

ONE FAMILY: THE SACRED BLEND

Week Four: Thy Kingdom Come

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” (Acts 1:8).

Vision Statement

OUR VISION

BLENDing the Family of God Together— “The Sacred Blend”

Bringing hearts together to celebrate, encounter, and adore our God. (Worship)

Lending our lives to the faith community. (Partnership)

Engaging in practices for spiritual growth. (Discipleship)

Never giving less than our best to God’s kingdom. (Stewardship)

Devoting ourselves to sharing God’s good news with others. (Friendship)

When Jesus taught us to pray what we call the Lord’s Prayer, He gave us the essence of the Kingdom. He said we should pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

The disciples who first heard those words, along with many others in their day, thought of God’s kingdom in political terms. They were tired of enemy nations oppressing them. After all, they were the chosen people of God. They wanted to throw off these shackles and be a powerful, independent nation. Yet when Jesus told them how to pray, He did not say anything about political power. He did not recommend overthrowing oppressive governments. He said, “Pray for the Kingdom to come. And here is what the Kingdom is: it is God’s will being done on earth, even as His will is done in heaven.” It is not a political kingdom; it is a spiritual Kingdom.

Then just before He ascended back to heaven, Jesus gave this strong and compelling verse in the book of Acts. It is potent because it contains in a nutshell the power and program of the kingdom of God.

They certainly needed power. But how does one get power to accomplish spiritual things? Jesus did not say, “You will receive power when you finally get organized.” Nor did He say, “You will receive power when you really begin to tithe.” Nor did He say, “You will receive power when you send out missionaries.”

He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” I’m not putting down organization, or tithing, or missions. They are all essential. But they are poor substitutes for the Holy Spirit. Unless we are filled with the Holy Spirit, all our organization and tithing and even

supporting missions are just so much activity. He is our only source of real power. Anything else is a poor substitute.

Along with the power, we must follow the program. Jesus said the program of the Church is to go and be His witnesses in the world. Jerusalem was home base. Judea was the province in which Jerusalem sat. Samaria was next door, a kind of half-Jewish region. The ends of the earth represent the whole world. So Jesus is saying that the program of the Church is to be His witnesses first at home, but then to spread the good news across geographical boundaries as well as cultural and ethnic boundaries.

OUR MISSION IS TO THE WORLD, AND THAT MISSION INVOLVES YOU: Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

1. A mandate for every believer. (Luke 24:49)

"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Jesus' gives this directive to be His witnesses first to the Church, but it is also a directive to each individual. He actually makes a promise: "When you receive the Holy Spirit, you will be my witness."

In a small village in Scotland, one of the town drunks was Sandy MacTavish. The local preacher had tried in vain to help Sandy, to get him off alcohol and "on the wagon." In a desperate effort to address the situation, he called a meeting of everyone in the town who had a problem with alcohol. He was pleased to see so many people, and especially to see Sandy MacTavish sitting on the back row. The pastor was so inspired that he preached an eloquent sermon, warning them of the dangers of alcohol to both body and soul.

At the end of the message, he sent a piece of paper around the group, asking everyone to sign it as a pledge to give up drinking. Everyone signed it and to his special delight, he noticed Sandy MacTavish signed it too. After the service, he could hardly wait to get home and tell his wife the good news. Coming into the house, he unrolled the sheet of paper and, sure enough, there at the bottom were the words: *Witnessed by* Sandy MacTavish. The drunk had not pledged to quit drinking; he only witnessed that the others had done so.

That certainly is one kind of witness, but Jesus was talking about something else. Suppose you happen to be at the bank this week and just as you are about to step up to the next available teller, two men in ski masks walk in, holding loaded guns. In the next few moments, you witness a bank robbery.

Often, after thieves make their escape and the police come to investigate, they ask, “Are there any witnesses?” Being the honest person you are, you would say, “Yes, I saw the whole thing. I witnessed the robbery.” That is a witness: someone who can testify about what he has seen or experienced.

Now, Jesus says, you are my witnesses, not to a bank robbery, but to the grace of God in your life. And when the Holy Spirit comes into your life, this I promise: you will be His witness. But perhaps someone is thinking: “It’s just not my personality to be a witness.”

2. A message for every unbeliever. (Matthew 5:16)

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

It is not a matter of personality. Some people think that to be a good witness, you must be outgoing and friendly, and have an effervescent personality, a sort of super-salesman type of individual. We all need to be friendly, but there is no one personality type who is the perfect witness. God uses all personalities to accomplish His work. If you are naturally outgoing, you may find it easier to talk to people. But the most effective witnesses, regardless of personality, are those who have the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and who can speak sincerely about what God has done for them.

It is not a matter of spiritual gifts. Others may think they are not gifted for witnessing. The Bible does talk about the gift of evangelism, along with other spiritual gifts: the gifts of teaching, administration, serving, and so forth. If you have the gift of evangelism, witnessing will be easier and you will perhaps be more effective. But God has called each of us to be His witness. Even if you do not have the *gift*, we all must accept the *role* of a witness.

It is a matter of accepting the responsibility. If you witnessed the bank robbery I mentioned earlier, and if you heard one of the robbers call the other by name, wouldn’t you feel a responsibility to give that information to the police? It was part of what you witnessed.

Witnessing is a matter of inner character. Because you are a person of integrity, and you have been enlightened, and you have friends and relatives who need the Savior, your character and your integrity say, “It is my responsibility to be a witness.”

Jesus said, “*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16).

So our mission is to the world and that mission involves you—first as a witness in your own sphere of influence.

ON BECOMING A GLOBAL CHURCH:

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

The great missionary D. T. Niles said, “The church exists for mission as a candle exists for burning.” In other words, we have just one mission—and that is to be His witnesses in the world. And that involves crossing over geographical and cultural boundaries to become a global Christian. A global Christian is one whose vision extends beyond his or her local community. It expands across the street and around the world.

Just one example reminds us that God is doing some amazing things in our world. Dedicated, if somewhat crusty, missionaries began working in China about 1805. They did not know the language at first, but they rented a room, started preaching, and before long they had a congregation. They learned the language and planted more churches. They survived the Boxer Rebellion in the late 1890s and early 1900s, when the Chinese were killing foreigners in their midst. They endured the Japanese war with China, and then Chinese communism. When the communists took over, the church went underground. In recent years, *Christian History* magazine reported that one in twenty-three persons in China is a Christian. When you consider the population of China is well over one billion, the Christian population there represents scores of millions of people.

God is at work in our world and we need to be aware that the scope of His work is greater than our own little neighborhood.

God has expanded His work by calling and equipping some remarkable people. In the late 1700s, William Carey stood and gave a passionate plea to a group of ministers in England on behalf of the world’s unreached millions. The ministers said, “Young man, sit down, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he’ll do it without consulting you or me.”

But God did not do it without consulting Carey. He took that young cobbler and initiated the era of modern missions. Instead of sending legions of angels, God entrusts this great task to people like you and me. When William Carey died after more than forty years of ministry in India, he had translated the Bible into three major Indian languages, founded what became the largest newspaper in India, established the strong Baptist Church Union in India, founded what became the largest seminary in India, and did more than any individual to bring the message of the gospel of Christ to that subcontinent.

1. God uses our availability.

2. God uses our experiences .

A woman named Marion spent thirty-five years working as a coordinator of mass food preparation, first at a military base, then at a huge hospital. When she retired, she asked God how He would continue to use her. She took a trip to Haiti to work in food preparation for an orphanage and, over time, increased the orphanage's capabilities from feeding 800 children a week to more than 2,000. Her experiences helped her become a global Christian.

3. God uses our prayers .

J. Christy Wilson reminded students that they only needed a newspaper and a Bible to become persons of prayer. "The Bible reminds us of the God of all times and all peoples," he said. Then he added, "The newspaper reminds us of specific situations in the world where we need to ask for God's intervention." Prayer helps us become global Christians.

4. God uses our pain .

An American church asked a young man to speak to their divorce-recovery support program. Later the leader wanted to cancel the meeting because they had so many hurting people themselves, they weren't sure they could handle hearing about outreach and global concern.

The young man attended the meeting anyway and reminded the group of 2 Corinthians 1:4, which tells us that God comforts us in our pain "*so we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*" Consequently, the group chose to adopt a single mother of three serving as a missionary nurse and teacher in Angola. Through prayers, letters and gifts, they encouraged her in her work. Our pain can help us become global Christians.

5. God uses our faith .

Hudson Taylor, the pioneer missionary in China, said, "Unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith." Faith and risk have led people and agencies to offer micro-business loans to help the poor get started in oppressive countries. Risk-taking faith has helped others step out in short-term missionary service.

How will you stretch your faith? How will you allow God to use you to become a global Christian? It means we will need to get practical about how we support our mission to the world.

SUPPORT THE WORLD MISSION WITH YOUR TIME, TALENT, TREASURE, AND TOUCH:
2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Some anonymous poet wrote,

"Giving is living," the angel said.
"Go feed the hungry sweet charity's bread."
"And must I keep giving and giving again?"
My selfish and querulous answer ran.
"Oh, no!" said the angel, piercing me through.
"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

1. Give regularly. (Proverbs 3:9-10)

"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of your crops [or paycheck], then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

If you repeat that act over and over, giving will become a habit.

2. Give wisely. (2 Corinthians 16:2)

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

Don't give to any organization if you don't know something about their budgeting structure. How much do they spend on administration and fund-raising? How much actually reaches the intended recipient? The wisest thing is to give through our own church's missions and outreach ministry.

3. Give quietly. (Matthew 6:2-4)

Jesus said,

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand

know what your right hand is doing,⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”

Give as unto the Lord, not to be seen by others.

4. Give joyfully. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Sometimes when we begin giving, we think about the sacrifice and we do not give joyfully. But as you continue to give, the feelings of joy will come. It is better to act your way into feeling than to try to feel your way into acting. The apostle Paul said, *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So what will you give to advance God’s mission in the world? As you think and pray about this, ask God to help you step out on faith. Don’t think just about what you can afford, but about what you can trust God to do through you in the coming year.

Conclusion

An old story in the form of a poem tells about six people who froze to death around a campfire because each one held on to the stick of wood he or she could have contributed to the fire’s warmth. A woman in the group would not give up her stick of wood because there was a person of a different race in the circle. A rich man held onto his stick because he did not want to warm someone else who was obviously shiftless and lazy. A penniless man was there and would not surrender his stick of wood because of the rich man. Another refused to give up his wood because there was a person in the circle not of his religious belief. The black man held on to his stick as a way of getting even with the white people for what they had done to his race.

The fire slowly died, leaving them in the cold, because each one held onto the stick of wood for reasons each felt were justifiable. The story ends with the lines:

“Six logs held fast in death’s still hand was proof

They did not die from the cold without; they died from the cold within.”

Let’s ask God to warm our hearts so we will relinquish our grip on the resources that can cause His kingdom to flourish.