's why you were there. That's why we're here. That's our purpose.

And the early church demonstrated that. How many know about the Pax Romana? Raise your hands. 200 years of peace under the Roman government, no wars anywhere.

And when you read that in the history books, which I did as a student, it says the reason for that was because the Roman army was so formidable and its punishments were so terrifying that people just bowed to its rule and didn't make any trouble. But if you read the early church, that's not what they say. They say the reason, oh, by the way, that 200 years of Roman peace is coterminous or is at the same time as the first 200 years of the early church.

And it's during those 200 years that the early church was a church of peace and non-resistance. And I think it's interesting that that Pax Romana ended just about the time the church made its compromise on the subject of non-resistance. But during that time, the church loved to tell its Roman friends, the reason why the world is at peace is because the prince of peace has come and has established a kingdom of peace and its prayers and its influence is keeping this world at peace.

And I hear I'm on a bully pulpit, but it's the last message. And brother Joe is going to preach this message, so I'm not going to preach it. But the most tragic compromise the church ever made was when it surrendered its gospel of peace.

And because of that compromise, we have all kinds of horrible things done in the name of Jesus, the Crusades, the Inquisition, slavery in America, the war, civil war and World War I and World War II. People say, what do you do with a man like Hitler? Well, most of the people in Germany were Lutherans. If the church had never lost its stand on non-resistance, Hitler would have had no army.

Almost none of the wars during Western civilization would ever have occurred. You see what happened to this kingdom? It got messed up. And I'm going to tell you that I hear testimonies very here and there that the most powerful testimony that the gospel still has is its testimony of non-resistance.

We live in a world that is sick of war and hatred and bitterness and bloodshed and killing and all of that. And to hear that there's a group of people that for 500 years has been able to live together in peace without the sword is about the most appealing message we could ever give to the world. Now that's another subject.

We'll let Brother Joe discuss it. All right, so I hope you understand what the gospel of the kingdom is. It is a gospel that says God wants to save human beings and he wants them all to go to heaven.

Don't misunderstand that. But his main purpose for saving human beings and leaving them on this earth is he wants an expression of his kingdom. And I'll repeat my understanding of the kingdom.

You can write it down. This is my definition. It's a group of people who show to everyone what the whole world would look like if everybody obeyed the king.

Now, we're to where my message is supposed to begin. And I have what? About 20 minutes, 25 minutes. All right, here are some things we have to have if we're going to have the kingdom.

Number one, we have to have a kingdom theology. I don't even like that word. Let's call it a kingdom focus.

And that means that the focus is going to be on the king. The focus is going to be on the king. The early Christians were passionate.

By the way, I don't believe in any Christianity that doesn't have any passion. If you're an indifferent, sort of an apathetic, blase sort of person, I'm going to doubt your Christianity. That's it's up to God to decide.

I'm not going to make any judgment, but you won't convince me. Because to me, that's what the focus is. The seal of the Holy Spirit is all about.

The Holy Spirit is motivation. It's drive. In fact, when it says Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, that word means driven.

When it says as many as are led by the Spirit of God, that word means driven. Christians are driven people. And the proof that you have the Holy Spirit is there's something driving you.

You have a gleam in your eye. There's a passion in your heart. And the passion of early Christianity was that I may know Him.

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. As ye have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk ye in Him. And I look at all those little prepositional phrases throughout, especially the epistles, where it says unto Christ, in Christ, to Christ, for Christ, after Christ, with Christ.

I mean, there are dozens of them scattered through the epistles. That was the passion of the early church. In fact, Paul had a tremendous fear that that passion would be lost.

Would you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11? Pardon me for yelling. My wife will tell me after that I yelled. But I don't know how else to preach.

All right. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 3. But I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve. Woo, that sounds pretty serious.

Through his subtlety, subtlety, that your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Turn to Colossians. Now, somebody wrote this verse, verse 8 of chapter 2 on a little index card and told me to stick it in my pocket and read it every now and then when I went to Shippensburg University.

That was a good idea. And I would suggest you do that if you go to secular college. But that's not what the context is.

The context is being written to Christian people in a Christian context. And he says, beware lest any man spoil you, that same word that Paul used back there in 2 Corinthians, rob you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Now, what are the traditions of men and what are the rudiments of the world and what's philosophy? What's he talking about? He said, beware lest some Christian take verses and manipulate them into a system of thought that you

will follow and it will not be after Christ.

And brothers and sisters, that's exactly what happened. It's still happening. In fact, it happens in our circles.

Assign someone to give a talk on biblical stewardship. And in most situations, what you're going to get is a clever manipulation of the text into a system of thought that supports keep investing and building up your assets until you have lots of assets. And they'll basically use the parable of the talents.

They'll ignore everything else Jesus said. So they'll pick their text and they will construct a theology, a systematic theology of economics that is absolutely un-Christ-like. Paul said, don't let that happen.

Don't let anybody spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit with logic the way the world does its stuff and take you away from Christ. But it happened. And here's how it happened.

Heresies threatened the early church. That was very serious. Instead of turning up the volume on simple obedience to the explicit example and person of Christ and his commands, they fought those heresies with theology.

So they constructed the creeds and they constructed systematic theologies until they had what Brother Dean here calls salvation by theology. That would not have been possible originally because the whole canon wasn't even in existence until the 200s. There was no such thing as a person saying, I'm going to do an exhaustive biblical study on the doctrine of angels.

By the way, if you want to put me to sleep right at the beginning of the service, you get up and say, you're going to preach on the doctrine of angels. I want to hear about Jesus. I want to hear about his kingdom.

And if in the text that you use there's something said about angels, then you go tell us what the Bible says about angels. But that's the kind of sermons people began to preach. I'm sorry, I don't mean to condemn.

But anyway, at the beginning, you could not have done an exhaustive search. The entire Bible wasn't in existence. Now, most of it was by the 200s.

But there were no printing presses. There were no concordances. There were no lexicons.

People did not study the Bible that way, except a few people like Augustine and some of your professional theologians were able to do that. The early Christians focused on the person of Christ and a passion to carry out every word he said because they believed every word was life. Even if it made no sense.

Such as non-resistance and voluntary poverty and some other things that of course got lost with the systematic theology approach because logically they couldn't put that together. Now, the Anabaptists returned to the original concept of Christianity. That's why John Overholt so aptly said years ago, and I didn't appreciate it then like I appreciate it now, but he said, the Anabaptists are our bridge to the early church.

They bridged across 1,000 years of systematic theology, which continued with the reformers. They continued that same process, but the dear old Anabaptists went right back to the teachings of Jesus and said, we are going to follow him. The genius of Anabaptism was not sola scriptura.

That's what we're always told. Everybody was sola scriptura. The Roman Catholics were proving their points from the Bible, and so were the reformed theologians.

Now, the Anabaptists were great biblical scholars. Don't misunderstand me, but they were biblical scholars with a purpose. They were passionate about learning to know the way of Christ.

And they were passionately devoted to following him and becoming like him and establishing kingdom communities. That was the original gospel. And that continued in one form or another up until about the 1800s.

And then the same thing happened to the Anabaptists that happened to the early church. Modernism raised its ugly head. And how did the Anabaptists fight modernism? With theology.

That conflict brought out our first theological statement, systematic theological statements. I will not mention the writings because I'm not trying to condemn. And the church started down that road.

And I would say most of my life, what I heard preached was systematic theology. Proof texts strung together in logical order. Could somebody bring me a glass of water? Strung together in logical order to come to certain often predetermined conclusions.

Anyway, so here we are after a century of that kind of teaching and preaching that ended up basically being a save me theology. And I want to see that change. And the reason I'm up here preaching my heart out this morning is I want you folks to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom.

We're talking about community. We're talking about society. We're talking about relationships.

We're talking about corporate expression of the gospel. Thank you very much, brother. So the first thing that we need to get straight, if we're going to have a kingdom, embrace the kingdom is there must be a kingdom focus, which is a focus on the king and everything he said and everything that he did and a belief that what he said and what he did is for this present age and that the kingdom can be expressed now.

Number, the next point that I'd like to make, there must be a kingdom hermeneutic. Now that's a big word. It means your method of interpretation.

How is the gospel to be the parts that need interpreting? I don't think very much of it, by the way, needs to be interpreted. I think it's all pretty straightforward, but how is it to be understood and how is it to be carried out and how are the applications to be made? Who's to decide all of that? Well, the reformers and the Roman Catholic church. In fact, from the time of the early church, when things changed, they said that's the job of a specialized clergy.

They're the only people that know enough to understand these difficult things and they'll figure it out and then they'll preach to us. And so they built their churches for that purpose. They built them with high podiums, the big long lecture halls.

So the preacher could get up here and expound to you the gospel. And you listen and you believe what he said and you went home and hopefully did what he said. That was not the end of baptism.

That was the beginning of the anti-baptist approach. By the way, some people think that the Roman Catholic, the anti-baptist, the reformers rejected the sacraments, the means by which you could receive grace from the doing penance and from the mass and all of that. They rejected that.

And some people think they turned right around and made the preaching of the word a sacrament. You just come and hear the word, that'll do something for you. They believed the church was the instrument for proclaiming the word and administering the sacraments.

That was basically the reformed concept of the church. And that's how the word was applied and interpreted. The anti-baptists returned to 1 Corinthians 14.

And I wanna go back and read it. 1 Corinthians 14. And this got lost too.

Somewhere in my generation, it got completely lost. Verse 23. I already read part of this.

So I'm not gonna reread down to verse 24. Let's start at verse 26. How is it then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation, let all things be done unto Edifying.

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at most by three and that by course and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church and let him speak to himself and to God. Let the prophet speak two or three and let the other judge.

If anything be revealed to another that said it by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace in all the churches of the saints.

So there you have a picture of an early church service. Everybody came. Well, I shouldn't say they all came, but they all had the privilege of giving a word of prophecy in order.

Now, when I was a boy growing up, there was a little bit of that left in the churches I was in. How many of you are in churches where after the sermon is done, the people who are sitting on the bench make comment? How many come from churches where that's done? Well, that was done when I was a small boy. By the time I was a teenager, that wasn't even done.

Well, if you go way back to Anabaptist meetings, you will find what happened was somebody stood up and gave a word, and then it was discussed. Somebody else got up and expounded a portion of the word, and it was discussed. In fact, their meeting houses weren't long halls with high podiums.

Their meeting houses were square. They had two pews there, and they had a pew here and a pew here, and the pastor stood in the middle. It was symbolic of the way they all discussed the word together.

This is a beautiful concept. I would say if there's any strength at all in the Church of Shippensburg, and I love the Church of Shippensburg, it's that we have done this for 25 years, so that if you were to ask any person in our congregation what he thinks on almost any given subject that's related to the gospel, you'd probably get the same answer. I'm not sure we can have a lot of unity until this is returned.

It worked at Schleithem. The Anabaptists were really confident that this was a tremendous concept of understanding the word of God. They came to Schleithem.

Some of them were not non-resistant when they came. They were in terrible disagreement and confusion. And at the end of the meeting, their hearts were united, and they all agreed to the Schleithem Confession.

And that's what they believed about how the word of the kingdom is understood and applied. It's in the gathered body, not by specialists who get up and preach from a high pulpit and everybody listens to the professional preaching of the word, but an understanding as the Holy Spirit works with all the gifts throughout the entire body on any given subject. Number four, or number three.

Somehow I got my numbers wrong here. Number three, if there is going to be an embracing of the kingdom, there must be a kingdom society. The church is a brotherhood in which the fullness of the kingdom ideal is explored and explained versus an individualistic, save me, religion in which each person is individually trying to figure out how he's going to make it to heaven.

It's a community. Are you aware that the church began in the city? It was an urban movement. People lived in the city right near each other so they could break bread from house to house.

They were with each other almost every day, shared communion in almost every service. And it was just one big family experience of constant worship and constant understanding of the gospel and the constant witness and constant discipling and constant teaching because they lived close together. I studied two years of Latin.

I didn't like it. We had a little saying that said, Latin's a dead language as dead as dead can be. It killed off all the Romans and now it's killing me.

But I did learn some vocabulary. The word Paganini means country dwellers. Most of you are pagans.

The church was in the city where people live close together and could fellowship constantly in geographic proximity with each other. Now, if there's an Amish man sitting here, he'll like what I'm going to say next. The automobile destroyed what little bit of community we had.

And now we have people who drive 35 minutes, 40 minutes. We went 30 minutes to church every time I went. The only time I saw the people was about twice a week because we lived a half hour away.

Now, I'm not saying you can't serve the Lord and live a half hour away from church. I'm not saying that. I'm saying if we're going to embrace the kingdom, here are some principles we're going to have to come to terms with.

There has to be enough closeness for us to fellowship on almost a daily basis. Work together, think together, pray together, sing together constantly. The word heathen, by the way, means the people who live out on the heath.

Well, what was it with Anabaptism? Well, the Anabaptists lived in villages. Same thing. They lived in villages.

I wish when the Anabaptists had come to this country, we had pursued the village model of settlement like they did in Russia where everybody lived along the street and their businesses and their lands that they farmed were out from the village. Now, I know you don't hear this very often, but the Anabaptists were very serious and the early church, obviously, about Acts 2 and Acts 4. Now, I think it is a stratagem of the devil to place a negative on those two passages of scripture among our people. I don't say you have to work it out like the Hutterites have worked it out exactly.

I don't care how you work it out, but there's an ideal picture in Acts 2 and Acts 4 that the devil never wants you to experience. And I think we should be seeking how we can get together geographically. Now, I can't give you any scripture except the picture that's given here.

All right. The Anabaptists were serious about fellowship, which means partnership, participation. They had a saying that said, no man can come to Christ unless he bring his brother with him.

That's how serious they were about constant fellowship. If you wanted to pray, you went and got a couple of brethren and prayed. And if you thought about anything in that prayer that had to do with another brother that wasn't there, he was in the prayer too, even though he wasn't there and you were thinking about him and you went and made it right, just like the Bible says.

They were greatly involved in each other's lives. They were serious about creating little colonies of heaven so that everyone could see what the whole world would look like if everybody obeyed the king. If we're going to embrace the kingdom, we're still talking about society, that's community.

We're going to have to have biblical leadership. What are biblical leaders? Well, biblical leaders are biblical people or people who out-serve the rest of the congregation, just like Jesus did. Jesus did not let his disciples become secretaries and keep people away from him.

When they tried to bring children to him, the disciples, oh, the master's too busy. No, no, no, no, no. He said, let the little children come unto me.

He had time to serve. In one passage, it says the sick were brought to him at sunset. I'm assuming it was the end of the day and he'd worked hard all day and he was tired.

He could have just prayed a mass prayer. He didn't do that. It specifically said he laid his hands on everyone.

That must have taken hours. He must have been there all night. Do you know that the word authority has the word author in it? An author is someone who provides something to inspire other people or to draw out their creativity or to bless them.

An author is a person who originates things. He's an originator for the benefit of others. And that's the kind of authority we need in the church.

Now, Brother Lynn Martin is not living. He died six years ago. He was our first pastor.

I never saw anybody serve like that man served. And he was determined that he would not be a lord over the church. And everything was decided in our brother's meetings.

But there was a special deference given to Brother Lynn. Busy as he was, if a student needed help with his algebra and it took all morning for him, he was there. He did not have an unlisted telephone number.

He didn't have anything to keep people away from him. And he served. He built people houses.

He fixed their cars. He preached their sermons. He counseled them when they were discouraged.

He counseled them when they needed wisdom. Everybody knew that this man was totally available to the community all of the time. And he was a leader.

And to my knowledge, he never said, well, folks, I'll tell you one thing. This is what we're going to do. And you're going to do it because I said it.

And I happen to be your bishop. That was not his attitude. I don't think that ever happened once.

Jesus would not let people crown him king. He said, don't call anybody rabbi. Don't call anybody father on this earth.

One is your father. And you're all brethren. We're going to have to have that kind of leadership.

And I think you know without me saying it that a lot of the problems in our churches start right here. And some of you sitting here will be leaders. I'm not preaching to the people who failed.

I'm preaching to you. If you become a leader, it'll be because you out-serve. And if you don't out-serve, then you're not a genuine leader.

Because Jesus said that the man who serves will be the greatest. Not that he's going to stand up and say, I serve more than anybody else. No, it'll just be known.

All right. And then you knew I was going to say this one. There must be a gospel economics.

Amen. Are you beginning to see why we have not been able to embrace the kingdom? In almost all of these areas, we have failed to obey the explicit command of Christ and nowhere more than the one I'm going to discuss. Turn to Matthew chapter 6. How much more time do I have by the way? Just tell me and I'll sit down.

10 or 15 minutes. All right. I promise you I will sit down in 10 or 15 minutes.

I am excited. If you people leave with this on your hearts, there's going to be a new generation. There's going to be a new expression of anabaptism.

There's going to be a new expression of the gospel. And you're going to go home and you're going to pour your heart into the church and you're going to forget about yourself. All right.

Jesus said, we'll just take a little time here with this. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Now we have three commands here. And I think Jesus knew that this was going to be the stickiest issue in his whole sermon. He gives the most time to it.

He gives almost one whole chapter to this. He doesn't do that for any other subject in the Sermon on the Mount. Not only that, but in all the other parts of the Sermon on the Mount, he just simply says, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this.

This is the only part in the Sermon on the Mount where he gives us some insight and explanation as to why he said the impossible things he said. He knew we'd need a little bit of help to understand. And so he gives us three reasons why we should not lay up treasures on this earth.

Number one, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Your heart follows your treasure. If a man waves his arm over a whole pile of stuff he doesn't need that he owns, and he says, yes, I have all

this stuff, but my heart's not in it.

He is not telling you the truth. That's what Jesus said. He said, where your stuff is, that's where your heart is.

If you've dumped your whole life down in the slums of the city, helping poor people, guess where your interest is. Guess what you're going to talk about. Guess what, wherever your investment is, that's where your heart is.

I always tell the story of my uncle. You don't know him, so I can tell it. I drove into the church where I used to go, and he was working in the graveyard, and I hadn't seen him for a long time, and this was in the late 90s, and I was driving an old 1978 Pontiac station wagon.

The hood was rusted, the wood grain was peeling off, and there were other symptoms that it was coming to the end. And I drove in, wound down the window and said, hello, uncle. And the first thing he said to me is he said, I guess you see, I bought a brand new Ford truck.

But it doesn't mean anything to me. It's just transportation. I hadn't said anything except hello.

And then he said, I guess you heard I bought a new Cadillac. That doesn't mean anything to me either. And I didn't say anything.

But see, that's the kind of dumb stuff people say, because they know that's what they're supposed to say. It doesn't say where your heart is, there's where your treasure is. It says, show me your pile of stuff, and that is where your heart is.

And if you say anything else, you're not telling the truth. And we're all concerned about where our heart is. You know, we don't drink any alcohol in our services because we're afraid, or in our circles, basically, I think most of us are teetotalers, because we're afraid there might be a few people that can't handle it.

And here's a subject that is much more dangerous than alcohol, and the church won't touch it with a 10-foot pole. That's sad. The second reason he gives is the light of the body is the eye.

If your eye is single, your whole body is full of light. But if your eye is not single, your whole body is full of darkness. And he's talking, this is in the context of economics.

And what he's saying is, if you don't get this one right, you won't see anything right. You'll make dumb decisions. You'll go down blind alleys.

You'll do stuff that turns to ashes. You'll mess up. You'll just not be able to make good decisions because you can't see.

And the third thing he says is you can't serve two masters. You'll either hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other. See, the devil would like for the Christians to believe they can do both.

They can have the stuff and still worship God. Well, let me tell you something. The word worship is the word worth-ship.

It has to do with what you value. Did you know that? Turn to Hebrews chapter, don't turn to it. Someday, look at Hebrews chapter 11.

There's not one word said in Hebrews chapter 11 about the morals of those people. Morals are just assumed among Christians, good morals. In fact, some of the men in that chapter had some real moral lapses.

But the thing that that chapter concerns itself about is values. Those people had values that were different. The greatest value statement in the Bible is in that chapter.

It says Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ. Something nobody would want. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ to have more value than the treasures of Egypt.

That's quite a statement. And so that's why Jesus says you can't serve mammon and serve God because if you serve mammon, that's where your values would be. And what you value, you worship, you worth-ship.

Now, those are the three things he gives us. If you pursue laying up treasures for yourself on this earth, your heart will go there. You won't see anything right.

And you'll worship the stuff. All right, that's the first command. The second one is lay up treasures in heaven.

Well, how do you do that? Turn to Luke chapter 12. Luke chapter 12, verse 32. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sell that you have and give alms. Provide for yourselves bags which wax not old and treasure in the heavens and fail if not where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupteth for where your treasure is. There will be a heartbeat also.

So he says, the way you lay up treasures in heaven, is by giving the stuff away. You're not giving it. It's an investment.

You're making an investment. And you talk to that man who's built up a huge portfolio, how he did it, he'll say, well, what I did was I didn't spend any unnecessary money on any of my own things. I put every penny into that investment because compound interest does wondrous things.

And I didn't wanna have one penny outside of that investment. I wanted it all to go into the investment. And so I live simply, I wore shabby clothes, I drove an old car and so on.

So every penny could go into that investment. That's what Jesus is saying. That's what Jesus is saying.

Do you really believe that the money you give for the kingdom in the name of Christ is an investment? The story is told of a man who went to heaven and he got there and his neighbor had a huge mansion. And he said, where's my mansion? Do I have one? Yeah, he said, you have a mansion. Well, he said, I'd like to see it.

So he took him down the streets of the city. They got to the outskirts, into the blankets of heaven, if there is such a place. Anyway, finally, they came to a little chicken coop.

And he said, that's your mansion. My mansion? Yeah, he said, we build these mansions up here with the stuff you send ahead of time. And that's what you send.

Imaginary story, but it's true. It is true. Those treasures are the ones we've sent on ahead.

And that's how you lay up treasures in heaven. Jesus said, look, lay yourself up a huge pile of stuff in heaven. It doesn't say you're not to accumulate.

It just tells you where not to accumulate it and where to accumulate it. And now we must quit. Sorry, I want to discuss the rest of that chapter.

Non-resistance is a part of this, but that's going to be discussed later. And then I'd like to spend a whole lot of time talking about humility. None of this is going to work unless we have the mind of Christ.

And I'd love to discuss Philippians chapter 2, but there isn't time. I shall conclude with a story. How shall we relate to these kingdom teachings? Some of them are difficult.

Some of them don't make much sense logically. I had a friend who was a principal of the first school that I taught at. And unfortunately, you people don't know him.

His name was Clarence Fretz. How many have ever even heard the name? That's interesting. The circles I moved in when I was a young person, everybody knew him.

He was a very outstanding, well-known Christian school teacher and principal. Well, he had been a missionary to Luxembourg. And he said, he told me this story personally.

So this story comes directly from the source. He said on his way back across the Atlantic to Luxembourg after his first furlough, he met a Baptist missionary who was non-resistant. And he said to him, he said, well, how did you happen to become non-resistant? Were you taught that? Oh, no, no.

He said, I was not taught that. I was taught God and country. Well, how did you become non-resistant? He said, well, he said, the last time I went back across the ocean after my furlough, he said, I opened my Bible to read one morning and it said, give to him that asketh of thee and of him that would borrow thee, turn thou not away.

So he said, I closed my Bible. And the next morning I went to have my devotions and I couldn't get past that verse. And he said, try as I would, the whole trip back across the Atlantic, that verse just burned itself deeper and deeper into my mind.

I could not get it off my mind. I thought about it 24 seven. And I said to my wife, if we do this, these people in Africa will rob us blind if they find out that's our policy.

So he said, one morning I said to my wife, what do we have to lose? Why don't we just do what Jesus said? So he said, we went back to Africa and he said, it wasn't long until the natives discovered our new policy. So they came and they barred the table and they barred the chairs and they barred the dinnerware and they barred the bed and they barred. And he said, after a while, we were sitting on the floor with nothing.

Meanwhile, down in the village day after day, they were discussing this stupidity of this missionary. And you know how those discussions go. They're funny for a while and you laugh for a couple of weeks.

But after a while, people sort of sober down and the jokes have all been told and everybody's said everything and everybody's had their laugh. And one day somebody said, you know what, we were a bunch of cowards. Anybody can do what we did.

That took no courage. That took no bravery. That took no wisdom.

That took nothing. That was just plain down coward. I'm taking my chair back.

Yeah, I think I'll take my table back. Yeah, I'll take some of the dinnerware back. I don't know if it all came back, but lots of it came back.

And then they said to him, you know, when you lived here the first time, you told us about a man who came and gave himself and gave himself and gave his life for us. We did not understand your message, but now we do. And he said, for the first time, we had a response from those natives like we had not had.

And my wife and I decided that you don't have to understand what Jesus said. All you have to do is obey what Jesus said. Sometimes you will see then the wisdom of it.

Maybe you won't see it, but you just do what Jesus told you to do. So he said, we did that with economics. We decided to do the same thing with his teaching on peace and violence.

Now, the interesting thing is the Mennonites have the peace and violence one, right? But they won't apply the same thing to the economics. Well, we have the courage of that Baptist minister to go out and take the kingdom teachings of Jesus and obey them explicitly in faith that he knows what he's talking about. And he will create this beautiful society that will show to everyone what the whole world would look like if everybody obeyed the king.

God bless you.

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