**The Kingdom of God Pt 5 Our responsibility**

Over the past 4 weeks we have looked at the Kingdom of God – what it is, what Jesus said about it, the parables about the Kingdom and last week about the timing of the kingdom.

Today, I want to conclude this series with a two-part discussion on our responsibility to the Kingdom of God. Today about our personal responsibility and next week about the responsibility of the church.

My bachelor’s degree from Carey College is in Applied Theology. Theology itself can be isolated from real life – ivory tower stuff - how many angels can fit on the top of a pin sort of stuff -, but applied theology asks, how do we apply this theology to our world. How does it work where the rubber meets the road?

Over the past 4 weeks I have bombarded you with a lot of theology and Scripture around the Kingdom of God. I am not sorry about that but today I want to ask, so what are we doing with that information.

The Devil will get you talking about heaven until you're out of breath, but what he really doesn't want you talking about is The Kingdom of God and its power here and now on the earth.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Not about when we die, but now and here.

Stanley Jones, missionary, reminds us that “if Jesus made the kingdom of God the centre of his message and the centre of his endeavour, the greatest need for us is to rediscover the Kingdom of God. We need nothing so much as we need something to bring life together into total meaning and total goal.

He continues that “Life for the modern person needs something to give total meaning to an otherwise fragmented life. We need an absolute from which we can work down to the relativisms of the day, a master light for all his seeing…”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Stanley Jones inspires me because he lived the Kingdom of God.

He was called to missionary service in India in 1907 and began working with the lowest castes, including Dalits. He became a close friend of many leaders in the Indian Independence movement and became known for his interfaith work. He became a friend of leaders of the up-and-coming Indian National Congress party. He spent much time with Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Nehru family.

He helped to re-establish the Indian “Ashram” (or forest retreat) with Christian disciplines as a means of drawing men and women together for days at a time to study in depth their own spiritual natures and quest, and what the different faiths offered individuals.

In the months prior to December 7, 1941, he was a confidant of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Japanese leaders trying to avert war.

In 1950 Jones provided funds for India's first Christian psychiatric centre and clinic, the now noted Nur Manzil Psychiatric Centre and Medical Unit at Lucknow

In 1962, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his missionary work in India. And in 1963, he received the Gandhi Peace Award.

He lived the Kingdom of God his whole life.

We know that hopelessness pervades society, that powerlessness pervades society, and the lack of meaning pervades society. But we ought not to have those things because we have a foundation of rock to stand upon and that is the kingdom of God.

Let’s take what we have learned over the last month and apply it to living in the world today.

1… The first I pick up is about understanding the truth;

We have been doing that over the past 5 weeks but please do not stop, keep learning, keep delving into God’s Word. Don’t stop learning.

To know Scripture and the fundamentals of our faith are the first steps of Christian citizenship in the Kingdom of God.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The disciples sat at the feet of Jesus, they are always there as a silent presence, watching Jesus, learning from Jesus, reacting to Jesus, and gradually being moulded into the focused community who would become the spearhead of the new movement of the kingdom of God after Jesus had gone.[[4]](#footnote-4) Initially they did not get it, initially they had a false idea of what the kingdom was, but the more they sat at the feet of Jesus, the clearer the truth became, particularly when explained to them by the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:25 Jesus told his disciples *“All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*

We may not have that physical presence that the disciples had, but we have Jesus and the Holy Spirit to remind us of the truth

John 14:16 *he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth.*

We have the Spirit of Jesus, we have the written Word of God. We too need to actively seek the truth. We need to be moulded into the living Kingdom of God.

2.. The second thing I pick up is that we need to assess all we do in light of its impact for the Kingdom of God

It is one of the most subtle wiles of the foe to get us occupied with superficial and surface concerns. The enemy is delighted to have us so occupied incessantly with secondary and trivial concerns, as to keep us from attacking and resisting in the true spirit of conflict. (J O Fraser)[[5]](#footnote-5)

We are to keep our eyes on the prize and not be distracted by baubles and bright lights. Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of this world will grow strangely dim.

We are to demonstrate his rule in our lives and so bring the perspective of his truth into all we do and to seek to extend the Kingdom of God into the lives of those around us.

The old wristband WWJD (What would Jesus do) is a reminder that we need to assess ourselves all the time in the light of the pure light that is Jesus.

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” is a call for us to reconsider how we have been approaching our life, in light of the fact that we now, in the presence of Jesus, have the option of living within the surrounding movements of God's internal purposes, of taking our life into his life [[6]](#footnote-6)

If we are to take seriously the Lord’s command to ‘seek first the Kingdom of God,’ then we should be assessing the effectiveness of everything we do in light of its impact for the Kingdom of God.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We look in the mirror every morning as we shave to make sure we don’t miss a bit. (Men only I think, but I may be wrong!) But do we hold the mirror up to our lives and ask “can I see the Kingdom here?”

There is an old saying that some Christian by their harsh judgemental words and actions inoculate people against Christianity, rather than attract people to the Kingdom. You attract me with honey than vinegar.

By our actions and words, do we attract people to the Kingdom, or do we inoculate them against it?

When I became a Christian at 35, I was surprised, no I was shocked, that the back biting, gossip, pulling people down and political machinations of the world were in the church. Shouldn’t we be doing things better than the world? Shouldn’t our behaviour to one another be modelled by Christ?

Take that mirror and look, what impact am I creating for the Kingdom?

3.. The third thing I pick up is about Living out the values of the Kingdom of God in this world,

This follows on that self-appraisal and should cause us to consider whether we are living the values of the kingdom.

There is a story about a young street evangelist approaching people about whether they were a Christian. One old man, when asked, pondered a moment and gave the evangelist some names of people he knew and said: go and ask them if I am a Christian.

By our actions, it should be evident that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

The great D L Moody commented: If I wanted to find out whether a man is a Christian, I would not go to his minister. I would go and ask his wife.[[8]](#footnote-8)

By actions out of the public eye, it should be evident that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

One way we learn to make choices between the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of this world is through the formation of our habits and desires.

As James K. A. Smith pointed out, what we love is shaped not only by what we learn with our minds but what we repeatedly do with our bodies.[[9]](#footnote-9)

What are our habits and automatic behaviours? Do they reflect the values of the Kingdom?

4.. The fourth thing flows from that in a question: Do I reflect the character of the Kingdom

We are to reflect the love, justice and righteousness of God’s Kingdom within society around us.

We must positively—and deliberately—choose the values of the kingdom of God. In order to accomplish God’s purposes, we recognize a different ordering of priorities, a different mind-set about what is important in and for our lives. [[10]](#footnote-10)

So what would the values look like?

Let me take just one:

In Jesus’ kingdom, people are not valued based on role, gender, or place of birth. The law of love rules all in the kingdom, often reversing the world’s system of valuing people.

In Galatians 3:28 Paul speaks of the level platform: *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

In our world, we may be more subtle than those in ancient society that Paul railed against, but we’re equally guilty of assigning everyone their more or less useful (or valuable) slots in the hierarchy of society. This sort of social mapping—whether it be based on gender, behaviour, occupation, economic status, or anything else—is the antithesis of the law of love.

Imagine a world where everyone was viewed as equal. It would be beautiful and full of love. It would drastically change everything for the better.

Jesus sees a better world—he sees the kingdom of God, here and present. It is our job to follow his leading in making that possible—to offer the full freedom of salvation to our entire world.

And in the process, to radically offer goodness and peace to all whom our world views as undeserving.

In showing people something different, and better, we’re simply reflecting the free grace and love we have been offered by God in Jesus.[[11]](#footnote-11)

5.. We need to recognise that God builds his kingdom but we are to demonstrate its presence.

Christ did not suggest that the obedient Christian would be able to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth. Only Christ himself would do that when he returns.

The New Testament nowhere tells us to build the kingdom of God. It is a kingdom built from the foundation of the world. It is built into the structure of reality – it is ultimate reality. We build the church, not the Kingdom.[[12]](#footnote-12)

We are to resist the ever-present temptation to try to usher in the Kingdom of God by political means or force or compulsion.

6. We are to be bold in our expression of the Kingdom

A cautionary word from Oswald Sanders: “A great deal more failure is the result of an excess of caution than of bold experimentation with new ideas. The frontiers of the Kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution.”

The Kingdom of God provides unique moral imperatives that can cause us to rise above our natural egoism to serve the greater good. God intends his people to do this; furthermore, he commands us to influence the world through our obedience to him, not by taking over the world through the corridors of power.[[13]](#footnote-13)

7.. And finally we are given a word of warning

Beware of false kingdoms

Jesus’ message of the coming of the Kingdom of God must be seen in the context of mankind’s search for peace, freedom, justice and life”.

The peaceable kingdom of God can never be brought in by violence.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Every attempt by the individual and by society to seek for and to substitute anything in the place of the kingdom of God will end in dramatically swift or slow corrosive failure. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added. Seek something else first and all that need will be subtracted.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Stanley Jones poses a question for us to ponder this week:

Consider how I can apply the Kingdom spirit and principles to all my relationships as far as it depends on me, to my personal thought, life, actions and habits, to my family life, to my professional or business relationships, to my class and race relationships, and to my national and international relationships, to my recreational relationships, to my church relationships. I can’t change everybody but I can change me and my relationships as far as they depend on me. In each of these I can say: As far as I am concerned the Kingdom is already here. In light of its being already here, how do I think and act?[[16]](#footnote-16)

To sum up:

For us to be relevant the answer is simple: discover the Kingdom, surrender to the Kingdom, make the Kingdom your life loyalty and your life program; then in everything and everywhere, you will be relevant.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Matthew 6:33 *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

1. Sebastien Richard *Kingdom Fundamentals: What the Kingdom of God Means and What it Means for You* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. E Stanley Jones *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Charles Colson *Kingdoms in Conflict* 245 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. France, R. T*. The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text* 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Taylor, Mrs Howard Behind the Ranges: Fraser of Lisuland, 133 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Dallas Willard *the divine conspiracy* 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Brian Hathaway *Beyond Renewal – the Kingdom of God* 176 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. D L Moody *The Overcoming Life* 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Emerson, M. Y. *Between the Cross and the Throne: The Book of Revelation* 72 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Marva J. Dawn *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* 111 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. DIY Bible Study [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Jones 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Charles Colson *Kingdoms in Conflict* 236 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Marva Dawn *Joy in our Weakness*: 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Jones 77 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Jones 301 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Jones 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)