

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Part 6 – Asking, Seeking and Knocking

I. The Heart Cry of the Kingdom

1. The heart of the gospel of the kingdom is about desire. The revelation of the King – His nature and His nearness – produces a deep inward longing as a wounded heart mourns over the Bridegroom's absence and cries Your kingdom come, Your will be done. That heart cry in turn leads us to repentance as we embrace a mindset and a lifestyle that carry that same cry.
Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
2. Kingdom life is an endless cycle of longing and being filled, unto still deeper longing. What we see changes what we want, which changes how we live, which changes what we see.
2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
Matthew 6:22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!
Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
3. God releases the breakthroughs: in our understanding, in our hearts and in our lives, but He does none of it alone. At every stage He is waiting for a willing heart: to seek revelation, to turn revelation into vision and to turn vision into lifestyle choices. Have we set our hearts on that journey?
Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

II. The Call to Seek

1. The Sermon on the Mount has that message at its core. In its introduction, Jesus presents the nature of the kingdom and its rewards (**5:3-16**) to provoke us to longing for the kingdom.
2. Jesus calls us blessed when the cry of our heart becomes longing for the kingdom above all else. Mourning is the inward expression of that heart – longing for more of the presence of God in our life. Meekness is the outward expression of that heart – longing for all things to be brought into submission to the will of God.
Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

3. From the outset, the possibility of laying hold of the kingdom in our own strength is ruled out. It is a gift given to those who recognize they have no means of obtaining it outside of asking.
Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. The central point, however, of the Sermon on the Mount is the charge to pursue what we cannot earn – to seek the kingdom.
Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
5. Jesus concludes with the message of the kingdom's nearness – it is available to any who would ask, seek and knock. It is not to be earned, but it must be consistently and continually sought after.
Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!
6. That seeking is expressed in the cry of our hearts (**5:3-12**), the cry of our lips (**6:9-13**) and the cry of our lives (**5:17-6:18**).

III.A Lifestyle of Surrender

1. We seek more of the kingdom of God in our lives through a lifestyle of surrendering self. If we're willing to surrender a life that is about us, we gain a life that is about Christ in us.
Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
2. We surrender our right to **self-indulgence** by embracing a pursuit of radical **holiness** (**5:17-37**).
 - a. The highest motivation for holiness is longing for more of God.
2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” 17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
 - b. The inescapable result of a heart that aches for His presence and longs for His will on earth is a heart that hungers and thirsts for righteousness.
Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
 - c. Holiness looks radically different when pursued out of that longing. It removes all of our convenient separations between big sin and little sin (**21-22**), inward sin and outward sin (**27-28**), forbidden behavior and just undesirable behavior (**31-32**), and sacred portions and secular portions of our life (**33-37**). The longing for God's presence drives us to actually pursue holiness and settle for nothing less (**17-20**).

3. We surrender our right to **self-defense** by embracing **sacrificial love (5:38-48)**.
 - a. This is probably the most offensive and most difficult portion of the Sermon on the Mount. It runs counter to our rights-based culture, asking us to lay them all down. It runs counter to our capitalist culture, telling us to give to those who have not earned it. It runs counter to our efficiency-based culture, telling us not to look at the return on our investment (except the heavenly reward).
 - b. Its core premise is very simple, but very painful. We are to stop looking out for ourselves and basing our decisions on the impact they may have on our earthly future, and instead we are to respond based on the kingdom principles of love trusting that there is a reward in heaven for us whether we see any fruit on earth or not.
 - c. Specifically we are to let go of our hold on: our rights (**38**), our safety and comfort (**39**), our possessions (**40**), our time and energy (**41**) and our money (**42**). We yield them not only to God as His servants, but as servants of the God who is a servant to all (**45**) anybody and everybody has a claim on our resources.
 - d. There is only one thing that can possess a person to behave in such a way. It's not required by anyone's standards of moral living. It doesn't make sense if we're looking for a favor returned. It doesn't make sense even if we're looking to make the world a better place. It only makes sense to those seeking to be like their Father and manifest His kingdom on earth. **Matthew 5:45** that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

4. We surrender our right to be **self-centered** by embracing a lifestyle of **giving (6:1-4)**.
 - a. Where before Jesus asks us to surrender our right to refuse an enemy who makes a demand of us, He now encourages us to go out of our way to deliberately sow into the poor and into the kingdom as an investment. **Proverbs 19:17** He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.
 - b. Sowing into the gospel sets our heart on eternity and preparing a reward for ourselves in heaven. **Luke 16:9** “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.
 - c. Giving from whatever we have sets us into a right mindset of stewardship. It reminds us that we are serving God with all that we are given now with the expectation that He will give us the greater riches. **Luke 16:10** He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?

5. We surrender our right to be **self-absorbed** by embracing a life of **prayer (6:5-15)**.
 - a. The primary issue of surrender in living a life of prayer is in gaining control over the focus of our thoughts. Prayer is about directing the focus of our thoughts toward God. **Matthew 6:6** ...pray to your Father who is in the secret place...

- b. How we pray is based on this understanding – it is not just a repeating of our needs with the hope that God may hear. It is a redirecting of our thoughts to focus on Him – who He is, what He's like and what He wants to do – and from that focus addressing needs.

Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread.

- c. Prayer is our only defense against being overwhelmed by ourselves – good or bad. The enemy would love nothing more than for us to be caught in the swirl of our own accomplishments and failures, our own strengths and weaknesses, and our own needs and struggles. The more we discipline ourselves to dedicated times of prayer, and to a lifestyle of ceaseless prayer, the more our focus shifts from ourselves and our own drama to the Lord and to the story He's writing in us and around us.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

- d. Besides releasing the provision and power of God, prayer is our escort into revelation and a life of hearing God's voice and walking in the Spirit.

Jeremiah 33:3 ‘Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

6. We surrender our right to be **self-sustained** by embracing a life of **fasting (6:16-18)**.

- a. Fasting more than any other discipline positions our hearts to remember that we have a need beyond bread alone.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” 4 But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

- b. Fasting is God's prescription for breakthrough in our hearts or in our world. When our flesh is made weak, God's strength is released. Fasting releases the power of the Spirit within us. **2 Corinthians 12:9** And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Luke 4:14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

- c. One of the greatest rewards of fasting is increased hunger and expectation. It is just uncomfortable enough that we are ever-mindful that we wouldn't be doing this if there wasn't something that we were longing for and expecting to receive.
 - d. The necessity and nearness of the breakthroughs we're longing for becomes more real to us as we insert a disruption into the illusion that we are comfortable and well-fed and have all that we need.
7. All of this is done as a continual lifestyle of surrender. More than a one-time choice to surrender our lives to God, it is a daily laying down of self to live instead with and in Him.
Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

IV. The Rewards of Seeking

1. The multitudes saw something in Jesus that they wanted. They saw the power of the kingdom of God at work, and they saw a man filled with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. They saw a Man on whom the Spirit of God *rested*... and Jesus turns to them and says you can have this too.
John 1:32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.
2. Paul says we are to redeem the time so as to *continually* be filled with the Spirit. There is a way to live such that we sow into the Spirit and we *will* reap abundant life.
Ephesians 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled [lit. go on being filled] with the Spirit
Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.
3. Mourning is our God-given means of reaching for more of the Spirit's presence. As we enter into longing for more of God's presence He comes alongside us to comfort us with the joy of His presence.
John 16:5 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'" 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
4. Meekness is our God-given means of reaching for more of the Spirit's power. As we enter into longing for our world to come into submission to the will of God He breaks in and shifts things in heaven, on earth and in hearts.
2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

5. The lifestyle of surrender described in the Sermon on the Mount is our God-given means of carrying those longings. Ours is not a hopeless aching but a longing we are to lean into knowing that God sees and rewards a life of hunger.
Matthew 6:4 ...and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly... **6** ...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly... **18** ...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
6. The parallel passage in Luke makes it clear – to those who embrace a lifestyle of asking, seeking and knocking the Lord will give more and more of His Spirit.
Luke 11:9 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”
7. When we take up a lifestyle of seeking first the kingdom we are laying down one life to find another better one. Day after day we surrender the story we had written for ourselves and we position ourselves to let God write His story in us and write us into His story. It is a holy lifestyle based on a holy calling – we have been set apart to be filled with the glory of God.
8. It is the coming of His abiding presence that will bring fruit to all that we do.
John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing
9. A life wrapped up in God is our inheritance in Christ – that the two should become one. Our story becomes His story and His story ours. Our life becomes His life and His life ours.
Ephesians 5:31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.