

KINGDOM LIFE



*Realising the Kingdom Life
God has for us...*

by David Legge

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Contents

- 1. Kingdom Gospel - 3**
- 2. Kingdom Relationship - 10**
- 3. Kingdom Power - 18**
- 4. Kingdom Freedom - 26**
- 5. Kingdom Healing - 35**

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Kingdom Life - Chapter 1

"Kingdom Gospel"

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Let's turn together in our Bibles, if you have a copy of the Scriptures, to Matthew chapter 3. We're looking this week at the subject of "Kingdom Life", and tonight I want to look specifically at the "Kingdom Gospel". Just one verse, verse 2, and it's John the Baptist is preaching. Verse 1 says: *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"*. Turn over to chapter 6, we're very familiar with these words of the Lord Jesus, in verse 33 - some of you could quote it to me right now if I asked you: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"*. Then over to chapter 24 of the same Gospel, chapter 24 of the same Gospel, verse 14. Jesus is going into a long discussion on end times, what's going to happen just preceding when He will return to the earth - I hope you know that, that Jesus is coming again. In verse 14 He says: *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come"*.

Maybe we could pray? And I would encourage you just to pray for yourself right now, that God would speak to you. We were singing that a moment or two ago, but please just pray, would you? Just say: 'Lord, have You anything to reveal to my heart, anything to say to me, anything You want to do in my life?' - because that's a prayer God loves to answer, because He really wants to meddle in our affairs, because He loves us so much. He doesn't want to leave us on our own, but He likes to be invited. So why not ask Him just now: 'Lord, would You please come, and would You speak to me now?'

Father, we thank You we can come to You as our Abba, Father. Your name is holy, and we just say tonight: Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We thank You for Your kingdom coming in Davy's life. We thank You that that was the kingdom breaking in. We thank You, Lord, that You've already been touching lives, and moulding and softening hearts. I just pray now that You will come, Holy Spirit, and witness Jesus and the Father to everyone here, that people will come to know You, that people will be warmed and set on fire and ablaze in Your kingdom love. I pray for people to be set free, to be healed, to be filled by Your Spirit. Lord, we need You now, we can do nothing without You. So we ask You to come now and help us, help me. In Jesus' mighty name - and everybody said: Amen.

The gospel of Jesus Christ introduces us to a Saviour. Isn't that right? But that Saviour is also a King, a King of a kingdom. Jesus came to announce the kingdom of God. If you don't know what the kingdom of God is, a very simple definition of it is: the rule and reign of God on the earth.

Someone has said that Jesus was a very odd sort of King - and there's no doubt about that. In fact, it would have to be said He was a King of a very odd sort of kingdom. Some people have called the kingdom of God an 'upside-down kingdom'. Another person described it like this: that Jesus reached, as it were, into the shopping window

of humanity and switched the price tags. He turned the value systems of this world on their head.

We all know, don't we, that kings and kingdoms need to be strong? They need to defend themselves, defend their people, defend their borders, they need to defeat their enemies and impose their wills on their minions. Yet Jesus taught that the greatest person in the kingdom of God is the weakest, the meekest. In fact, He said that a child is a symbol of what it's like to be great in His kingdom. One who loves is great in the kingdom of God, one who serves the poor. To put it another way, you live under God's rule and reign when you respond in love, even to enemies. Remember that one? 'Love your enemies', not just your neighbour, but your enemies, Jesus said. When you forgive those who offend you, this is God's kingdom breaking out. And it's not just through the teaching of Jesus, but actually His enthronement, if you like, in His Kingdom, as King of the Jews, was when He ascended the cross, sentenced to a criminal's death. Now that is a kingdom like no other. Yeah? We need a lens change, to understand what the kingdom of God is when it shows up on the earth.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of that kingdom that we read in chapter 3 of Matthew's Gospel. To paraphrase what he said, we could render it: 'Change your mind' - that's simply what 'repentance' means, 'metanoia', the Greek combination of words - 'Change your mind, because a new day has dawned, the kingdom of heaven is here'. There needs to be like a brain transplant for some of us to understand what God's kingdom is all about. The Bible is filled with the kingdom of God, there's nearly 75 references to the kingdom. 'Kingdom of heaven' is just a different way of saying the same thing - it's found around 35 times. Jesus didn't stop talking about God's kingdom. In fact, it was a focal point of all His entire ministry, the parables He taught about were kingdom parables, every miracle He performed was a kingdom event. In His teaching, His illustrations, His works of power - all of them were intended to reveal that God's realm had come to Earth.

Now think about it: this is a world that previously was marked by the works of the devil; but now, through Jesus, it's tangibly being impacted by the rule and reign of God. Significantly, before Jesus returned to heaven - after He had died on the cross, was buried, and rose again - He spent 40 days teaching His disciples about the kingdom of God. Turn with me to Acts chapter 1 for a moment, Acts chapter 1 and verse 1: 'The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God'. If you like, He had a Bible Conference on the kingdom of God for the 40 days in between His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. Now, that must mean it's pretty important - wouldn't you agree? It confirms that this was His primary message, even after His resurrection. I kind of used to believe, and I know many people that do, that the kingdom of God message is not a message post-resurrection, that we've got a kind of different gospel message now, of your sins being forgiven and going to heaven when you die; but this gospel of the kingdom is something that was reserved for Jesus' time, and maybe might show up in the future sometime - but no, this scripture shows us otherwise. All that Jesus talked about, or the most of it, between His resurrection and ascension, was this kingdom.

So let's answer a few questions tonight, as we lay a foundation for the week that we're going to enter. What is the kingdom? Well, as I said, it's the rule and reign of God on the earth, it's the eternal kingdom rule and reign of God - His domain here. Someone put it like this: it's God's rule over everything and everybody everywhere in eternity past, in the present, and in the future - that pretty much covers everything, doesn't it? It has two manifestations. There is the present kingdom of God that shows up when people like Davy Alistair give their life to Jesus, when people are healed, when people are delivered and transformed. But then there's the ultimate future kingdom of God, when Jesus returns and sets up a kingdom in a more established fashion, perhaps. So some people have coined this phrase: there is the 'now' and 'not yet' aspects to the kingdom of God. There's something already going on in God's kingdom now, but there's something yet to happen.

What has tended to take place in the church is, we have projected the reality of God's kingdom so far into the future, that it has no bearing on our present reality. Yes, there's an ultimate kingdom that still has to happen - otherwise Jesus wouldn't need to come back again! Isn't that correct? We need Him to come. But actually, the reality of an ultimate kingdom of God on the earth one day, is the very guarantee of the existence of a present expression of the kingdom of God now. What I want to appeal to you tonight is: to make sure that the 'not yet' aspect of the kingdom of God, whatever you believe about end times and Jesus' return, make sure that the 'not yet' aspect doesn't rob you of the 'now' reality of God's kingdom here tonight. Yes? Because it's real. The kingdom has come in Jesus, and the kingdom is coming now; and, yes, the kingdom will come. Myles Munroe called this 'God's big idea', the kingdom of God. That's what it is!

Second question: where is the kingdom? It's interesting to note that the word 'kingdom' and the word 'church' are right throughout the New Testament scattered, they are prominent themes. Yet the kingdom of God is not exactly the same as the church - do you know that? Maybe it's a little bit complicated for some, but the church is in the kingdom of God, but the kingdom is bigger than the church. The Kingdom incorporates everything that God's doing even outside of the church - and some would say, Israel in the Old Testament, even to an extent in the future, is part of this rule and reign of God before the church ever existed. So the church is in the kingdom, but the kingdom is bigger than the church. So we need to understand this: the church today, particularly in Ireland, needs to get a grasp of this, because we are impoverished because we are not kingdom-minded.

Without rediscovering the kingdom, the church remains deficient in authority, because the kingdom is the realm where the King reigns. Yes? Without the kingdom, the church remains divided, because what we instinctively do is begin, in our sinful humanity, to build our own kingdoms. We often compete with one another, and, dare I say it, we fight with one another when the kingdom is not central to the church. We are depleted in power when the kingdom is not central to what we do as church, because the power is actually, through the King, dispensed throughout the kingdom - and we need to tap into it as the church. When we focus on the church and ignore the kingdom, we actually leave the church powerless. That might be an explanation of why we find ourselves where we are in our own land, unable to bring transformation to our communities. Isn't it interesting that Jesus never said: 'Seek first the church?'. Why is that? Because if we seek first the kingdom, the church will be blessed. If we seek first the church, we don't get the kingdom. The church has lost its kingdom mentality.

I believe my message here tonight is as much to call the church back to the kingdom message. We have adopted an abbreviated gospel message. Yet we read, Jesus said in Matthew 24:14: 'This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come'. When Jesus announced this gospel of the kingdom, it was long before He ever foretold His death and His resurrection. Now don't misunderstand anything that I'm saying tonight: I am not at all belittling the cross of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection, because the gospel of the atonement is what brings us an entrance into the kingdom of God. Without the cross of Jesus, we have nothing. It's all because of His blood that we've been singing about tonight. But the gospel of the kingdom is not just the gospel of the atonement. For so long, the church has just been preaching a gospel of atonement and leaving the rest out! Yes, the cross, the resurrection is how we enter the kingdom, and stay in the kingdom, and know the fullness of the kingdom message - but it's not the full message.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 4, Luke chapter 4. Bring your Bibles with you, will you? Luke chapter 4 - somebody's laughing there, I hope he's not laughing at me! Luke chapter 4. I told everybody off last year for using their phones, do remember that? You all came the next night with these big Bibles! So we'll be looking for the big Bibles tomorrow night, or get an App with page turning on it or something like that! Luke chapter 4, Jesus is in His home synagogue, and the scroll is presented to Him for the reading of that Sabbath. The reading happened to be - or maybe He chose it, we're not sure - Isaiah 61, which is the prophetic mandate, the mission statement of what Messiah would come to do, inspired hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born - and He reads it. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me', verse 18, 'Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty', freedom, 'to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty', freedom, 'those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. Jesus said: 'This is what I'm here to do'. In fact, they were all so gobsmacked, it said, 'their eyes were fastened on Him' - because He actually had the audacity to say, 'It's Me! Today this scripture', verse 21, 'is fulfilled in your hearing. I am the fulfillment of this prophecy'.

But what is it? His mandate was to bring good news to poor people, to disenfranchised people in society, to people who feel they have been held back, to bring healing to broken hearts - anybody got a broken heart here? Freedom to people who are in captivity to the devil, habits, compulsions, addictions; recovery of sight to those who are spiritually blind, to set at freedom those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord - that was the year of jubilee when slaves were set free, debts were cancelled. Yes? Wonderful! Land was restored, that had been taken off your family, in the year of jubilee. You see, Jesus doesn't just want to forgive your sins. He wants to actually undo the damage that the devil has done in your life, in your family, in your community. It's a full gospel that He wants you to embrace. Listen, Jesus can forgive your sins, He forgave Davy's sins, He forgave my sins. There're people I could get up here tonight, and they maybe wouldn't want to divulge the type of sins in their life - who would? I'd run a mile if my sins were on the PowerPoint here tonight! But thank God, they're under Jesus' blood, there as far as the east is from the west, that I will never answer for them, because Jesus died for them. That's good news, isn't it? If that's all there was, and we get to heaven when we die, that would do me! But that's not all there is. There's much more.

Look at chapter 10 of Matthew quickly, chapter 10 of Matthew, verse 7. Jesus is sending out the twelve disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom, this good news. In verse 7, He says: 'And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" - that's the gospel of the kingdom! Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons, it's a gospel of power.

Years ago there was a man called J.B. Phillips who translated New Testament into contemporary language from the original Greek language. He was so over-awed at the multifaceted details of the Greek language, that can't really be described through any of the English translations, that he wrote a book called 'Your God Is Too Small'. He was inferring that we put God in a box - and we do! Guess what: you can't put God in a box, in case you didn't know! If you try to do that, guess who's in the box? You are! But I want to suggest to you that for many of us, our gospel is too small. Praise God for sins forgiven, and heaven when we die - but this gospel of the kingdom has the potential to change our world and our society now! It has the potential to change Northern Ireland and Ireland as a whole.

Where is it? We asked the question. Turn with me to Luke chapter 17, Luke chapter 17. I know I'm getting you to go to a lot of verses; but, you know, some people think what I'm talking about isn't in the Bible - so it's important to show it is. Verse 20, Luke 17 verse 20: 'Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when' - you see, this is what people get all uptight about - when? 'When the kingdom of God would come, He answered them' - and He didn't answer them 'when', He answered them 'where'. He said: 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation' - the NIV translates that 'not with something that can be observed' - so stop looking for it that way. 'Nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you' - or, as the NIV says, 'in your midst'. It's here, in you! Wow! Does that not excite you? If it doesn't excite you, you don't know what's going on, you haven't got it yet. The kingdom of God is here. Yes, there's a 'not yet', but there's a 'now'.

How do I enter? Well, we read it together, didn't we? Matthew 6:33: 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added' - that's one of Christ's first commandments, after 'repent', it's really His first command. There's a continuous aspect to this: keep on seeking the kingdom of God. This is not something that you do once, when you sign a card, or pray a sinner's prayer; this is something that is a lifestyle. It also includes His righteousness, to seek a life that is pleasing to Him, and actually replicates His character. But you won't seek the kingdom of God until you see the kingdom of God.

There was a very religious guy came to Jesus one evening in the dark of night, because he really didn't want his contemporary clergy, if you like, to see him. He was a Pharisee. So at least he came to Jesus, even if it was the dead of night, he came. He asked how you could inherit eternal life. And Jesus told him: 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. He doesn't say you can't enter it, He actually says, 'You can't see'. You need God to do something for you, that actually brings the very life of heaven into your heart - that's what becoming a Christian is. It's a miracle. It's the greatest miracle ever. Your very nature is changed, and you become a son or a daughter of God by believing that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, and that He's able to deal with your problems, and your issues, and the

wrong in your life. I wonder, have you had this birth from above? I wonder what you seek? Do you see the kingdom by having this experience with God, where you turned from your ways, and your selfishness, and your sin, and you turned to Him. But even if that has happened in your life, what are you seeking tonight? Are you seeking first the kingdom, is the kingdom first? Jesus says everything else will be added to you - and if I could just kind of paraphrase that, what He's saying is: 'You look after My kingdom, and I'll look after yours'. When we give the kingdom priority, everything becomes ours. Wow!

That takes - and I haven't got time to go into these passages - but right throughout the Gospels, a child-like trust to enter the kingdom. To see it, you need this new birth. You need to seek it, but you need to become like a little child. He said he's the greatest in the kingdom, a little child, because he's humble. He's innocent, he's not double-minded. He has no agenda of his own. Maybe he's a bit naive, and so he accepts things at face value - and that's the way you need to be in the kingdom. That's why it's been such a struggle for me: not because I'm clever, but I like to think I am, and I ask a lot of questions, and have a lot of cynicism and doubts and scepticism. But what happens in the kingdom is: you've got to be like a child, and live comfortably with the sense of your own ignorance. You can't know everything. You won't know everything. You've got to become comfortable with the mystery of the kingdom of God - and there's a lot of stuff God does when He shows up that is weird. Look up the definition of 'weird' in the dictionary, by the way, and it is actually spiritual phenomena: weird.

Stop trying to understand everything. I think there's folk here, and that's your barrier to the kingdom - I'm not saying you're not a Christian - but entering into the fullness of this message of the gospel of the kingdom, because you don't understand certain things that God's doing in the world. You don't understand the miraculous, the supernatural, you want your head to be in gear before anything happens in your heart. But you actually need to make a decisive act and decision of your will to say: 'Lord, whatever You're up to, I'm in'. Can you say that? I've even had to come to the stage of saying to the Lord: 'Whatever it looks like, Lord, as long as it's from You. I'm in'. You see, the reality of the kingdom is more caught than it is taught. 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. 'Father', can you say this tonight? 'Father, whatever You're up to you, I'm in'.

There's a young man by the name of Leif Hetland, some of you will know of him, you've maybe read his books. He came to another general in the faith really, Jack Taylor, to ask questions about the kingdom of God. When he left Jack, Jack said to his wife: 'That boy is in for a lot of trouble. He thinks you can study the kingdom, but what he doesn't realize is: the kingdom is studying him! He thought he came to get the kingdom, but what he doesn't realize is the kingdom is about to get him!'. The kingdom got me. The kingdom has got some of you. You thought you were looking into things, weighing things up - but the Lord is out to get us, in a good way, don't freak out! It's good for Him to get you, because He's the only one that gets you. He's the only one that knows you. He's the one who searches your heart. He knows your ways, He knows your past, He knows your brokenness, He knows your struggles, He knows your hurts, He knows everything about you. It's time for some of you to surrender your heads. I'm not saying that God is irrational, but He transcends the rational, He transcends reason. Faith makes a fool of what makes sense.

There's a lot of shaking up going on in the world today, and I think it's just what

Hebrews 12 talks about. It's on the screen here, Hebrews 12:26-28: 'See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens'. The words 'once more' indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'. Who would agree with me that there's a worldwide shaking going on? There's a song about that, isn't there? 'A whole lot of shaking going on' - but that's something else. But there's a worldwide shaking in politics, in morals, in governments, society and Western countries seem to be more polarized than in living memory certainly. I know things like that have happened ever since Jesus was here, but whole nations and institutions of the world are being shaken to their core. This passage is telling us that the wicked and the righteous will be affected by the shaking, we're all feeling it, aren't we? All of us. This shaking exposes - this is what Hebrews says - what can be shaken, that involves created things. It's designed to exalt and actually expose what cannot be shaken, which is the kingdom of God.

If you're one of the children of God, the shaking all around us in the world is designed to shake you toward God, I hope it's doing it. But also, if you're not a child of God, if you've never put faith in Jesus, if you've never repented and come to personal faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your Lord, that's what this shaking is meant for. So that you would come into a kingdom that cannot be shaken, the mighty kingdom of God that is here now and is coming more and more.

So, I want to call you into that kingdom. If you've never stepped into it, maybe you're still in the kingdom of darkness? That's OK, you're welcome here; and, actually, the Lord really is interested in having you - really, will you take that step, and will you come in? Maybe you thought, because you were in church, and you went to church, and you're baptized into church, that you were in the kingdom? But no, it's not the same thing. Maybe you're a Christian, you're genuinely a mature born again believer, maybe even Spirit-filled; but you haven't understood what this kingdom is all about. Well, tonight is your invitation. Can I tell you: tonight's your invitation if you need healing, because there's healing in the kingdom, healing of heads, mental illness, healing of hearts, brokenness, emotional brokenness. There's healings of spirits that have been crushed in life. People's identities, who don't know who they are. There's healing for broken bodies. There's deliverance and freedom from the bondage of Satan.

Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus came and brought the kingdom, that what Jesus bled and died for and rose again, so that the kingdom of God would show up on the 14th of August 2019 in a field in Newcastle? His kingdom is here. The King is here, because the King is the kingdom, the King is the kingdom. Jesus is here.

Kingdom Life - Chapter 2

"Kingdom Relationship"

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I want you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. Thank you, Brett, for that testimony. We're going back to Ephesians, we spent last year looking at the whole book of Ephesians. Now, obviously not verse by verse, but we're going to delve into a couple of verses here of chapter 3. We're looking at this theme, "Kingdom Life", and tonight we're looking at "Kingdom Relationship". What's all that about? Well, Ephesians chapter 3:14-15 in the NIV reads: *"For this reason", Paul says, "I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name"*.

Let's pray, and I want you now to pray for yourself. I don't care if you're even an atheist, you don't believe in God - what have you got to lose then? Just pray, see what happens, you might be surprised. But if you're a child of God, and you want God to speak to you (and I imagine that should be the case), just come to Him now and say: 'Lord, please, would You speak to me'. Will you do that?

Father, we give You praise for everything that's gone on tonight. We thank You for the worship that has, we believe, touched Your heart as it has touched ours. We thank You for those who have led us in worship, we thank You for Brett, we thank You for Aaron and Tana and their family, we thank You for Neil and the vision here. Thank You for everything that You're doing. As we said last night, Lord, whatever You're up to, we want to be in it and a part of it. You've said, 'Seek first the kingdom, and I will build my church' - and so Lord, we remove ourselves from trying to build Your church, and we want to be seekers of Your kingdom to allow You to do what You want to do in Your way. We pray that You'll do that tonight, that You'll show up here, and that You'll open our eyes and our hearts to what 'Kingdom Relationship' is with You and with each other. We would ask You to remove blinkers, blockages, whatever is preventing us taking off tonight, we pray, Lord, that You will blow in our sails, and You will have Your way with us all. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Let's just read those two verses again. They're very short, of course, and I want to give you a little bit of Greek here that's in the verses as well: 'For this reason, I kneel before the Father'. The word there in Greek is 'pater': 'I kneel before the Father', Pater, 'from whom every family', the word is 'patrea', 'from whom every family', patrea, 'in heaven and earth derives its name'. Isn't that interesting? Because the very word for 'family', 'patrea', actually is derived from the word 'father', 'pater'. There's a play on words here. 'I kneel before the Pater, the Father, from whom every family, patrea, in heaven and earth derives its name'. Really what Paul is saying, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of course, is that God was a Father before creation. Now think about that for a moment: God was Father before creation. I used to have this idea that God called himself 'Father' because we kind of got it, we relate to what a father is, we have had one or we are one - and so we understand, so God takes on a name that we get. But that's not the case at all. We are fathers, or we have fathers, because He is the original and the ultimate Father after whom every family in heaven on earth is named. So, before creation, there was a Father, and there was a Son - and,

of course, the Trinity, if you like, is the ultimate family, isn't it?

Psalm 2:6-8 reads like this: 'Yet I have set My King' - and we're talking about the King and the kingdom - 'I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion'. God says: 'I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession'. So right away, you've got there the Father-Son relationship, but it's at the centre of the Messianic declaration: 'I have set My King in Zion'. In the kingdom, God is King, that's obvious - but when Jesus came into the world as the Messiah, He revealed this God King to actually be 'Father'.

Now think about this personally: the King of the whole universe is your Father. Because of Jesus, God can become our Father. When Jesus died for our sins on the cross, was buried, and rose again the third day; He appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden where the tomb was. We read in John 20:17 these remarkable words: 'Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'' - isn't that beautiful? 'To My Father and your Father', and we receive Him as Father when we become children of God. John again, in the same Gospel, chapter 1 verse 12, says: 'As many as received Christ' - that means 'embraced Him, believed in Him, turned from all other things toward Him, and taken Him in by faith as our Saviour' - 'to as many as received Him, to them He gave the right', or the authority, 'to become children of God, to those who believe in His name'. So, it's through this act of turning from sin, turning from self toward God, and believing that Jesus is who He says He is, that we actually get born anew. We come to know God, this great King and Creator, this awesome One, as our Father. Incredible, isn't it?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to God as 'Father', over 100 times. Jesus actually is referred to as 'Son' over 60 times and, of course, if you know anything about the Gospels, you'll know that John has this very intimate relationship with Jesus - and, in fact, he's called 'the disciple whom Jesus loves'. Jesus loves everybody, but there was something special about John's intimacy with the Lord - he kind of saw into the heart of Jesus, and he certainly saw into the heart of the gospel. The heart of the Bible is this kingdom message that we're preaching each night, but the heart of the kingdom message is the message of the Father's heart, the kingdom relationship.

God has always employed the family paradigm as the model for the kingdom. Someone said, 'If God had wanted something besides a family, He would have had us call Him something besides 'Father''. But He taught us to pray - didn't He? - 'After this manner, pray, Our Father, who is in heaven'. Actually, Jesus used, personally Himself, and taught His own disciples to use a very personal term for 'Father', 'Abba'. And 'Abba' is, of course, a Hebrew word for 'Father'; but it's actually an Aramaic word, and it's derived from Aramaic baby-speak, where a baby, when it started to talk, would say: 'Abba' and 'Imma'. 'Imma' which is the equivalent of 'Mama', and 'Abba', 'Dada'. Jesus comes to these very religious Jewish people and tells them to address God in this manner! It'd be like us saying, 'Papa' or 'Daddy', and some folk find this to be over familiarity with Almighty God. I want to say to you tonight: intimacy and reverence are not mutually exclusive. Do you understand? In fact, when you go into a deeper relationship with God, you become more familiar in the right sense, and yet more revered - the fear of God is on you even deeper and heavier. When you look at the Lord's Prayer, He's 'Father' before He's 'hallowed' - do you notice that? It's 'Our Father,

hallowed be Your name'. This is the centre of the kingdom message, this is the centre of the New Testament: Jesus has come to reveal the Father to us, and to bring us to Him.

So Paul, in Galatians 4:6-7, says: 'Because you are sons', once you've received Christ, 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out' - there's this word - 'Abba, Father!'. Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ'. Again, in Romans 8:15, he says: 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father''. So I want to ask you tonight: is this kingdom relationship the relationship you have with God? Do you know Him as your Abba, Father? Because it affects everything!

Let me share with you three things it affects. First of all, it affects how we relate to God. You heard the reading from Galatians 4:6-7: 'We're no longer slaves, but we're now sons'. In other words, we're adopted - that means we're not natural sons and daughters born biologically to God, as it were; but it's better than that: we get chosen by Him, just like any adopted child. When it's biological birth, you have to take what you get - isn't that right? But when you're adopted, you get picked, chosen. That's what happens when you come into the kingdom of God: you're accepted for who you are, chosen, drawn, you belong. Yet so many so-called Christians - and I know that's a very broad term - but they live like slaves. They don't live like sons and daughters in the kingdom. They don't have a Father-child relationship with the Lord. It's more like a slave-Master relationship.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 15 please, to a very well-known parable called 'The Parable of the Prodigal Son'. I would like to change that title, because I don't feel it really fits the heart of the message - because really this parable is not so much about the young man who goes AWOL. There's another son in this story, as we'll see in a moment or two, but it's not even about him. It's a story about two sons, but it's ultimately the parable of the father's heart. It's a parable of a prodigal father, who loves his two sons so much, but we get a glimpse of his heart in this parable - and I want you to see the father.

You know the story. Let me summarize it a little bit for you. This young man comes to his father and says: 'Can I have the inheritance?'. In other words, he's saying that he wants his Dad's will before he's dead, which is tantamount to saying 'I wish you were six foot under, so that I can get my hands on your money'. The father doesn't reprimand him, or reject him, he actually gives him what he asked for - that's interesting. But he splits it between the younger boy and the older brother, and that young fellow goes away, it says, into the far country and he wastes his inheritance on prodigal living, riotous, wasteful living, drunkenness, debauchery, prostitution - it's all there. He gets to the point where his friends all left him when his resources are dried up, and he has to go to the low place (remember, these are Jews who are listening to this story) of feeding pigs, feeding swine. He can't even fill his own stomach with the pig food, the farmer won't let him. When he hits rock bottom, he has a moment - you know, those eureka moments - where he realizes that he needs to change his ways and do something about his condition.

This is where we enter the story, verse 19, if you look at it, of chapter 15, verse 18, he says: 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned

against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants". It's as if he's looking in the mirror, if he had a mirror in the pig pen, and he's rehearsing what he's going to say when he gets back to his Dad. He's instinctively feeling: 'I could never be reinstated in the position of a son again, my only hope of anything is to be a slave'. What happens is: he gets back - I'm skipping a little bit here - but it says that his father, look at verse 20: 'He arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion' - now, try and fill in the gaps here. We're not adding scripture, but we're asking questions: how did he see him a great way off? The only way he could see him a great way off is if he's watching, and the only way he could be watching - because he didn't know he was going to come back this day, this very hour and minute - was if he was watching every single hour, minute and day since the young fellow turned his back on Dad. So there's the father up there looking for his son, longing to see his son - and when he sees him a great way off, he doesn't wait till he comes back the whole journey and let him sweat it out. He runs! And for that to happen in this ancient Middle Eastern society, this father, this elderly man who is on the house stop, would have to lift his robes (which was undignified), expose his legs and run! We would say 'Run like a wee lad', run into the desert and kiss his son.

Now, the Holy Spirit is wanting to show us something about Father's heart. He is prepared to become, dare I say it, undignified to reach his prodigal. Maybe that's uncomfortable for you? Well, come with me to the cross. This is the Father's heart. How more undignified can you get? Jesus is hanging stark naked, covered in blood and spittle, hanging there for our sins. This is the Father's heart: behold the Father. The wonderful thing here is, verse 21: 'The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son'. But', verse 22, 'the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found". He interrupts his speech. Imagine God interrupting you? He didn't get the bit out that says, 'Make me one of your hired servants'. No. God wants him to be a son. This is the Father - do you see Him? Do you see the Father as He really is?

I don't know when he came to the point of repentance, this young man. He certainly came to self-realization when he was in the pig pen, but I personally think that he only truly started to repent when he saw the Father's love for him - that brought the fruit of contrition and true transformation. You see that's what the Bible says. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. It's whenever we understand that Father loves us, and is prepared to send Jesus, and actually come in Jesus. God came in Jesus to die for us.

Reconciliation with the Father comes through true repentance, and we saw last night that one of the things repentance is, is a change of mind. Maybe you're here tonight, and you need to change your mind about what God is really like? Because this kingdom message of the Father-heart of God, it changes how we relate to God. You see this elder brother, he didn't see into father's heart. It's interesting, because he never left father's home. He was in the father's house - like many religious Christians are - but he never saw into the father's heart. If you go down to verse 26, he hears a commotion, music and dancing - imagine that! Verse 26, he calls one of the servants and asks: 'What do these things mean?'. 'And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted

calf'. But he was angry' - do you know any angry Christians? 'He was angry and would not go in' - separatist, would not enter that place. 'Therefore his father came out' - wow! The father is coming out, pleading with him! 'So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends'' - now, who talks to their Dad like that? 'All these years I've been serving you, I never broke any of your rules at any time' - he related to his father as an employee to an employer, not a son to a Dad. This is the way self-righteous religious people relate to God. In fact, this message of the parable was to the Pharisees. These men knew their Bibles, but they didn't know their God when He showed up before them in human flesh. They had legalism. They had laws, but no love. They had rules, but no relationship with God in a deep way. Religious people are so often like this elder brother, they make offense into an art form - and I know, because I was one, and am a recovering Pharisee, probably.

We can treasure our offense, whatever it is, as more valuable than what's going on in God's family and in God's kingdom. I want to call upon you tonight to lay aside your religious offense, whatever that is, in exchange for the Father's love; and join the party of what Abba is doing in His kingdom, and get with the family. That's what this is about. So many, in our country especially, have biblical concepts of God, but still do not personally know intimacy with Him, because they don't enjoy Him as Father. Now why is that? We could spend all night talking about this, but one of the reasons is a wrong teaching about God. We've imbibed harsh, legalistic personas of God, where He's so cold and demanding, a judgmental perfectionist. Now don't misunderstand me, I believe the Bible teaches that there is judgment, there is a place called hell. But there's one day of judgment, and so far there's been thousands of years of grace. So that's the balance that you get with God. He is known to be angry every now and again, but His nature is love, that's what He's commonly known for in the Word of God; and grace, forgiveness, peace.

So many of us have imbibed a scary view of God. He is to be feared in a reverential way, but the fear of God is different from being afraid of God. If you want to know what God's like, just look at Jesus. That's what He came to do, He came to reveal the heart of the Father. So, wrong teaching can affect how we view Father God, but also wrong example. You see, our fathers, our earthly fathers, biological Dads, if they're around, are meant to be a signpost - and our Mums as well - our parents are meant to point towards our Heavenly Dad. But so often they point in the opposite direction, because some of them are absent; some of them are present, yet absent, they're emotionally detached from us; some of them are perfectionists; some of them are controlling; some of them are abusive - and we could go on. But what was your father like, and ask yourself: has that affected your view of God? Have you ever played the word association game? 'Microwave', you think of a word immediately, 'oven'. 'Toothbrush', 'toothpaste', 'couch', 'chair'. 'Father' means so many different things to so many different people, because of the Dads that we've had. 'Father' is not a neutral word. All of us have had biological fathers, but not everyone here tonight has had a Daddy.

This truth of the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus came to reveal Abba Father, it can change your life, it can actually bring healing to the brokenness of the father-wound that you might have, or the mother-wound; but you need to start seeing God as He really is. I'll never forget the time when I had this revelation, and I have had a good

Dad in my life, but to know that there is a better Dad! None of us have had perfect Dads, none of us are perfect Dads, but there is a perfect Father in heaven. He wants to be our Father, and He wants to know us as sons and daughters. This is at the heart of the gospel. Jesus said to one of the disciples: 'To see Me is to see the Father'. If you want to know what your Daddy in heaven is like, look at Jesus - and I challenge anyone in this place tonight to be disappointed with Jesus.

But this truth of kingdom relationship, it also transforms how we relate to each other - and this is as big a subject almost, because the kingdom of God is built on the Father-son model. The kingdom is a family business. The Father is extending His family business into all the earth through sons and daughters, not employees, not CEOs, but through His kids. The kingdom will spread and even function properly when it's in this mode of Father-son relationship. When I use the term 'son', I'm using a generic term that includes daughters, OK? This is the way God wants us to relate not only to Himself, but to one another. Even Paul used this paradigm of family, father-son, in how he worked with the early church. First Corinthians 4:14-17 says, Paul: 'I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children' - not 'converts', not even 'disciples' here, but 'children'. 'Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ', or 'instructors', or 'teachers', 'you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son' - not 'my assistant' or 'associate', 'my son' - 'whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church' - do you see it? This is what needs to happen.

We highlighted last night that the church needs to rediscover kingdom life and kingdom truth, we need to move from institutionalization of the church back to kingdom family. We need to move away from professionalism in ministry to actually being fathers and mothers of sons and daughters. This is the model for leadership and for discipleship: the father-son paradigm. Jack Taylor, near the end of his life, said that he wanted his legacy to be this: 'I plan to leave sons, who have sons, who have sons, who have sons, to the edge of eternity, who are discovering the kingdom of God, declaring the kingdom of God, and demonstrating the kingdom of God until Jesus comes'. Amen to that, I love that, don't you? Sons, who have sons, who have sons to the edge of eternity, discovering the kingdom, exploring it; but declaring it, preaching it, demonstrating it in power until Jesus returns - this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached, then the end shall come.

Jesus is coming for a family, not an organization or a religious system, and the kingdom can only be entrusted through family. You see how this kingdom relationship affects how we relate to God, affects how we relate to each other, but also it affects how we relate to the world. Because I want to say that this is a truth for our times, if ever there was one: the Father-heart of God. We live in the fatherless generation, and I don't want anybody to feel stigmatized here tonight, or shamed. But the fact of the matter is that the family, the nuclear family is being attacked, and fatherhood, masculinity, is being attacked like never before. The social crisis of our nation, and indeed our planet, is fatherlessness. There is a fatherhood vacuum in many homes, and in communities around us. There is a crisis of orphanhood - not just literal orphans, but spiritual orphans, people who don't know who their identity is, don't understand their worth, because they don't understand they're made in the image of God, and God wants to father them. This is the reason, by the way, why people try to

fill 'the void', as we say. There is an empty space within it that only the Father's love can fill. This is one of the reasons why people go sexually wild in their adolescence and developing years, because they haven't received father's love. It's one of the common reasons, not the only reason, but one of the common reasons: because that part has never been filled. True, pure, tactile affection has never been given by a father, and so they seek this elsewhere, and it's eroticized.

What are you filling the love tank, where Father's love should have been, and an earthly father didn't give that to you, but you've never discovered Heavenly Father, Abba, Father's love - what are you trying to fill it with tonight? I don't need to go through a litany of various sins, you know what it is that you're trying to get a fix from deep down in your heart. Counterfeit affections, addictions, all sorts of moral aberrations. Someone said: 'If you were writing a prescription today for the ills of society and the church, it would be: 'Needs to know the Father and His love''.

Do you know the Father as He really is? Do you know His love deep down in your heart? This is what the world needs to hear. This is what we all need, but this is the message that we have that actually is the answer for the ills of society. We've got it, it's in the kingdom! Jack Frost - I highly recommend his book 'Experiencing the Father's Embrace' - he said: 'Before every major revival, there has been a social crisis in the land'. Study history and you'll see this. 'Then God brings a fresh outpouring of His grace, and begins to meet the needs of that social crisis. He has chosen this season in church history to reveal His affectionate Father's heart'. Wow! That agrees with Scripture, Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament, near the very end of that book it says that God will turn the heart of fathers to their children and the heart of children to their fathers. It's this kingdom message, this gospel of the kingdom, and the Father's heart-relationship with us that is doing this across the world. It hasn't really happened much here in Northern Ireland, really, yet. Wherever father's hearts are turned towards anything other than children, this verse continues to say that there will be a curse: 'Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse', Malachi says. A curse can be released on families where father's hearts are turned away from their children and children's hearts are turned away from their fathers. There can be a curse on the family and the land where fathers are not taking their rightful place.

Listen: this is the answer for our aching age and our aching hearts. This is the answer for the church. I remind you that Luke 15, this parable of the prodigal Abba Father, it doesn't conclude for the elder brother - you know, that religious self-righteous guy who was trying his best, who was a good fellow really, but hadn't seen into Daddy's heart. Jesus doesn't conclude it, because He's spinning it out to the Pharisees to basically say: 'It's up to you how the story ends'. Will you still stay out of the party, and will you hug your offense, staying angry, or will you let it all go, and will you dive into what Abba Father is doing, even if it doesn't seem right? Because, can I remind you, Deuteronomy, I think it's chapter 21, is the law of the rebellious son. The law of the rebellious son is an antithesis of the prodigal son, basically; because it's a rebellious guy, but the end result is that he gets stoned. His father and mother do him in to the elders of the city, and they come out and they stone him to death, because that is what the price of rebellion is, the judgment upon rebellion.

But the judgment of all sin is death. This is why Jesus came to establish grace, to tell us that Father's heart is not that we should be judged by law, but that we should be forgiven, we should be established as sons and daughters, and we should know that

there's bread in His house and plenty to spare. So how will the story end for you tonight? Whether you're religious, the older brother; or you're the prodigal, you've done all sorts and you think you've burned your bridges - how's it going to end for you tonight?

Let's pray. I want us to take a few moments. I want to pray for you right now, whatever your situation is. I'm going to ask the Holy Spirit to release the Father's love into your heart. I want you to be prepared for God to do that. It would help if you were in a position to receive that, by being willing to open yourself up to the Lord. Are you? Let me pray for you: Lord, I thank You, Jesus, that You came to reveal Father's heart. Thank You, Abba Father, that You are the most awesome Papa, Daddy, the Holy Father in heaven - but You are the One that we can cry out to like a babe just out of the womb cries, we can give an 'Abba Father' cry through the Spirit of Jesus. We say: Father, we love You, and we thank You that Jesus came to reveal that through dying and rising again; and He's here tonight because He's the King, and this is His kingdom. He wants to pour Your love, Father, by the Holy Spirit, into lives right now. Lord, would You come and do that?

If you're here tonight, and you want to take a step deep into Father's love, will you pray with me now? It's not a mantra or a magic spell or anything like that, there's nothing powerful in the words per se. It's in your heart as you come towards God by faith. Will you pray? Just say these words: 'Father, I come to You in Jesus' name. I thank You that You sent Jesus to die for my sins, so that I could call You 'Father' and know You as my heavenly Dad. I turn from my sins and my selfishness to You and believe that Jesus died for me and You love me, and You want me in Your family. I come to You now. I confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and I ask You to fill me now with the Holy Spirit, that I may live a life that is pleasing to You'.

Kingdom Life - Chapter 3

"Kingdom Power"

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I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Neil has already read from that passage, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, and then we're going to go to chapter 4. Then 1 Thessalonians and then Romans. So you're going to be looking up the Bible, which is a good book to read! 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

We have travelled from Wednesday night, looking at this subject of "Kingdom Life". On Wednesday evening, we looked at the gospel of the kingdom, the 'Kingdom Gospel', which is more than just the gospel of the atonement. We celebrate the gospel of the atonement, that Jesus died for our sins, that through the shed blood that we were singing about tonight our sins can be washed away, we can be made white as snow before the throne of God, we can be acceptable with Him. Jesus rose again to vindicate the sacrifice that was made, and now we can have that eternal life ourselves, because He lives.

But the gospel is so much bigger than that. This is what we're trying to tease out each night, because it also tells us that the disciples were commanded to go out and heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons. Jesus said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord'. So there's a bigger gospel than, at times, we preach or hear preached. Then the second night, we started to see that part of that is 'Kingdom Relationship'. Last evening, we looked particularly the Father-heart of God, and that the Father-heart of God is actually the central message of the kingdom message. The kingdom message is central to the Bible's message, but central to the kingdom message is the message of the Father-heart of God, that Jesus came to reveal the Father.

Now tonight, what we're going to consider is 'Kingdom Power', that this message is the most powerful thing in the world. I wonder, do you believe that? Let's read these few scattered verses, and we'll be looking at other Scriptures, of course, but let's look at these. First Corinthians chapter 2 verse 4, Paul said: *"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* - not with persuasive words, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power. Now turn over to chapter 4 of Corinthians and verse 20, a very brief statement, but profound in its depths: *"For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power"* - now that goes against a lot of evangelical thought in the church today. I mean, that has to be said. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Now over 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and, again, just the one verse. Paul says, verse 5: *"For our gospel did not come to you in word only",* now, of course, there is the word that we preach, but it's not in word only, *"but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake"*.

Now that's interesting: it wasn't just the message that authenticated what they were saying, there was a power, a demonstration of the Holy Spirit, but that was actually manifested in the lifestyles of these individuals. You see, it can't bypass your own life. We saw it at the very beginning on Wednesday evening, Jesus said: 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added'. No, that's not what Jesus said. Jesus said: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you'. So the power of God was manifested in transformed lives.

Then over to Romans chapter 15. I'm actually going to read this passage from the New Living Translation, Romans chapter 15, you may care to read it in your own. Verses 18 and 19, Paul says: *"Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. They were convinced"*, now watch this, *"by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God's Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum"*. So, you see what he's saying here: the way he preached the gospel was through signs and wonders, miraculous things that God's Spirit did - this is a kingdom of power. God's kingdom is a supernatural kingdom.

I've already referred to it, Isaiah 61, when Jesus stood in the synagogue that Sabbath Day, and was given the portion of Isaiah to read, He turned to Isaiah 61, and He began: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me', to do all these things, 'to preach good news to the poor, heal the brokenhearted', etc. But the first statement is 'the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me' to do these things, because this is a gospel that is infused with divine unction from heaven. The power of the Holy Spirit is behind this kingdom message. It's testified by works, and the ways of Jesus. Miracles that we see right through the Gospels, right throughout Acts, we see them even in the tent these evenings, are kingdom signs. But it didn't stop when Jesus died, rose again and ascended to heaven. It didn't stop when the apostles died, and were buried. It didn't stop when the age of the early church transpired. But in fact, Jesus Himself says in John chapter 14 verse 12: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he', or she, 'who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father'. 'Because I go to My Father, miracles will not stop; but, in fact, you will perform, and greater than these'. Now, I'll let you work out what that means, but it means what it says somehow, doesn't it? Because Jesus said it.

This is why He commissioned the apostles in Matthew 28, you know it: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded; for lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age'. We often leave - we get the 'Go' and the 'discipleship' and the 'baptise', but we often leave this aspect out, 'teaching them to observe', or literally, 'put into practice everything that I taught you', because that's what a disciple is.

You've heard a lot about the shipyard, my grandfather, great grandfather all worked in the shipyard. And you were beginning in the shipyard as an apprentice, and you shadowed a more experienced tradesman, and you learned from how they did things. That's what the disciples did with Jesus, they learned how the kingdom of God comes in miraculous power; and then we see, in the Acts of the Apostles, them doing the same thing. That's how Mark really describes his great commission in Mark 16:17-20: 'These signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they

will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs' - there it is. That's really a summary of the Acts of the Apostles, what happened, because the Acts of the Apostles effectively is rather the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. But what I want you to understand is: though Jesus gave these promises before He ascended to heaven, He was at pains to tell these followers of His not to move a finger in their mission of going into all the world with this good news without the promise of the Father and the Son coming upon them.

In fact, in John 16:7 Jesus says: 'It's to your advantage that I go away, that the Comforter will come'. But in Acts chapter 1, He says to them categorically: 'Being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which', He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'. Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'. You remember we saw last evening I think it was, or maybe the night before, we get obsessed with the timing of the kingdom, when, rather than the place, where, here and now. 'And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority''. I have my own ideas about end times theology and eschatology, I have my own views, you can have yours. But let's hear the word of the Lord Jesus here: 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority'. He's saying: 'This is the thing that you need to make a priority, the kingdom will come when you receive the Holy Spirit, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses, My ambassadors in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'.

Of course, as I say, this was a prelude to the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and one of the principal characters in this story of the Church ablaze with the Holy Spirit is Paul. Certainly among the Gentile world, he's a principal mover. We've read his words already, at the very beginning, he operated under the unction of the Spirit. Neil has already said that he was a highly intelligent individual, highly schooled in Judaism, and he could have tied any of us in knots theologically with Old Testament scripture. But he says: 'I have not come with that type of argument. I have not come with cerebral speak of theology and doctrine, per se, but I'm coming to you in the very power of God, kingdom power - because, as Jesus taught us to pray, Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen'. Psalm 62:11 says: 'Power belongs unto God' - and that's all power, you know. Even the devil's power was created by God. Now, it's a prostituted power, it's a stolen power, but even the devil was created by the Almighty.

All power belongs to God. Yet my personal observation is - and I think some of you will agree with me - that there's a great absence of power in much of the church, especially here in our land. Much of that is corporate, individually in Christian's lives, there is a deficit of power. It's an interesting observation that a lot of folk in the United States who turned to the New Age movement were actually former church-goers. One of the reasons they say they turned was that they were disillusioned because there was an absence of reality and power in the church. I'm not against apologetics, you

know what apologetics are? It's a reasoned argument to justify belief in God, I think it's a wonderful thing. Some of the books at the back will speak to that - people like C.S. Lewis, Ravi Zacharias, our own John Lennox are wonderful apologists for the Christian faith. I believe that Peter tells us that we are to give a reason for the hope that is within us, but can I suggest to you tonight that the apologetic that the world needs in this particular hour is the apologetic of the supernatural in this kingdom of power.

I remember years ago before I was really as informed even in this teaching and walking in the fullness of Spirit, perhaps, the way I am now - and I seek more, of course, and there is always more. But I was preaching a Gospel Mission - and it was probably more the gospel of the atonement on its own - but I was preaching it nevertheless, and God was helping me. There wasn't an awful lot happening in the fortnight of mission, it was somewhere in East Belfast - and this one particular night, a young fellow was brought along by an older gentleman. And anyway, during the message, I could see that God's power was coming on this young fellow, and to such an extent that he seemed to be more and more overwhelmed as I came near the conclusion of my message. I kind of instinctively knew - and this happened seldom to me, and I suppose now I would not see it too frequently - I knew this guy was going to come through for the Lord. By the time I got to the sinner's prayer, if you like, the conclusion of a response, I felt: 'This guy's already there, but we'll just do this anyway', and we did it. At the end of meeting, he wanted to see me and speak to me privately in the back room. So I did, and - as evangelists tend to do - I put him over everything to make sure he was fully cooked and all the rest. He was there already, no doubt about it. We came into the room together, and the older gentleman that brought him said to me: 'Did he ask you the questions?'. I said to him, 'What questions?'. 'Did he ask you the questions?'. I says: 'He didn't ask me any questions'. He says: 'Well, he came tonight with all these questions about evolution, about Darwinism, about science and physics, and all the rest'. He didn't ask any of them, do you know why? He encountered the living God! That answered all his questions, that was the apologetic of a kingdom of power.

Bringing you up more to recent times, I was in St. Anne's Cathedral doing a healing service. God came in power and some weird things happened - and sometimes that takes place when God comes, things are exposed, and a certain person became very demonstrative in the gallery, that's all I will say. Some of these church goers weren't maybe used to some of that - but anyway, there was a whole lot of things happening and people were getting healed, and some deliverances that were quite loud and all the rest. At the end, there was an individual there who sits on the fence with regards to faith in Jesus, and she happened to remark to the person that brought her: 'I don't know how anybody could come to anything like this and not believe in God, not believe in God'. She didn't understand what was going on, I wasn't 100% sure of some of it myself, but I believe God was in our midst, and God was doing something - I knew that much. But she was able to see that this was beyond normal, natural or rational. Some Christians can't see that. But that's what we need: we have a debt to our society, to demonstrate the power of the gospel - and the church, if ever it did, needs to plug in again to the power source of the kingdom, who is the Holy Spirit.

If that's going to happen in Ireland, particularly the North, but all over Ireland, there's a couple of things I think need to happen. First of all, I think we need to repent of offending the Holy Spirit. I know what I'm talking about here. I don't claim to know

everything that I talk about from the pulpit - I should, but an occupational hazard is that sometimes you have to talk about things that you haven't experienced. I prefer now preaching about things that I know from experience, but I can tell you tonight - 100% - I know what it is to repent of offending the Holy Spirit, because I used to preach against the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I used to preach against some of the things I do now and experience now. One of the areas we need to repent of in offending Holy Spirit is unbelief.

Let me tell you a story. Not long after some significant Holy Spirit revivals in the early 1900s, a revival broke out in a German city by the name of Kassel, but it died very quickly. The reason why it died was opposition from the German evangelical church leaders - isn't that interesting? The reason being, certain theologians critically analysed the phenomenon of the Spirit, some of the unusual manifestations that were going on, and they found them wanting. Could I just interject here with a quote from Dr. A.T. Schofield, who was a missionary to India and experienced revival there. He says: 'As well expect a hurricane, an earthquake, or a flood to leave nothing abnormal in its course, as to expect a true revival that is not accompanied by events quite out of the ordinary experience'. When God shows up, some things happen that are out of the ordinary, because He's out of the ordinary. But anyway, in 1909, back to Germany, 56 conservative evangelical German church leaders issued a joint statement - it's called the Berlin Declaration - in which they condemned the Pentecostal movement, which was the prime movement using the gifts of the Spirit at that time. This is a quotation from that Berlin Declaration: 'This so-called Pentecostal movement is not from above but from below; many of its phenomena can also be found in spiritism. Demons are at work here who, led by Satan's cunning, mix truth and lies in order to entice the children of God. The personal faith and dedication of some leading brothers and sisters cannot deceive us, not even the healings, tongues, prophecies, etc. The movement brings forth powerful spiritual and physical manifestations, like falling, face twitching, trembling and shaking, screaming, ugly and loud laughing. Such phenomena are not worked by God'.

This land of Germany previously had given birth to higher criticism. If you don't know what that is, this was some high theological academics who would critique the Bible to basically take the miraculous out of it and deny a lot of the supernatural things. Now, what's happening is, as one commentator put it: with these - this Berlin declaration and many more references - the German church refused her only weapon against the spirit of antichrist, the weapon of the Spirit's anointing. Five years later, after the Berlin declaration, Germany plunged herself and much of the rest of Europe into the fiery cauldron of World War I - a conflict that consumed the cream of an entire generation of European manhood. You see, what happened was: there was a spiritual vacuum that had been created by Germany's rejection of the Holy Spirit, and intensified in the economic and social devastation that followed the War, it created an opportunity for the spirit of antichrist to fill that gap. Not long after, of course, World War II - Adolf Hitler rose to prominence and the Nazi Party; and that evil spirit engulfed the globe in horror with the unbelievable brutality of the Second World War. Fifty-five million people around the world died.

Now, I know that the church in Germany, a large part of it anyway, has now repented, significantly of the Berlin Declaration, and God is doing marvellous things around Germany. But can I call you to be alert right now at this moment, in Ireland and in Europe, because the spirit of antichrist is at work. The church will be impotent to halt

its advance, unless we have this kingdom power from on high in our midst. We need a baptism of the Holy Spirit over our land. That's the only thing that's going to halt the movement of the forces of darkness. So we need to repent of how we, as individuals, as groups, as denominations, as ministries, have spoken against the things of the Holy Spirit, some of which we don't understand, perhaps, but we've spoken against them, or we've spoken against people who are moving in those areas. Whatever theologies we have assented to, or statements we have made, or prayers we have prayed that have grieved and offended the Holy Spirit, we need to repent!

But secondly, we need to repent of offending the Holy Spirit by not just unbelief, but by operating in the flesh. You see, many Christians are living their Christian lives on their own steam - they're just kind of 'good people', 'religious folk', but they don't operate in the power of the kingdom.

Lewis Hastings was a British explorer of the late 19th century, and he noted in his explorations of Africa that his guide shared the unusual insight of some behaviour of chimpanzees. I don't know if anybody is an expert here tonight in chimps, but in the jungle of Angola, he noticed that there were clearings where sticks had been carefully piled as if to make a good fire. He was intrigued by this, and Hastings asked his guide how these things came to be there, and why the sticks were so neatly arranged. He was astounded by the answer. Chimpanzees had gathered them - and in Angolan, by the way, 'chimpanzee' means 'mock man', 'imitation man'. Hasting's guide told him that, even though the chimps had piled the sticks of wood and done it well, that that was all they could do because they were missing the fire. They were mocking, mimicking man - but there was no fire. They had seen somebody building a fire for cooking or protection from wild animals; and they were able to copy the man's actions in building the fire heap, but they had no flame, no spark, no heat - it was absent. That's so often how we live as Christians: read your Bible, pray every day if you want to grow; go to church, don't miss the meetings, give your tithe, try and tell people about Jesus even though it's counterintuitive to you and it nearly makes you nauseous - but we're all doing it in our own strength, because the fire is not there!

Corporately, that's often how we move as the Church - you know, you've got some business acumen, or some wisdom, or you're intelligent, you're a lecturer or something like that, and you'll get a place in the Church very easily. But we're missing the fire. We're wondering what God's blueprint is for a new generation that's rising, that doesn't go to Church, doesn't want to go to Church, and doesn't have a clue about anything spiritual other than the dark side - and we don't know how to reach them, because we're not moving in the power of the Spirit.

So we need to repent of offending the Spirit, but we need to actually repent and believe again. You know, repentance is about changing your mind and turning around, but you've got to turn from something to something - and the Holy Spirit is not an option. I'm trying very carefully in my terminology not to isolate anybody, or estrange anybody in the words that I'm saying tonight. We can use terminology that turns people off, and that's unfortunate, but that's one of the prime moves and master strokes of our enemy: that he's got us, in our own camp, fighting over terminology, when the fullness of the Holy Spirit is - not an option - it's vital! It's essential.

Paul said in Ephesians, and it is an emphatic command: 'Be filled with the Holy Spirit' - end of. Being indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and being filled with the Holy Spirit are two

different things. I don't care about your background, I don't care about your terminology, we could use things that might offend you - but you cannot argue with me that that is not biblical. Being indwelt with the Holy Spirit - when you're born again you receive the Holy Spirit, yes, but being filled with the Holy Spirit is different than that. It's the difference between music playing in your house in one room, and the whole house, the entire building being filled with music to the point where the neighbours and the passers-by, they hear it. It's the difference between a light being on in your bedroom, and a light lighting and illuminating the entire house inside and outside, the property flooded with light. You can have a guest staying in your guest room, or you can welcome the guest to allow him or her to occupy the entire house. It's exactly the same with the Holy Spirit: you can have the Spirit or you can be filled with the Spirit. Jesus wants His kingdom people to be filled to overflowing, that out of your innermost being, He said, will flow rivers of living water. That means it's not just for you to have a feel good, it's actually to flow out of you to the world around and touch and transform them!

So there's a need to repent and believe again in this truth that we need a Spirit-empowered church, and we need to receive the Holy Spirit in this capacity. We need to say again as the Church: 'Holy Spirit, You are welcome here' - and is that the case? I mean, if the Holy Spirit really showed up in most of our Sunday morning services, it would be a catastrophe - because we'd be out of control, and we like to be in control. Can we put our hands on our heart tonight as individuals and say: 'Holy Spirit, You are welcome here. You're welcome to put your finger on any point of my life. You're welcome to ask me to let go of any idol, or repent of any sin, change any lifestyle choice, Holy Spirit, You are welcome here. Come and meddle in my affairs, shake up my life, change and transform me'. That's kingdom!

The problem is, some of our churches are pneuma-phobic. 'Pneuma' is the Greek word for 'spirit' and 'phobic' is, of course, for 'fear'. We are afraid of the Spirit. Again, this is a masterstroke of the enemy. Jesus taught into this, so that we would know that this is a scheme of Satan. He said in Luke chapter 11: 'Any of you who is a father, or a parent, if a son asked for bread, would you give him a stone to break his teeth? If he asked for a fish would you give him a scorpion, or a serpent, to sting him and kill him?' - who would do that? 'If you being evil', the most evil of fathers might be able to give good gifts to their children, 'how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit and good gifts to those who ask?'. Yet we have been inoculated against the Holy Spirit, because we're afraid to go for prayer and have somebody lay hands on us, because somebody told us we'll get a demon. I'm not saying that couldn't happen ever - make sure people who are laying hands on you, you know least something about them, perhaps. I'll tell you this: your Father, as you heard last night, if you're born again believer, your Father's good. If you come to Him, looking for the Spirit that He promised through Jesus, He is not going to give you a demon. You might have one before you came - that's another sermon. Come on back tomorrow night, and we'll find out about that. But your Father will give you the good gift, He'll give you the good gift.

Jack Taylor tells how, as a Baptist boy he longed to move in the power of the Spirit, but he was afraid of some of the antics he saw among the Pentecostals. He wanted the stripped-down version of Holy Spirit acceptable to his denomination. This is what he says: 'Then we invited a retired Southern Baptist missionary to speak at our church. Miss Bertha Smith had been a missionary in China until all the missionaries were expelled by the Japanese. A mighty revival broke out in the province where she

served, and all the American Baptist missionaries had been filled with the Holy Spirit. When Miss Bertha (as she was affectionately called) came to speak at Jack's church near the end of 1969, she immediately asked three questions'. Listen to these: 'Have you been born again? Have you been filled with the Spirit? And are you being filled right now?'. Those are three good questions!

Are you born again? We talked about this the other evening. This means you've received life from God, because you've received Jesus Christ, His Son, and you have the authority and the right now to become children of God - because you've believed you're a sinner who needs Him, and He died for you, and He loves you enough to take you and transform your life. You just come to Him like a little child and say: 'Yes, Jesus, I want You as Saviour'. Have you been born again? Then He comes to live within you - that's receiving the gift of the Spirit.

But then she asked: Are you filled with the Spirit? Is the Spirit overflowing your whole being as a vessel? Do other people recognize that He's spilling out of you, that the Holy Spirit's showing in your life? Then she asked - this is not a once and for all thing, as you would think with some Pentecostals and Charismatics - but: are you being filled right now? That verse in Ephesians is: 'Be continually being filled' - it's in the passive. You put yourself in a position where you are continually being filled from on high, this is ongoing, day by day, moment by moment. Sin can - you might have been filled with the Holy Spirit, I don't care whether you've hung from chandeliers years ago; but something has come in, and you're not filled now, but you're still pointing back to some kind of date. We can do that with our conversion as well. How are things now?

Jack goes on to say that by that time, when he heard these three questions by Miss Bertha: 'By then my desperation level for God had begun to rise above my fear level, and I wanted all that He had for me' - now that is amazing! When your desperation level rises above your fear level - your fear of getting something from the devil that somebody told you about, or your fear of being embarrassed, or your fear of what it might look like. You get beyond that fear, your desperation rises above it, and you just want all that you have from God. So, as I said the other evening, when you get to that place - that, I feel, I probably have got to, I hope I've got to - where I say to God: 'I don't care what it looks like. I don't care what anybody else thinks, as long as it's You'. As we said the other evening: 'Whatever You're up to, Father, I'm in!'. Are you in that place? Has your desperation level risen above your fear? He said: 'I had been fearful and distrustful' - listen to this - 'of the only God who was on the planet, the Holy Spirit'. Wow! We're not getting into the Trinity tonight, but what he means by that is - if I could put it another way - the one Member of the Godhead that we have direct dealings with now on the earth is not the Son of God in flesh, and it's not personally the Father, in the sense in which He's enthroned in heaven, but it's the Holy Spirit who brings the Father and the Son to us - the Spirit of God. He is the One we need, and He is the One so many of us are scared of.

Do we not need to repent? Do we not need to believe again? So many of us say it, around this nation, this land, on Sundays in the Apostles Creed: 'I believe in the Holy Ghost'. Well, you could have fooled me! If you believe, tonight, in the Holy Spirit, in this kingdom power, will you come to receive? Now it's by faith. It's by faith, like salvation is by faith, this is by faith upon God's promise.

Kingdom Life - Chapter 4

"Kingdom Freedom"

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Let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew's Gospel chapter 12. Matthew chapter 12, please, as we look at "Kingdom Freedom". Matthew 12, and we'll begin reading at verse 22. I'm not going to look at all the details of this passage, but just one verse in particular, but we need to read the context. Verse 22 of Matthew 12: *"Then one was brought to Him", that's Jesus, "who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'. Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons'. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges'". This is the verse I want to focus on tonight: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God", I think another Gospel says 'by the finger of God', "surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" - and we'll end our reading there at verse 28.*

Let's pray together. I want you to pray for yourself just now, that God would speak to you - would you do that? I don't know whether you can identify with Laura's story. Maybe it's not suicide that's your issue, perhaps it's fear that she mentioned, and has been mentioned already in our singing? Or perhaps it's an unrelated issue that you have, but you're starting to believe that the enemy's fingerprints are all over it? That he, in fact, is the moving author behind your issues, and you're, therefore, effectively in bondage somehow to darkness - whether it's thought life, or whatever, emotional well-being, or even a physical condition that you might have. You're starting to realize that it's not just physiological, it's not just biological, it's not just psychological or emotional - there's something, a spiritual force, behind it. I want you to really pray now that God would reveal to you, and open your eyes and your heart, and do something this evening for His glory and for your good. Would you do that? If you've nothing like that, and you're just the finished article and you're wonderful and you've arrived, will you pray for other people who aren't, like myself? Alright, so let's pray together.

Father, we thank You this evening that Jesus Christ is the name over all in hell and earth and sky, angels and men before Him fall, and devils fear and fly. We just want to say tonight, that Jesus Christ is Lord, we declare that over this whole atmosphere, this field, over every life in this place tonight, and we want to put every demonic spirit on notice this evening that your time is up, and that you're in trouble tonight, because the gospel of the kingdom is being preached. We are going to evict you from people's lives, in the mighty name of Jesus, and by the power of the precious blood of the Lamb. So we pray, Holy Spirit, come now, and set people free, mind, body, soul and spirit. For the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

A third, yes, a third of the ministry of Jesus Christ was deliverance - that is: casting out demonic spirits. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying by that: Jesus didn't search for demons. Sometimes there're people and ministries like that, but the demonic reacted to His presence wherever He went. That's what you find when the kingdom of God is in the midst. Of course, as we've learned these evenings, the kingdom of God is the presence of the King, Jesus. When the King is in the midst, this still happens: the demonic manifests, because it's exposed by the presence of God. Ordinarily, the demonic doesn't want that to happen. They would far rather work in stealth, in the shadows, in the dark corners, and not be found out. There's no message that will draw the attention of the enemy faster than the message of the kingdom of God.

'Spiritual warfare', that you sometimes hear people talking about, is effectively when these two kingdoms come in conflict: the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, comes into collision with the kingdom of light, which is the kingdom of God and His dear Son. When we preach the gospel of the kingdom that I spoke about the first night - you can get it, download it off the Internet or whatever - it's the gospel of the atonement, yes, the cross is central to the message we preach. That is that Jesus died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and He died taking the punishment for our sins. He satisfied God, that the sacrifice was enough that we, as human beings, could be forgiven. He then rose again the third day so that we could have eternal life. But we saw on our first evening, Wednesday night, that that's not the whole message of the gospel - because this gospel isn't just pie in the sky when you die. There's something now that is relevant, to change our life, to give us abundance, overflowing life, and a relationship with Father God, power through the Holy Spirit, as we'll see tonight, freedom and even healing. Jesus instructed the disciples to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom. These are the things He told them to do: heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, and cast out demons - freely you have received, freely give.

Of course, we saw, Isaiah 61, the message of the Messiah, the mandate and mission statement that he was given prophetically - hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born, but speaking of Him, was: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to set at liberty the captives, to bring freedom to the oppressed and sight to the blind'. So, central to the message of the kingdom and the mission of the King was to set people free from the enemy. When we preach the gospel of the kingdom, the devil immediately contests it, because it's such a threat to him.

It's interesting to note, when we read the gospel record, that there was no deliverance in Jesus' ministry until His baptism. When He was recognized, as it were, the Son of God, God the Father identified Him for who He was, recognized Him as the Messiah - and immediately, the devil started to contest against Jesus. From that point on the devil and the demonic forces flanked Christ's ministry wherever He went. John Wimber said: 'Wherever there is a church obeying the words, and doing the works of Jesus, there is an outpost of the kingdom of God. The outpost is always in the middle of enemy territory. Count on it: any turf you win, you will have to defend. The forces of evil may fall back, but they won't permanently retreat'. Now, if you're confessing to be a Christian tonight, and you're not experiencing some form of spiritual warfare, I would suggest you should examine your faith - you really should. Because the devil hates Christians especially, we are public enemy number one to him, because we are such a threat if we, like Jesus, understand our identity and the commission that we've been

given by Father in heaven.

But what I want to say tonight under this subject of 'Kingdom Freedom' is: encounters with the demonic today are proof that the kingdom of God is in our midst. That's what we read from Matthew 12:28: 'If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God', or the finger of God, 'surely the kingdom of God has come upon you'. So, this very week, some people have been delivered of demonic spirits over here at the front, and some even in the congregation, and that is proof positive that the kingdom of God is here. That's what Jesus said - if you've got an issue with that, talk to Jesus about it. A little talk with Jesus will make it right, I assure you. This should be no surprise, because of what I said from Isaiah 61. Remember, Jesus declared that in His home synagogue in Nazareth; and everybody's eyes were fixed upon Him, because He was claiming to be this One who would bring freedom to people.

If you turn to Luke chapter 4, please, quickly, Luke chapter 4, just where that is in verses 18 and 19. Follow on from it, after Jesus reads this portion of Isaiah the first thing that He does after claiming to be this promised Saviour, is He performs a deliverance. Look at verse 31, this is the first act. Luke chapter 4:31: 'Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority' - now remember that word, you might want to even mark it. 'Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice' - now, just for your information, people who have demonic problems go to church. I know this wasn't church, but it's the equivalent. 'Saying, 'Let us alone!' - so, this is what's happening: the presence of the kingdom is coming with the presence of the King, and the devil can't stick it. And so he has to cry out: 'Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us?' - the word 'destroy' there is related to the word 'loose' - 'Do You come to loose us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!'. Isn't it interesting that the devil and the kingdom of darkness know who Jesus is? 'But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' - it's interesting that He didn't make a whole show, He didn't even permit the enemy to speak. 'And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying' - now watch this - "What a word this is! For with authority", there it is again, "with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out'. And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region'.

So there are two words there used to describe what Jesus has exhibited in this deliverance: 'For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits to come out of this man'. Let me explain the difference between those two things, because often they're translated just 'power' in the New Testament. The word for 'authority' here is the word 'exousia', and the word for 'power' is the word 'dunamis', or 'dynamis' that we get 'dynamite' from, explosives. But they're two different words in the sense of the meaning that they carry. Now let me explain it like this, some of you have heard me do this before: a police officer, OK, has both authority and power, because the police officer bears the badge and the arms. So the badge is his authority, and the arms, firearms, is the firepower. But a criminal, a bank robber, he has the power, he's got the firepower, but he hasn't got the authority. So this is an illegal power, a stolen power - but he still has it. He hasn't the authority to operate in it, but he still uses it. OK, now, just for sake of argument, say the police officer decided to go out on a Saturday morning and shoot some geese with his allocated weapon - that's not

authorized, is it? So he's got the power, and he's authorized in a certain way, but not to do this.

It's a whole huge subject here, which we'll not get into in entirety tonight, but what I want to explain to you is: when God created man in the beginning, He gave him authority over all of creation, and He told him, to subdue it, to rule over it. But the enemy, Satan, came into the garden with the subtlety of a serpent and with lying deceit. Effectively what he did was: he promised that Adam and Eve would become like God - that's still a promise that Satan is speaking to people today, whether it's through the New Age movement, other religions, or just 'You live for yourself and worship your own reflection'. It's still the same lie, 'You can become like God', and they believed the lie. This is what happened when they believed the lie: they took the authority that God had given them, and put it into the hands of Satan, and he now had authority to wield his power in humanity. That's why we live in a broken world with so much heartache, trauma and crisis. Now the good news is that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, came; the Son of God in human flesh, as a man, to go to the cross, to die for us, to pay the penalty, and to effectively wrest from the hand of Satan the authority that he had stolen off us - Jesus now has gotten it back. When we preach the gospel of the kingdom, what we are declaring is: Jesus is Lord, and Jesus deserves our lives, and Jesus can set us free. This is this is the crux of it: that when we surrender to the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords, Satan loses his influence in our lives, and his power can be broken, and a new power - the power of the Holy Spirit - can come and possess us.

This is what Colossians 2:15 talks about: 'Having disarmed principalities and powers', that's the heavenly rulers, 'Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in His cross' - that's what the 'it' is there. So when Jesus died, and He looked defeated, and I'm sure there was a party going on in the realms of darkness, thinking: 'We've got Him now, we've put Him to death' - little did they know that this was sealing their own sentence, and ripping from their bony, cold, deathly grip, the kingdoms of this world. I want to declare here tonight that the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Jesus is going to reign over this whole world, because He purchased it with His own blood.

So, in His kingdom, we are commissioned now, as His disciples, as sons and daughters of the King, with His authority to deal with the enemy. Now look at Luke here, chapter 9, a few chapters from where you are, verse 1, Jesus says to the twelve disciples: 'He called His twelve disciples together', verse 1, 'and gave them power and authority', there's the two words 'exousia' and 'dunamis', 'over all demons' - what does the word 'all' mean? Just to help everybody here: all! All demons. He gave authority to the disciples over every demonic force, 'and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick' - the gospel of the kingdom we were talking about. Now look at chapter 10, because here we see a larger group of disciples - there wasn't just the twelve, you see, there was also the seventy (some versions say seventy-two). Verse 1 of chapter 10 of Luke: 'After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few''. Look down to verse 9: 'Heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'', or 'into your midst'. Look at verse 17: 'Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name'. And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Behold, I give you the authority" - there's that word 'authority' again - "to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power" - what does 'all' mean, by the way? - "all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven". But look at verse 21: 'In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight'.

Now, as far as I'm aware, this is the only time we read of Jesus rejoicing. I'm not saying He didn't rejoice at any other time, it's the only time we read of it, but what he's rejoicing over is this: that the revelation that God's authority has been given back to us in Jesus was revealed not to big boffins with a litany of degrees after their name, but to simple people like you and me, and even children, in the faith. But He rejoiced over this fact: that He was devolving His authority to His twelve disciples, to His seventy or seventy-two disciples, and effectively to the world. That's what the kingdom is: the power that Jesus had, He is giving to His twelve, seventy, and to the world who believe in Him. That's what the Great Commission is all about - Matthew 28 - we talked about it last night: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded', which means 'Putting into practice what I have shown them to do'. John 14:12: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father'. Mark 16: 'These signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons'. This is the ministry of the church, because this is part of what the kingdom of God is - but unfortunately, it is almost extinct in the church in our land.

Freedom is the central, legal charter of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is meant to be the atmosphere we live in, the air we breathe, it is for freedom that we've been set free. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. Whom the Son makes free, shall be free indeed. So many people are not free, so many Christians are not free. Why is this? This is what Jesus died for. One of the reasons why people aren't free is that they're ignorant of the spiritual battle that's going on. The New Testament teaches the reality of the spiritual realm, and most of us have grown up and been indoctrinated through our education, our Western education, to a materialist worldview - which basically means: if you can't see it, touch it, smell it, taste it, with the physical senses, it doesn't exist. Now we as Christians don't believe that, but we practically operate in that fashion. Whereas the spiritual realm is an invisible domain.

Jim Daly wrote in Decision magazine, the Billy Graham Association magazine, these amazing words: 'There is a lack of understanding about the spiritual realm and the influence that it has on the physical realm' - watch this - 'The spiritual precedes, influences and, to many degrees, determines the physical realm' - is that how we exist? Cognizant of the fact that the spiritual precedes, influences and, to many degrees, determines the physical realm? 'The better we understand the spiritual and how it relates to the physical, the better we are able to operate as Christians' - and yet many Christians live as practical unbelievers when it comes to the demonic realm. Now, a word of warning, OK? Some people are utterly obsessed by the demonic, and that is unhealthy, because the devil loves that as well. 'He loves you', C.S. Lewis said, 'either to be an unbeliever in these things, or to be obsessed and a fanatic about

them'. I'm not wanting to encourage you to be - and some people accuse me of being - a fanatic with the demonic. I can assure you, I am not. I am not. Some people will say: 'When are you ever going to stop talking about repentance, or the demonic, or whatever', when everybody's free, that's when I'll stop talking about it! If that's OK with you.

So we don't want to be obsessed with it, or intrigued in a curiously dangerous way, but we've got to move from this absolute ignorance to the worldview that the gospel has - I'm talking about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - which seems to be different. As we said on our first evening, what John the Baptist effectively said was - 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' - is: change your mindset, because the kingdom of God is here.

The word translated 'demon possession' in the New Testament is 'daimonizomai', which effectively means 'influenced by a demon', it literally means 'under the power of a demon'. 'Demon possession' is an unfortunate term in English, it's in every English translation. If you want to read more about this, buy my book, just to put an advertisement there, it's down there. But 'possession' connotes in our minds 'ownership', doesn't it? We hear that saying, 'Possession is nine tenths of the law' (I don't think that's true, by the way, so don't try it), but we often think of 'ownership' when we talk about 'possession'. So when we talk about demons and Christians, people say 'Oh, that's impossible, because Christians can't be owned by the devil' - but we're not talking about ownership, we're talking about influence. In fact, when you look at the Gospels here, yes, you've got a man like the demoniac that we're going to talk about in a minute, who was possessed with many demons - there's no doubt possession was his affliction - but this word, 'daimonizomai', is used in the gospels of physical disease, mental illness, paralysis, blindness, deafness, loss of speech, epilepsy, and insanity. Very often, when Jesus physically healed someone, He cast out a spirit of infirmity, deafness, blindness, dumbness, or whatever. What I want to say to you here tonight is: Jesus has taken the authority of the enemy, and there's no reason why you should be under it in any capacity. You can be set free from the bondage of Satan by the blood of Jesus. The only way that Satan can have a hold on any of our lives is if we have given him the authority ourselves by decisions that we have made, or perhaps other people under whose care we have been have given him authority in some way.

I talk about this in three ways: sins, wounds and demons. Sins are the things we ought not to do, or we leave undone that we should have done. We break God's commandments. When we sin - newsflash to everybody, because very often we think 'There's no consequences to my sin right now, especially if I'm not harming anybody else and just doing something privately'. Listen, the Bible says: 'Sin crouches at the door'. That's what God said to Cain: 'Sin crouches at the door'. God personifies sin, meaning that sometimes when we indulge in certain ways over and over again, there is an actual demonic entity that can get on our backs, as it were, and empower that behaviour. So sin is not some kind of trifle, as Billy Sunday said: 'It's time we stop treating sin like a cream puff, and treat it as the rattlesnake that it is'. When we open the doorway of sin too many times, the demonic can get a grip on us - even as Christians.

Another way the demonic enters in is through woundedness, broken hearts, wounded spirits, fractured minds. Where do we even begin to talk, where that's concerned? But

it's interesting: at the fall of mankind into sin, brokenness came into humanity immediately. Brokenness between marriage partners, between brothers, between communities, a brokenness even within himself, man, within Adam - and the devil loves brokenness. Just like when we graze our knees and Mum puts the Dettol on it, and we think: 'What on earth are you doing? That's making it worse!' - she's killing the germs, because a wound is a breeding place for germs. Wounds of the heart are breeding places for the demonic. The devil loves brokenness, we've heard that already tonight, from Laura.

Then there's the satanic itself, the demonic, the occult, that whole realm of Spiritism and New Age that we talked about a little bit through the book. So the enemy's just looking for a foothold to get in. We need to repent of our sins, we need to get those wounds healed, and we need to tell the devil to get out of our lives in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus. As I often say: you can't repent of a wound, and some people are trying to do that. You need healed of a wound. You can't repent of a demon, you need a demon cast out. Do you understand? You can't heal a sin, 'Lord, please heal me of my lust' - you repent of your lust! Maybe there's healing needed there, but repentance needs to come when there's sin involved. But spiritual warfare, effectively, is about what authority you've given the enemy in your life - and very often that comes from the lies that we've been listening to, maybe other people have spoken that over us. We listen to the lie, and what happens is: it filters down from our minds to our hearts, and we start to not just think that way, we start to feel that way, and then it affects our behaviour. As you see from the screen: you empower whatever authority you submit to. You empower whatever you give rights to. The demonic, just to demystify it for you tonight, is simply the devil's empowering force, his enforcement agency, and the only way you can be set free from that tonight is to submit to the King of the kingdom - to say 'Jesus Christ is Lord'. The ancient Christians used to say: 'I renounce Satan and all his works', and that's what we need to do.

You need to do that tonight, whatever your problem is? That's where covering comes in, the subject of that book I advertised. The principle of spiritual covering is: when you stay like this umbrella, the wee man staying in the realm of submission and safety, it's under the covering of God's kingdom. But, even as a Christian you know, you can step out of that in disobedience into rebellion - and that's a dangerous place to be. There's this evangelical lie that 'I can just sin away all I like, and there's no consequence' - that is rubbish! It's nowhere in the New Testament! I'm not saying you're going to go to hell, but I am saying that you're exposed to the dangers of Satan if you step out from under the covering of the authority of the King through disobedience. That's why believers in the Bible are warned so much about the devil. Have you ever thought about that? That everything in the New Testament warning us about Satan and his kingdom was written to Christians - not to non-Christians, to Christians! To you! 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you'. He's 'like a roaring lion, going around seeking whom he may devour'. We're not to wrestle flesh and blood; put on the armour of God; beware of Satan's schemes, do not be ignorant of his devices.

Let me introduce you to a man in Luke chapter 8, in Mark chapter 5, and Matthew's Gospel as well. This man is known as the demoniac of Gadara, the maniac of Gadara - lovely names aren't they? The reason he's known that way is: he was an outcast of society, they had given up on him, no one had an answer. So they had put them in the their equivalent to the padded cell and thrown away the key. He lived on the mountainside in the graveyards, and he run around naked, demented, cutting himself,

self-harming with stones, crying out like an animal. One day, Jesus decided: 'It's his time to be set free', because Jesus is the answer. He went through a storm - and I haven't got time to get into all this, but it was a satanic storm, the word used for Jesus rebuking that storm is the same word that is used of Him rebuking spirits, dark, demonic spirits. That storm was trying to drown Jesus from delivering this man that was like a lightning rod in this area for satanic hold and stronghold over a whole people. But Jesus overcame the storm - and maybe there has been a storm trying to disrupt you coming here tonight? But you're here, because Jesus wants to set you free. Jesus got to this man, and the demons started speaking out of this man. They'd already stripped him of his dignity he's stark naked running around mad. Maybe Satan has stripped you of your dignity? I don't want to go into that detail, but maybe you are covered in shame tonight for the things that you have done or have been done to you? He was also stripped of his personality, because if you had went to school with this fellow, you'd never have recognized him now, after what the devil had done to him. I don't know how his relationship started with the devil, whether he started dabbling in the occult or witchcraft, or whether it was through immorality or something like that, I don't know. But there was a doorway, and it was a downward spiral. He didn't wake up one day and say, 'I'm going to be possessed' - but it was choices that he made, as he gave authority increasingly over to Satan by the decisions in his life, until he actually became unconscious. He lost his sobriety. He didn't know who he was anymore. This was the ultimate identity theft, and this is what Satan is into today. So that, when Jesus spoke to him, and said: 'Who are you?', the demons spoke out of him and said, 'We are legion. We are many'. A legion in the Roman Army was something between 3000-5000 soldiers, and it might be that there were that many demons in this man!

Nobody had an answer for him. But this is wonderful: Jesus, with a word of authority, a word of kingdom power, cast the spirits - every one of them - out of this man, and into a herd of swine. It's said that they went headlong over a cliff and drowned in the ocean - and I just love that, because the spirits that were trying to drown Jesus, now Jesus is drowning them in the ocean. Now, you don't drown spirits, but they were in the pigs anyway, near enough. This beautiful verse depicts what you can enjoy tonight, if you tap into the kingdom freedom and the kingdom gospel. It says that this man was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. Did you hear that? In an instant, this man was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

The kingdom is more than just asking Jesus into your heart. The kingdom is more than asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins. The kingdom is being set free from the bondage of the enemy. The kingdom is being set free from darkness. Romans 14:17, I think it has already been quoted tonight: 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy'. Do you know what that means? Righteousness is the opposite of sinfulness. So if you're in the bondage of some kind of addiction, or sinful habit, or some vile thing, Jesus is able to set you free - not by making you a better person through self-effort, but by giving you His very righteousness that's His own. The very righteousness of God to turn you around and to change your life! We said it the first night: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness' - He will give you it, if you come to Him. And peace, that's the opposite of fear, turmoil, distress, trauma. Have you got peace of mind tonight? Have you got peace of heart? Have you got peace with God? What about peace with yourself? What about peace with your past? What about peace with your neighbour? God does not give a spirit of fear to people - and there are so many Christians, I think this is one of the Christian epidemic diseases: fear! We often legitimize it by saying: 'Och, I'm just a

worrier, and my Mummy was a worrier, and my Granny was a worrier. It's just my disposition' - poppycock! It's not, that's a lie. God does not give anybody fear. You need to recognize what it is and be set free, and know the peace of God that is beyond comprehension. Joy - that's the opposite of depression, despair, the opposite of self-hatred, the opposite of low self-esteem, lack of value. The joy of the Lord!

That's the kingdom: joy, peace, righteousness. So, tonight, you might need to repent of some agreement you have made with the enemy in your life. You might need to renounce some behaviour or oath that you've taken. You might need to forgive someone that has hurt you. The enemy can so often come in with bitterness and unforgiveness, and bring a bondage there. You might need to receive healing for heart wounds and brokenness - but one thing is certain, listen: if the enemy is in your life and on your case, you need to, tonight, take the authority that Jesus Christ gives you and command him to leave in Jesus' name. You might very well need help in doing that, and we are here for you tonight. You might need long term help, because, for some people, this is not instant. I'm just being upfront with you. For some people, it's a journey, because it's a combination of all these things: sins that need repentance, but wounds that need deep, long-term healing; and then the enemy can be told to go. But all I can tell you tonight is, I've seen this enough to know, over, and over, and over, and over, again and again: that the power and authority is in the name and the blood of Jesus Christ to set people free. There's a power here tonight that can revolutionize your life, change your family, even your community, and this whole nation.

Let me finish with this story. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a Harley Street Specialist, a doctor, and he practiced in London, of course, Harley Street. But then he became a minister and he went to the Welsh Valleys, where his first church was. He later went to Westminster Chapel in London, famously, but he was in Wales first. A few doors down from the chapel where he preached was a medium, someone who claims to contact the dead, when really they're in contact with a demon. But she practiced there in that little house, and she used to notice on a Sunday how everybody went to church, you know, in their fine clothing and their Bibles and everything. She was intrigued with what was going on down there in that church. So one day she decided, 'I'm going to go and see what's happening'. She went in, and Lloyd-Jones was preaching, and this woman came to know Jesus as her Saviour. Afterwards - you know the way preachers are - he wanted to know what it was that affected the woman, and why she had trusted Jesus. So he had a conversation with her, and he said: 'What was it that gripped you? What was it that was said. She said: 'Oh, it was nothing that you said' - and we love that too! - 'It was nothing that you said', but she said, listen carefully to this, 'When I came into your gathering, I sensed a power that was very like the power that I experience in my spiritualism'. Now that might surprise you, but this is the important part, she says: 'The difference was, this was a clean power'. Isn't that wonderful? Clean spiritual power is the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God - and He's here tonight, because this is His kingdom, and this is His work.

Kingdom Life - Chapter 5

"Kingdom Healing"

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Let's turn in our Bibles to Scripture. We're looking at two texts. We'll be thinking of a lot of Scriptures tonight, as we have been each night. First of all, John chapter 14 verse 12, and then we're going to Luke chapter 10. Maybe we could have the lights up a little bit, so that people can read their Bibles, because I really want folks to see tonight, where we're getting what we're talking about, from Scripture. John chapter 14 verse 12. Now these are the words of Jesus Christ, we know the Bible is the Word of God. These are the words of Jesus within the Word of God, and we need to take every word that He spoke seriously. Verse 12: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father"*. Because Jesus emphasized, 'I'm going to the Father', it's talking about a period of time after His life on earth. Jesus is speaking about how His followers would actually replicate His own works and do greater works.

Now, I'm not going to enter into too much depth on that verse, save to say that healing ministry is incorporated within that. Whatever else it means - and I'll let you theologians out there debate that - but listen, it has to mean something that it does actually say, and you can't just jump over verses like this and ignore them in Scripture. What does it mean? It certainly means the healing ministry now, in the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we will see is outlined in further Scriptures. Now, if you look at Luke's Gospel and chapter 10, verse 9. You remember, if you were here on Wednesday night, you can get it on the Internet or the recording, we talked about the gospel of the kingdom. Sometimes we've heard a gospel of atonement, which is the centre of the message of good news; that is: Jesus has died for our sins, and satisfied God that our sins are paid for, and He's risen again so we can have eternal life through His resurrection life - but the gospel is far greater than that. Jesus said in Isaiah 61, He then repeated this - it was in the Spirit in Isaiah 61, He actually said it physically in His own home town synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath, when he read from Isaiah 61: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to set at liberty the captives, to give recovery of sight to the blind; to preach the year of Jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord'.

Debts cancelled, yes? Land that's been taken off your family returned. Slaves set free. This is the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus instructed the disciples to go out and preach this gospel, and we saw from Matthew 24 that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached and then the end will come - that this same gospel is to be preached until Jesus returns. Here in chapter 10 verse 9, He tells the disciples: *"Heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'"*.

Let's pray together. I want you to pray just know that God would speak to you. I know some of you may not go along with, perhaps, what I'm saying tonight - that's OK, you're very welcome. We're glad to have you here. But might I ask you to come and ask the Lord that He might open your mind and heart? If I'm saying anything wrong,

that He'll reveal that to you; but if there's truth in what I'm saying tonight, that you would have a disposition to receive that, with impartiality and honesty, in the presence of God.

Let's pray: Father, we thank You for Your Holy Word. We thank You for everything that we've witnessed this very week to Your glory. We thank You, Lord, for what You're doing and what You're going to do tonight. I just pray, Lord: come and meet with lives this evening and bring transformation, bring restoration and redemption that was bought through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection. Let us see You moving in our midst tonight, we pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask it, Amen.

Sickness, the Bible teaches, is a result of the Fall. The Fall is when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and obeyed the voice of the enemy. We talked about that last night, that we empower whatever voice we obey, whatever we believe. They empowered the enemy, and a curse came upon all humanity. Sin, yes, but an offshoot of that was sickness, and disease, and accidents. So, illness and disease are the outworking of the curse, and eventually we know they will lead to death.

The message of the gospel in the cross of Christ is that Christ has redeemed us from the curse. 'Redeemed' simply means 'bought us back' from the slavery of the curse. Isaiah 53 verse 5 is a very famous verse of scripture, which says: Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and the punishment of our peace, to make our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes or His wounds, we are or were healed. I believe that that teaches us, and the whole of Scripture, indeed, testifies to the fact, that both spiritual and physical healing has been purchased for us at the cross of Jesus where He died.

Peter, actually, in his epistle, 1 Peter 2:24, shows us that when he says of Jesus: 'Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree', the cross, 'that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed'. He's talking about spiritual healing, that our souls can be made whole through the salvation that Jesus brings through His death. Our sins can be forgiven, we have peace with God, we can be restored into relationship with Him as Father - Abba, Father, we talked about that 'Kingdom Relationship' on Thursday night. But Matthew also quotes this verse from Isaiah, 'By his stripes', wounds, 'we are healed', and He applies it a different way. Matthew 8:16-17: 'When evening had come', during the ministry of our Lord, 'they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses''. Matthew quotes Isaiah in reference to physical healings.

Now, I think I've said to you enough these evenings, I used to preach against healing. I used to preach against the gifts of the Spirit, and the Spirit-filled life. Not that I didn't believe in the Holy Spirit - of course I did, I believed in empowerment from the Spirit. But I just didn't think that these gifts were necessary now that we had a finished Bible, and now that the apostles were all dead. I used to say that, 'Well, this fulfillment of Isaiah actually happened in the ministry of Jesus, in His lifetime. So it's fulfilled now, period'. But that ignores all the rest of the material in the New Testament to do with healing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles, which is all a fulfillment of the fact that by the wounds of Jesus, our wounds can be healed.

Now, let's look for a little bit of consensus here tonight in the gathering. I think all Christians everywhere most likely believe that Christ purchased complete freedom from sin and from sickness at the cross - but the question is, when? When do we experience this absolute healing? Christians agree that all the benefits will not come until Jesus returns, when we get our resurrection bodies without all the ailments, weakness and problems. So what then are we to make of healing now, and this talk about God touching lives and restoring them? Well, we may not have our resurrection bodies yet, but what we do have, the Bible teaches, is resurrection life living within us now. We're not waiting on that. Romans 8:11, whilst it's alluding to the resurrection, it says: 'If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you'. Now it is looking to resurrection day, but it says that we have that eternal resurrection life dwelling in our mortal - not immortal - but in our mortal bodies now.

Paul talked about how he had many wounds and broken aspects to his physical body in 2 Corinthians 4, but he talks about the life of Jesus being manifest even out of that weakness, because the life of Jesus lives within us. So, one way we experience healing and wholeness and the prosperity of our souls is because we believe that the Holy Spirit brings the very life of Jesus inside of us - and that's going to make a difference, surely. If you believe that that same power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive in you, surely that should help you get up in the morning? Yes?

We talked on our first night about how there's an aspect of the kingdom of God which is already, but not yet. Jesus has to come to sort everything out - agreed, yes? To iron out all the creases, to right all the wrongs, to turn everything up the right way. Yet, there's something about the kingdom of God with us now, through the Holy Spirit, the King is reigning in His kingdom, and it's breaking in upon us. So there's something about the now aspect of the kingdom that brings healing into our lives. So, we acknowledge that our resurrection bodies aren't here yet in perfect, absolute health; but God, from time to time, grants a foretaste, or a down-payment if you like, of healing that He will grant us in the future. We see this in the ministry of Jesus, as the kingdom came into the midst of humankind. We see it in the ministry of the apostles, and we see it in the records historically of healings right throughout the church age. It all testifies that healing is a part of the covenant blessing of God that Jesus purchased with His own blood. God wills to heal people. Jesus frequently healed all who came to Him - that's the record of the Gospels. It's very insightful, to me anyway, to note that He never turned anyone away who came to Him by these words: 'It's just not your time'. Not once do we read that. Not once do we hear of anyone being told: 'God wants you to learn a little bit more through this suffering'. Not once. Not once did Jesus ever say: 'You haven't learned your lesson yet, so you have to wait on this gift from God'. To just make it even more clear, there was a leper who came to Jesus in Matthew 8, and seemed to cast doubt on His propensity to heal, His desire and willingness. He said to Jesus: 'If You are willing, You can make me well', and Jesus turned the tables back on him and said, 'I am willing. I am willing'. Do we agree, tonight, that Jesus is the manifestation of God Himself in human flesh? He is God incarnate, He is the express image of God's heart. He reveals the Father to us. Here He is in His healing ministry, expressing the heart of God to touch lives, to heal them, to transform them mentally, emotionally, and even physically.

But, of course, another question that comes immediately we talk that way is: who then? Who then gets healed? Are all people healed if this is what God wants? Does everyone get it? Well, not all people will be healed. We've got to put our hands up here tonight and be honest about this, and we must be sensitive not to say that God heals absolutely everyone today. We certainly must never, ever, ever tell anyone: 'You haven't got enough faith to be healed'. Never tell anyone that. Even during the Apostolic age, not everyone was healed. We read of a man called Epaphroditus, who Paul was gravely concerned about because he was near death. Now he did get healed, and God had mercy upon him, but he was obviously ill for a period of time, and they prayed for him, but nothing changed. We read of Timothy, who had some kind of stomach problems, and Paul tells him to stop drinking water and drink a little wine for his stomach's sake and his frequent sickness. We read of Trophimus, who Paul actually had to leave behind in Miletus because he was sick. Not everyone is healed, just like not everyone is saved. OK, but hold on one minute: just because everyone isn't saved doesn't mean we don't preach the gospel to everyone, and it doesn't mean we don't pray for everyone to be saved. In the same regard, we need to pray for the sick, and we need to persevere in praying for the sick. I've seen a lot of people delivered, and more and more people being healed, and I've noticed a correlation - that the more people you pray for, the more get healed. Have you noticed that? If anything our Lord Jesus taught us to pray: our Father, etc, etc, deliver us from evil. Now, I know some of us as Christians have canonized and sanctified sickness, but you will not find that in Scripture. Can God use our experiences? Of course He does. Scripture is clear that He works all things together for good, but that verse does not say all things are good, and it doesn't say all things are from God.

John said in his third epistle, verse 2: 'Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers'. There it is in black and white. John is saying: 'I'm actually praying for your physical health to mirror what's going on in your prosperity of soul. I want you to be well' - now, that's enough for me to pray for people to be healed. Even the Old Covenant talks about how God is the God who forgives our sins, and heals all our diseases, Psalm 103. Another verse in that Psalm, verse 5, says that our youth can be renewed like eagles. Sure, even the patriarch Moses experienced this miraculous thing going on in his life, health, even at the age of 120 years old: 'when he died, his eyes were not dim, nor his natural vigour diminished'. Am I saying that we all get this? No, but he got it. He spent so much time in the presence of God, that's what was going on here. He was so much immersed in the divine eternal life, that it affected him physically, his eyesight and his strength. A different atmosphere changes things, even physically, and certainly mentally, and emotionally.

But listen, if you don't believe in healing, let me challenge you: because by our very actions, when we seek medical intervention, we display our belief that we should be well, do we not? When we're sick? What do we do? We go to the doctor. Why? Because we want to be well, and we have this instinct that we should be well. By the way, nothing I'm saying tonight is telling you to avoid the doctor, or to give up on your medication. On the contrary, if God heals you and touches you tonight, you go to the doctor and get it all tested out, and only let him take you off the medication. But even our own bodies - forget about an instinct to seek a physician - our own bodies are created with a capacity to heal themselves, which shows that the divine intent of the human Architect, God who made us, was that we should be healed and be well to the Maker's design.

Not everyone will be healed; but people can be healed, and people are being healed. Third question is: how? How? This might add a little bit more to that question 'Who gets healed?' - how are people healed? One of the objections I used to have - and maybe it's in some people's minds - if you have the gift of healing, or you believe in healing, what are you doing standing up here gassing off in the pulpit, but why don't you get up to the hospice in Newry? Why don't you get to the hospital in Craigavon? Why don't you go around healing people that are seriously ill, just heal everyone! It's a complete misunderstanding of the gift of healing, and of healing in Scripture. In the book of Corinthians, the gift of healing is actually called 'the gifts', plural, 'of healings', plural - which means there are different kinds of healing. There's emotional healing, there's mental healing, there's deliverance, being set free from demonic spirits, which is actually included within the gifts of healings, and there is physical healing also. But the gifts of healings also indicates not just a plurality of the gift, but that it is a gift from God. Each time it occurs, it is given as a grace gift. He is the Healer, Jehovah Rapha, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great Physician, He is the One who gives the gift of healing. There's no one running around with that gift as their own. There might be people used in it proficiently, but nobody owns it. Nobody can go around healing people at will, OK? Do you understand that? That's not the way it works.

Even in the life of Jesus, this was the case. There's a story of a man at the pool of Bethesda, where there was a legend - or perhaps it was true, I don't know, but the people believed it anyway - that an angel would come down and stir the waters. When that happened, there was a miraculous power released, and the first person that got in, whatever their affliction was, they would be healed. Because of that, a lot of paralyzed folk, afflicted, diseased people were gathering around this pool, and they just stayed there, waiting for the waters to be stirred. Jesus went into that vicinity one day, and He saw a man that was lying there, could not walk, and he'd been there for 38 years. Jesus asked what appears on the surface level to be one of the most stupid questions to ask anybody in that condition. He said: 'Do you want to be healed?'. Why do You think he's there? Why do You think he's there 38 years, if he doesn't want to be healed? But, you see, the Lord Jesus, you've got to go beyond the surface level - He never asks stupid questions. He discerned that there was something of a resignation in that man's heart, that that man had given up somehow, that he would be overlooked again. He even said: 'I've nobody to help me into the water, everybody gets in first before me' - maybe you feel that way.

John chapter 5 tells us that Jesus healed that man. He walked out of that vicinity, and we don't have a record that He healed anybody else all around. Then, later in John chapter 5, He's talking to the disciples, and this is what He said: 'I only do what I see the Father do'. In other words, 'I only do what God tells Me to do, what is His will at that given time'. There was a great multitude of sick people, but He only healed one. He didn't do anything independently of the Father, and we can't do anything independently of the Father either. If anybody gets healed this week, or gets healed tonight, it's nothing to do with us - it's God. Do you understand that? Nobody's claiming to have power to heal people, other than the power of God - but that being said, that being said, hold the thought; Jesus said: 'Truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also and greater works'. So we're acknowledging that it's through the power of God that the work is done, but it's going to be us that does it in His name.

He didn't tell the disciples: 'Go out there and preach the gospel of the kingdom, and I'll heal people', He actually told them, 'You go out and heal them'. Now we know the backstory, OK, it's His power that's doing it; but He's telling us to go out and do the thing. There's more responsibility on us than we realize, to go out and do it. He even instructed the disciples to go out and anoint the sick with oil, that they may be healed. I've so often heard it said that that was only the elders from James chapter 5. It wasn't, He sent the disciples out with oil to heal the sick. In fact, the commission that Mark gives us, the version of Jesus' 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel' that Mark recites is that 'these signs will follow those who believe'. It doesn't say apostles, it doesn't say the twelve or the seventy, it says 'Those who believe in My name, they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover'. There it is. That's how people are healed. When we, in faithfulness to the Word of God, pray for people who are afflicted, and God happens to give - in His power and with His prerogative - the gift of healing at that moment, and a person is healed to the glory of God, that's how it happens. If someone is healed - there's a mystery in it, yes, I agree; but we don't we don't give up, we just keep praying. We just keep praying, and keep praying, keep praying.

A miracle is a little bit different than a healing. A miracle is a slightly higher order than a healing. We see that in the list that's given in 1 Corinthians 12:28: 'God appointed these in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, and then gifts of healings'. So miracles comes before gifts of healings, and there's a reason for that. A healing can be a gradual thing. You could get healed tonight and not know for a month or two, because the condition doesn't flare up, only periodically. Or you could wake up in the morning, as some people have from this meeting, and realize: 'Actually, I've been healed'. A healing can be imperceptible, where usually a miracle is instantaneous, in a moment, and it's obvious. You can only heal something that's there, by the way. So a broken leg, your leg is there and it's broken, and it gets healed - but a miracle can actually bring something to be created that isn't there, something out of nothing in an instant.

Let me show you how this happens. Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3 verse 2: 'This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. Now listen to that phrase, 'the hearing of faith'. 'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. Now this is what's going on: these Christians were born again by the Holy Spirit - the way you get born again - but they're trying to live the Christian life by their own steam, which is the way most evangelicals live. Paul is coming and pleading with them, because they're starting to live a life of works and legalism and law under Judaism. The men are getting circumcised. They're obeying the food laws and cleanliness laws and so on. Paul is saying: 'Look, you received this salvation by the Spirit, how can you be made perfect by the flesh? It starts with the Spirit, and it continues with the Spirit'. Then he says this very interesting thing: 'Those miracles that are going on among you, how do they happen? By the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?'. Now just please note: these Galatians were embracing a different gospel for a start. There was legalism, there was even immorality among them, OK? Yet the miraculous was there. That's staggering to me. Because we, in Northern Ireland in particular and in evangelical circles, have this idea that we've got

to have all our ducks in a row, and all our I's dotted and all our T's crossed doctrinally and procedurally if we want God to move. That's not the way it worked in the Bible. Here's a case in point: they were experiencing not just healings, but miracles, and things were not all right. Now that's not a reason to have things not right, but I'm just pointing out that it was by the hearing of faith that the miraculous happened. Even faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. Now it's not for us, as I said, to judge how much faith a person has in their heart - that's between them and God, so we shouldn't be going around accusing people of not having faith. But nevertheless, Scripture is absolutely clear that it's the hearing of faith. When Jesus, that day as He walked to the pool of Bethesda, heard the Father say: 'There's a man in there 38 years, and I want to heal him today', He went. That was the hearing of faith, He went and He healed him.

You need to hear in such a way that it increases faith. Night after night in these meetings, we have been sharing testimonies each night from last year. We're not just doing it to fill in the gaps, we're doing it to raise faith in you to realize: this is what God can do and does do. The reason why we're giving words of knowledge out each evening before we pray for folk - which is what we will do again tonight - it's a gift of the Spirit, it's a little bit of insight that God gives supernaturally to us, in the place of prayer usually, but sometimes through physical feelings and sensations, where we have a sense that God wants to touch people with those particular ailments or conditions that night. But what's it for? Is it for entertainment? Perish the thought. It is to raise faith. To raise faith, so that when you hear your condition, as people did last evening and every evening so far, they believe God sees them, knows them, wants to touch them, and they come out. When they come out, the person that gave the word, their faith raises as well, I can tell you. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and that's why it's so important to give testimony - but this is the hearing of faith. Miracles are, almost every time, triggered by an act of someone's faith. Healings and miracles are the same in this regard.

Look at the different types of faith there can be. Sometimes it's the faith of the sick person themselves that causes them to be healed. The woman with an issue of blood, Jesus said to her: 'Your faith has made you well'. Your faith. He said the same thing to the leper that came back. You remember there were ten of them healed, and it was a Samaritan leper came back to thank Jesus. He said to him: 'Your faith has made you well'. Not just the faith of the sick, but the faith of the person bringing the sick. You remember that wonderful story - it's really humorous if you weren't the guy that owned the house - in Mark chapter 2, where his roof is demolished as four friends lower this paralyzed man to the feet of Jesus in a crowded house where nobody else could get in. It says that Jesus saw the faith of the four friends, and He said to the man: 'Your sins are forgiven you', and a little bit later He heals him and says: 'Lift up your bed and go'. It was the faith of friends - and you can actually pray for your friend in faith to see a transformation happen tonight. I've had people coming, asking prayer in proxy for a loved one. There's the faith of those coming on behalf of the sick, what I've just talked about - but this was a centurion who had a servant. He came and asked Jesus just to speak the word. He said: 'I'm a man under authority, and I have men under my authority, and I know if You just speak the word, my servant will be made well'. Do you know what Jesus said? He was astounded, this guy is a Gentile, and He said: 'Nobody in Israel has the faith that you've got right now'. We see a Syrophenician woman, another Gentile who comes on behalf of her demonized daughter. She believes the same: that Jesus, from a distance - geography is not a

boundary to Jesus. Then there's the faith of those who pray, just faithfully pray. We talked about elders praying for the sick and anointing with oil, and it says that the prayer of faith will save the sick and make them well.

The problem that blocks healing and the miraculous, Jesus discovered it in His own ministry, was this problem of unbelief - and Ulster and Ireland is riddled with it, and the Evangelical Church has an epidemic of it. Jesus had people in His own family who didn't believe in Him and what He was doing, how do you think that felt for Him? In Mark chapter 6 verse 5, it says that He could, in His own home town, He could do no mighty work there - that's the word for a miracle - He could do no miracle there, except He laid hands on a few sick people and healed them (we'd receive that alright, wouldn't we!). But He couldn't do the big thing, why? Because of their unbelief. I could point you tonight, if we had time, to Mark chapter 7, where there was a man who was deaf and dumb. It says that Jesus took him out of the multitude, He put his fingers in his ears, and He healed the man. You might say He took him out of the multitude so that he wouldn't be embarrassed, but He healed other people in the crowd at times, so that doesn't seem to be the reason. But the reason is given in the place where the healing, or at least the beginning of the story takes place. It's a place called Tyre, and it was under the judgment of God because of their unbelief. Jesus took him out of the environment of unbelief in order to heal him.

It's the same in Mark chapter 8, you find exactly the same thing. It actually specifically says there that Jesus took the man out of the town because it was under judgment. Unbelief is a huge problem that affects many of us, in our churches, in our religious circles. I want to challenge, tonight, your unbelief. Do you believe that our God is still the same as He ever was? Do you believe that He is a Healer? Do you believe He is a Deliverer? Do you believe He's a Restorer? Do you believe He's a Redeemer of lives, and families, and marriages, and communities, and whole nations, and continents? Do you believe He's coming back to redeem the world? But do you believe He can do it for you? That's a different thing. Do you believe He can do it for you tonight? Even if it doesn't seem to happen tonight, do you believe enough to pursue, to keep on asking, seeking, knocking until it does happen?

Do you know something: James teaches us that faith without works is dead. When I pray for folk to be healed, I often get them to do something after they receive prayer, something they maybe couldn't do before, as an act of faith and expectancy that God is going to do something. You know the way we pray: 'Lord, please heal so-and-so', and then we run at 100mph away in case they're not healed. Rather than doing that, being bold enough - and sometimes it is nerve racking, and sometimes you feel like you're putting your neck on the block and exposing yourself to embarrassment - but when you believe in God, as I said - when was it? On Thursday night, to do with the Holy Spirit, when your desperation level rises above your fear level, that's when the game's on. That's when things will start happening. When you're prepared to take faith risks, to see God manifest His power.

So, when Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray at the hour of prayer in Acts chapter 3, and there's a lame man there - and, by the way, probably Jesus would have went by that man at some stage. Certainly, James and Peter and John went past him on occasion as well at the hour of prayer, because they practiced prayer at a particular hour in the temple. But this day, it says, Peter and John fixed their eyes on him, and they said: 'Silver and gold we do not have, but what we do have we give to you: in the

name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk'. It says they took him by the hand, and they lifted him up, and as they lifted him up - not when they spoke the word, not when they prayed - as they lifted him up, his ankle bones became strong and he was healed. The ten lepers I talked about earlier, Jesus spoke words to them, but it says: 'As they went, they were healed'. As they got up and went, something happened. He told another man: 'Go and wash your eyes', he was blind, 'in the Pool of Siloam'. He put mud in his eyes - Jesus did some weird stuff! Weird things, and He often didn't repeat Himself in how He did it. I think that was just to show it's God does it, it's God does it, and there's no formula here. But He asked him to do something as an act of faith, and when he washed his eyes, he could see.

So I'm going to encourage you tonight to expect something. Even if you're not a Christian here, oh boy, what a demonstration. We've said it the other evening, what we as a church, owe this world is an apologetic of the supernatural, to show that our God is real, and well, and active on planet earth, and the kingdom of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Being passive is no good, expect. The Apostle said on the Day of Pentecost: 'Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know'. The miraculous is the testament to the veracity of the claims of Jesus Christ. It was in the Gospels, it was in the Acts, and it still is now. Our God is a God of the supernatural. Our God is the God of the miraculous. This embodies the kingdom of God: it's good news. He's a good God, He does good things, and that's good news. Now, if you're here tonight, and He doesn't touch you; or you've prayed for years, and you haven't been healed, I want you not to be too selfish. I know we're all inherently selfish. We want the thing for ourselves. We don't want to be like the guy that's constantly overlooked for 38 years. But I want to challenge you tonight to actually look around you, and consider what God is doing for other people. Have the generosity of heart to rejoice with those who rejoice - and guess what might happen? God might touch you and help you. The Lord Jesus Christ is here tonight, and His power is the same as it always has been. He can save your soul. He can break the bondage of sin in your life. He can deliver you of any affliction or any spirit. He is able - but will you believe Him tonight? Will you expect? Will you reach out? Will you step out in faith? Will you receive?

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