

## The coming Kingdom – A second chance

Matthew 16:21-28

Good morning and welcome to worship on this Lord's day. It is such a joy to be able to gather together before the Word of the Lord, and though we may not be gathered physically, we find peace in the knowledge that we are together in spirit, and as we look forward to the coming time when we will be able to gather physically once again, may this peace, which transcends all understanding bring us comfort and joy. And to that end, our call to worship is taken from Jeremiah 33:6-11:

**“ ‘Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security. I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before. I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me. Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honour before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it.’ “This is what the LORD says: ‘You say about this place, “It is a desolate waste, without people or animals.” Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, “Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever.” For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,’ says the LORD.”**

Opening song: All to Jesus I surrender - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW8EA7DEQ2M>

**Matthew 16:21-28: <sup>21</sup> From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. <sup>22</sup> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”**

**<sup>23</sup> Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup> What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.**

**<sup>28</sup> “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”**

Peter's rebuke of Jesus shows something that we have all struggled with at one point or another, that is a misunderstanding either of God's plan for salvation or at the very least, a misunderstanding of the way that plan of salvation had to be fulfilled. Peter rebuked Jesus because the plan of God was finally made clear to the disciples in such a way that, to us hearing it today it could not be misunderstood, and yet that is

exactly what happened. The birth of Jesus ushered in the establishment of God's heavenly Kingdom here on earth in and amongst His people, yet entrance to this same Kingdom required the one entering to be clean, to be blameless, to be righteous without sin and without blemish... The question one must ask though is who would then be able to enter this Kingdom?

For years, the teachings offered to the people of Israel by the Scribes and the Teachers of the Law were about being able to attain a level of righteousness through the observation of the Law. Paul understood it this way. As a well-respected member of the Jewish community, as the Book of Acts tells us, Paul was one who enforced the Law, punishing those who broke it. Yet by the Grace of the Lord, Paul realized that this was not the entire story as he goes on in Romans 7 to show that the Law itself cannot lead a person to righteousness because, as human beings, it is an impossibility to follow to the letter – more than that, Paul make the purpose of the Law clear, it is there to reveal sin and by doing so, he adds that this revelation of sin leads one to death and not life. Therefore, I ask again, who would be able to enter the Kingdom of God? Well if we look at Romans 3:10, the answers to this very question is clear **“there is no one righteous, not even one.”**

In Matthew 5:20 Jesus said these words, **“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”** This is a stark reality I believe even for the most seasoned believer, but at the same time, we must understand what Jesus is speaking of. As I have said, a common teaching of the time was the fact that righteousness was something to be attained through the observation of the Law and one would assume that those who teach the Law should also be the ones who uphold it, yet this was not the case. And this is what Jesus is challenging. He is by no means saying that the scribes and the Pharisees are in anyway righteous, rather, the underlying point is that fact that they teach on righteousness, they teach on faith and observance of the Law, they teach that one must worship the Lord only, yet they themselves live very differently, they deny the Lord by denying the Messiah who is Christ Jesus.

And here in lies the misunderstanding for Peter. You see, in the passage preceding ours this morning, Peter makes the most profound confession when asked by Jesus, who do you say I am. Peter's confession is this, **“You are the Christ, the son of the Living God.”** In this seemingly simple statement, Peter acknowledges the righteousness of Christ yet in his rebuke of Jesus in 16:22, it becomes apparent that there is a misunderstanding of what that means. Why?

Well Jesus says to him in 16:23, **“You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”** He goes on and teaches that one must pick up ones cross, one must deny oneself, and follow Him. It is always going to come back to faith in Christ.

If faith in Jesus is the prerequisite, then righteousness is the key to the Kingdom, but the key is not given without a true repenting faith. It is not within our power or ability that righteousness can be attained. The Righteousness we are talking about is not human righteousness but it is the Righteousness of Jesus Himself, and this Righteousness, as the key to the Kingdom, is imputed to us only by the grace of God because of the death and the resurrection of Jesus. And to deny these things as so many have done or attempted to do would amount to a denial of the righteousness of Christ. Yes, with the birth of Jesus the Kingdom was established here on earth, yet it is only by His death and Resurrection that we have been given entrance

into the Kingdom. This is our second chance at life eternal, that we would receive Jesus into our lives in true faith and accept Him alone as our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer and our Righteousness.

Let us Pray

Song of praise: All I once held dear - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4lgusP8Z8w>

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