

Series: 'Practical Hints from Jesus about submitting to the Kingdom Rule of Heaven'

Message: "Towards God's Righteousness" (15th October 2023)

So ... we are helping each other to take daily and practical steps out of OBEDIENCE AND TRUST in Christ, as we discover more practical answers to the question, 'what does following Jesus look like ON the earth in light of the revelation we have received about Heaven On Planet Earth. We need more of the real Jesus and less of our human interpretation of Jesus more than ever in this world.

You see, the Bible is not a reference textbook that we develop our ideas and doctoral theses from, it is the living written word of God expressed in and through the life and work of Jesus Christ whilst He lived and walked on the earth. This is the meaning of what the apostle John referred to as the logos, literally the word become flesh. I'm reminding us of this core truth and reading from John chapter 1 and verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (logos). We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace (full of the presence of heaven and truth (the rule of the kingdom of heaven).

So, this is the very reason I bang on all the time about aligning everything we hear, every message we are exposed to, to Jesus, the living written word of God. As such, we've been preaching a series of messages that I have given this working title to, 'Practical Hints from Jesus about submitting to the Kingdom Rule of Heaven', AND As Julie opened up for us again last week, let me declare that the Heaven

On Planet Earth project is a message to, and for this church, given us by the Holy Spirit, to help us get out of the way of our good intentions to be what we collectively believe church should be, (church world) & seek a revelation from heaven like the one Peter received as recorded in Matthew chapter 16, that Jesus can build HIS church on. The heaven on planet earth project is a complete change in the way we live and operate as Christians and as the church.

Like Jesus showed us when He was sent into the world by the Father in heaven, the HOPE project ...unashamedly and unapologetically declares, represents and demonstrates the kingdom of heaven rule, or God's rule on the earth, and the battle exists (again, as it did for Jesus) because the source of the government of the Kingdom of this world is completely opposed, is completely counter to the government of the kingdom of heaven.

I want to share some implications that this reality ushers in for us, and that Julie rightly issued warning about, particularly as we continue to sift through the rubble of human reason to find the practical gems from Jesus about HOW to declare, represent and demonstrate the kingdom of heaven rule in our everyday lives. I can only scratch the surface in this introduction, but my heart's desire is to open it up now, so we can begin creating accessible opportunities for gathering around these truths, & to be mentored by the Holy Spirit individually & together.

To offer some context for that, & I believe it's important to share how God leads us as a church along the way, this is why I testified at the end of last Sunday's gathering. After hearing Julie's message, I clearly understood why God had encouraged me, to put a brief hold on the message that the Holy Spirit was forming within me LAST week, to give the green light to the timing of the word He brought through Julie, bringing it forward to last Sunday from when she thought she was going to bring it.

OK, here's some key scriptures to help us on our discovery tour this morning:

Matthew 4: 1 – 11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of

God.”⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.⁶ “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”⁷ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

And then in verse

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Matthew 9: 35

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

and 10: 7-8

⁷ As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

John 12: 44-50

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.⁴⁷ “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.⁴⁹ For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So, whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Romans 3:21-24

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

John 8:2-11

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Romans 8

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

I hope it is clear from these scriptures, that Jesus didn't come to bring a message of the gospel of love, he came to earth to preach (i.e. declare,

represent, & demonstrate) the kingdom rule of heaven on the earth (that's the gospel of the kingdom and His message is 'repent (turn back to God), for the kingdom of heaven is NEAR (or **right here**).

If we can understand that in Jesus' life and work, relationship is the journey AND the destination, then we will more likely understand that repentance is NOT ritually or religiously saying sorry or saying words or doing certain acts that will superstitiously cleanse us from our mistakes, wrongdoing, bad behaviours.

SIN defined is anything and everything that separates us from God (that's a **relational** definition, it affects our relationship, not because the Father God stops loving us (nothing can separate us from that), but that we are affected, we operate differently because of what we have done or are doing.

Guilt & shame is the human condition and the reason we need salvation. That's why when Jesus says, 'repent for the kingdom of heaven is near', He is saying I am here, I am present with you, my call to repentance is an act of redemption, of restoring relationship, it is literally, stop going in the direction you are going, turn around, see that the

kingdom of heaven hasn't moved, acknowledge that He is near & loves you, & begin heading back into the loving, empowering, freedom offering arms of the Father. So, to be clear, to repent is the act of moving towards **God's** righteousness & NOT moving towards more of our own righteousness or sin, or that which separates us from God.

Can we grasp this? If we can, it will help us immeasurably when we are confronted by things that sound right, even good, but ARE NOT truth. (Cf. Matthew 4 in the wilderness) For example, and let's not name any particular life choice or behaviour, so that we don't get distracted from what we are trying to discover. Let's say, you are confronted by a recognizable sin and you need to make a choice about how you respond to it. OK, here is a key that is an absolute when it comes to kingdom of heaven governance or rule God is the **ONLY** righteous judge, even Jesus SAID SO (e.g., John 12), this means that we can love all people equally because you and I don't make the final judgement (a good reason for this is that as human beings, we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God – Paul tells us in Romans 3 - 6)

But the kingdom of heaven rule doesn't tell us to respond **without any judgement**. This is where the English language lets us down again. We

need the judgement that comes from the Holy Spirit working in us. And this looks like wisdom, practical common sense and discernment. NOT, I judge you and you should be punished, but rather, (like a good parent) I love you, I want the best for you, so let's work together to help you be better, or be more of God's righteousness and less of ours, or our justifying or self-centred righteousness.

So, once again we need to be reminded to quote Jesus' words and actions AS THEY ARE, and not as we think they should be. For example, Jesus didn't say to the woman caught in adultery, 'Go now, and try and sin less, or do less things which hurt the way you relate to Father God' but, Jesus DID save her from guaranteed death at the hands of moral teachers, and then freed her from so much more than just the act she'd been caught in, by telling her to Go, freely on her way and sin NO MORE.

Jesus was actually saying, this sin that you have been caught in, is no worse than any other sin imaginable, So, I DON'T CONDEMN YOU either. BUT, the issue is how we respond because Jesus could say I don't condemn you to the woman because of the kingdom of heaven rule truth that the world just can't understand – (Paul) there is now NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST, when you repent, that is turn back to God and engage in a relationship with Him.

Do we live our lives desperate to move towards more of God's righteousness or do we decide it's futile and remain satisfied with less of His righteousness, being dictated to by our own definition of righteousness (which, as you and I both know, is very fluid and changes all the time to accommodate all sorts of words and actions that only help US, our – self, and do nothing to be a help or blessing to anyone else). Once again it is clear that relationship is the journey and the destination.

So, when we are confronted with visible, even public sin and need a practical way to respond, kingdom of heaven rule says, love them unconditionally but encourage them towards more of the truth, that they might receive a revelation of truth from God and not have to depend on a manufactured truth because we want them to do something we want, instead of something God wants.

Now, that starts with everybody being reassured that they HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN, & the way to engage with this truth & receive it, is to repent and turn back to God. It's a re-aligning or re-

orientation thing, or as Julie refers to it, a positioning, so that God can do all He needs to. Hence the message of Jesus, repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Now, of course, as it is with most things, it is never as simple as that. The kingdom of this world and the systems that govern it, adapt and shift to deal with the losses they encounter when up against simple and pure truth.

So, here's an example of the new level of the battle, so something to remember from the scriptures we have referred to already is that we can only give out of what we have received from heaven. One of the things that more often than we'd like to admit, can debilitate us in our desire to be more of Jesus with those we connect with every day, is the acceptance of what seems like a reasonable position with regard to a particular behaviour that the Bible clearly says is not from heaven.

So, when it suits the world system, it responds to followers of Jesus by acting like it knows the truth of the kingdom gospel and so it argues that we can **ONLY** love someone if we **accept** their choice to live a certain way, because their choice is freedom. It is such a compelling argument that it causes debates and fractures relationships even between believers, which of course is exactly what it is designed to do, because as strategic weapons go, the 'house divided against itself can't stand' weapon, discredits ANY efforts across the board to portray a loving Father God to a rebellious world.

But the reason that we get caught in this, and find it difficult to engage the battle, is because we forget how Jesus responded, & cut ourselves off from the only standard or measure of the government of the kingdom of heaven that we have. We cannot achieve this love that the world accuses us of not being able to be consistent with, because in a humanitarian world, the definition of the love we are being asked to bring, is human defined, it's based on human strength and wisdom, and it is not kingdom of heaven sourced. People can't get the idea of the love of God we can bring, because you see, they don't believe that God is supernatural, and can't be defined or restrained by human definitions. So, when we are asked to accept something that is clearly unfounded in scripture, we **CAN** love with God's love because Jesus showed us how to declare, represent **AND DEMONSTRATE** the kingdom of heaven rule

ON THE EARTH, and as such, the kingdom of this world rejects the miraculous demonstration of God's rule, when it is appropriate and necessary to demonstrate it. Why did I qualify that? Because Jesus doesn't want us to let the pendulum swing from one extreme to the other. Let me clarify.

If we are desperate to be proven right (and you know this is one of our flaws), miracles will be attempted out of human strength, instead of only engaging in confrontations with the enemy where we have been sent by God, so like Jesus, we only do what the father says and what the father does, and only WHEN the Holy Spirit gives it the green light AND THE REASON To ensure that the result is people being able to respond to the real work of heaven in a safe place, & not be coerced into any position that doesn't allow them to be hungry for more of heaven's truth, so that it can be revealed to them.

Why do we think that more often than not, when Jesus healed someone, he told them not to tell anyone – it was so they might have truth revealed to them by the Holy Spirit and not be caught up in the moment of magic and mystery – which as we all know is fleeting and often temporary (Parable of Sower – different soils and yields)

Here is one of the clearest classic examples of Jesus' love on the earth that challenges the human notion that 'inclusivity, or accepting every human choice = love'. Jesus challenges the law of the Pharisees directly when dealing with the paralytic on the mat in front of him in Mark 2 & Matthew 9. The Mark 2 version gives a little more detail.

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has

authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, ¹¹ “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

So, here’s the reader’s digest summary that I am more than happy to talk with anyone about at greater depth.

Whatever sin the paralytic man had in his life, whatever he had done, in whatever way it was connected to his illness or not (we all know how much our life choices can impact our health – hence the reason I used reference scriptures that in many cases associated healing ministry with repentance). Whatever the paralytic man’s story was, and however the leaders of the world system at the time (the pharisees and scribes etc) interpreted this man’s life and woes, Jesus shows us the double whammy by dealing with forgiveness of sin and complete healing as ONE issue.

In this miraculous deed, Jesus reminds everyone, including us today, that as many definitions about **justifying** the things that separate us from God that human beings can thrust upon us, there are two things that stand out when the kingdom of heaven rule confronts this stuff. Firstly, a love that rescues and redeems, and that offers freedom, wholeness, forgiveness and complete well-being, is ALWAYS the focus of God’s rule and secondly, the reason it is so counterculture to everything the world system stands by, is that the demonstration of the kingdom of heaven is always miraculous and life transforming – for the better in the **(long-term)**.

Supernatural is not just a definition of miracles and wonders like we always think of when we think magic like the world defines, supernatural actually defines everything that comes from heaven that changes things on earth, transforms things for good and to the glory of God, eternally. So, crudely then, natural is the limit of what can be understood in the human realm, and supernatural is what happens when something is governed by the culture of the kingdom of heaven.

In Luke 20 – the chief priests and teachers of the law asked Jesus ‘by what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority? Instead of arguing at a human level of understanding, Jesus asks them a question which requires these guys to explain the supernatural truth of the kingdom of heaven. They don’t answer so they can escape the obvious challenge they would face if they did answer – just like the

current world system does when challenged, and this response that you and I can learn from, allows Jesus the freedom, to NOT have to give an answer to them that He knows they will misunderstand, misinterpret, and spread misinformation about. (cf. silent before Pilate – kingdom reason)

The only way we can do this is to be as Jesus was, and as Jesus asked us to be ... 'ministers of reconciliation', people who by definition press into their **relationship** with Father God, to be FILLED with more of Jesus Christ, so we can be ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven in such a way that gives glory to God and simply but profoundly creates safe place after safe place so that any member of the amazed crowd can become a genuine seeker, hungry for the kingdom gospel truth, and who will, as Jesus promises, have that truth revealed to them as Christ apportions.

Remember, this promise of Jesus is something you can live by AND testify to, in your daily lives because it is eminently measurable. Jesus says, ³¹ *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* ³² *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³ *But seek first his kingdom & his righteousness, & all these things, the things you need, will be given to you as well.*