

Talk Notes

Title: The Kingdom of God 7 – Proclaiming the Kingdom

Meeting: Freshwaters

Date: 06/08/17

Introduction

I am now on talk 7 about the Kingdom and want to focus today on the teaching and proclaiming of the Kingdom of God.

Don't shut the door to the Kingdom!

In **Matthew 23:1-36** Jesus lists his complaints against the religious leaders of His day – let's read it together.

In **verse 13** Jesus says **Matthew 23:13** **“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You won't go in yourselves, and you don't let others enter either.”**

With all the stories of Jesus humility and love we often wonder at the strength of His words to the religious leaders, but as had so often happened in Israel's history – and actually has sadly often happened since – the very people who were meant to be encouraging people to know, love and follow God were actually shutting the door in their faces, refusing to enter themselves and barring the way to anyone else entering.

In what ways do you think the religious leaders of Jesus day were shutting the door of the Kingdom to others and why?

- Emphasising law over relationship
- Teaching obedience and adding additional burdens of obedience while neglecting the heart of the law (Justice, mercy & faith (**v23**))
- As custodians of the writings which we now refer to as the Old Testament they had all of the ingredients of the Kingdom – but they did not have the life of the Kingdom for they did not know the King.
- Their focus was on outward appearance which covered their greed and self-indulgence (v 25); impurity hypocrisy and lawlessness (**v 27**).
- They supported those who thought and behaved like them, but they were hostile to those whose lives, actions and words were truly in line with the Kingdom of God – ultimately this led them to reject Jesus.

- The religious leaders loved the power & control of being the ones who could decree whether someone was righteous or unrighteous, whether they could join in worship or be excluded.

Now it is easy to either assign these warnings to history – it was just the religious leaders of Jesus day. Or to assign them to all of the other religions of today, but actually they are also warnings relevant for me and all Christian leaders today – but also for you.

You are responsible for your faith, for your relationship with God, for your journey of discipleship. We can help, advise and encourage, we can provide opportunities through Sunday mornings, Fellowship Groups, great events like One, but ultimately you are responsible. **Do you choose lifeless legalism or Spirit filled, life enhancing discipleship to Jesus?**

Will you block the way; ignore the way or point the way?

Where once the scribes and Pharisees stood at the door to the Kingdom and shut it in people's faces – now we stand at the same doorway – not just us as church leaders, but every one of us who have entered ourselves. As we look out at the World will we be those who will **block the way** like the scribes and Pharisees – sending people away with the sense that they are not good enough, emphasising how righteous and holy we are and how sinful others are.

Will we be those who **ignore the way** and the Kingdom that surrounds it? Somehow the rest of life seems so much more important and others wouldn't be interested anyway, would they?

Or will we be those who **point the way** proclaiming in who we are, what we say and what we do that Jesus and His Kingdom are real, are Good News and are accessible to everyone.

Jesus Proclaimed the Kingdom

As Christians we often get excited about signs of the Kingdom like healing and miracles, and why not, they are exciting. However the major emphasis for Jesus, for Paul and for the early church was not just the signs of the Kingdom – but the proclaiming of the Kingdom. In **Luke 4:43** Jesus said “**I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent.**” When we think about the life of Jesus, we often think about His miracles, about His service and His sacrifice and all of these things are important – but Jesus said that the reason He was sent was to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

If we want to be like Jesus we too must preach the Good News, that's not just talking about standing up here on a Sunday morning, the word translated preach means :-

- To bring good news
- To announce glad tidings

- In the NT context particularly related to the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God and salvation through Christ
- To proclaim glad tidings – instruct people concerning the things which pertain to Christian salvation.

It's about sharing with those around us the Good News that **God loves them**, that **they can be forgiven and restored** to real relationship with God through Jesus and that **the power of death has been broken** and **the life we share with God and one another is for eternity**.

Sometimes we think 'well **when God comes in His power, when signs and wonders and miracles break out, when revival comes** – then we will proclaim the Kingdom. What if proclaiming the Kingdom actually changes the spiritual atmosphere in an area so that signs and wonders can be released, so that revival can break out – maybe while we are waiting for more signs and wonders, God is waiting for us to proclaim the Kingdom.

Paul proclaimed the Kingdom of God

In **Acts 19:8, 28:23 and 28:31** it talks about Paul 'Preaching boldly; arguing persuasively; explaining and testifying; boldly proclaiming and teaching about the Kingdom of God.'

Paul was not the exception – He may have been exceptional in his calling and gifting, but the early church was full of people pointing to the Kingdom, proclaiming the Kingdom and living the Kingdom.

1 Peter 3:15b-17 says 'Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. 15Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. 16But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. 17Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

What are the things that we can take on board from these verses this morning to encourage us in proclaiming the Kingdom of God?

- Eager to do good
- Willing to suffer for what is right
- Don't worry or be afraid
- Worship Christ as Lord of our lives
- If someone asks us about our hope, **be ready** to explain in a gentle and respectful way.
- Keep your conscience clear
- Live a good life
- Belong to Christ

Conclusion

Whether we like it or not, whether we accept it or not, we are called to proclaim the Kingdom. All the forces of darkness are ranged against us to keep us silent. Imagine if the darkness and chaos of at the beginning of creation could have stopped God from speaking out under the inspiration of His spirit – let there be light. So we face opposition in speaking light into the lives of others – let me read to you from **Acts 4:23-31**.

Yes we face opposition, yes we face threats and intimidation, at least as much from within as without – but let our prayer be ‘Lord give us your servants greater boldness in preaching the word’.