

8 - Advance the Kingdom
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – 3/6/25

We are in a sermon series entitled Seize the Kingdom of God. We've taught that the kingdom of God is the domain over which God rules. The kingdom of God is where people submit to the Lordship of Jesus.

We've taught the unless you are born again through faith in Jesus Christ, you cannot see the kingdom nor enter the kingdom. We've taught you how to use the authority we've been given over the enemy in the keys of the kingdom. We've taught that we are all called to be kings and priests on the earth.

Today I'm preaching a sermon entitled Advance the Kingdom. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said-

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

Jesus has how much authority? All authority. There is no greater authority or power in heaven or on earth. But Jesus said, "All authority is given to me... now go." That means Jesus delegated His authority to us.

This is called the Great Commission. Commission means to appoint and authorize a person or a group to go on a mission. It also means to commit to that person or group the authority to accomplish the mission.

Those who are commissioned are given a purpose and a mandate to accomplish. What's our mandate? To make disciples. It's not just the pastors' mandate! This commission was given to every believer who lives between the time Jesus left earth until the time when He comes back. That means it's for you! **You have a mandate from God to advance the kingdom of God.**

That involves taking back territory from the kingdom of Satan. This does not primarily mean to take back land. It primarily means to reach those in the kingdom of darkness so that they can come into the kingdom of light. Colossians 1:13-14 says:

God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of His Son, whom He loves. His Son paid the price to free us, which means that our sins are forgiven.

By His grace, God saved us from the power of darkness and brought us into His kingdom.

That happens when we place our faith in the fact that Jesus paid the price to free us on the cross through the forgiveness of our sins.

Once we have changed kingdoms, our mandate is to advance God's kingdom by preaching the kingdom of God to those still in the kingdom of darkness.

We don't preach religion to them. That won't attract them to God's kingdom. We don't preach rules and regulations to them. That won't attract them to God's kingdom. Jesus said in Matthew 11:12

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men seize it.

God is telling us how His kingdom is advanced. It doesn't just happen - it takes effort and force. We are the advance force who are going into the world to forcefully advance the kingdom of God.

Advancing God's kingdom is not about invading physical territories. It is about invading the hearts and minds of people with the good news of God's kingdom. That's what Jesus did. He said in Luke 4:43

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.

His mission was to preach the good news of God's kingdom. When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, He gave him a commission in Acts 26:16-18

I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of Me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

We have been given this same commission - To preach the good news of the gospel of the kingdom so that people turn from darkness to light - from Satan to God - and receive forgiveness from their sins.

This takes the power of God because lost people don't know they are lost. One of the reasons advancing the kingdom requires force is that Satan does not easily let go of those who are part of his kingdom.

Being part of the kingdom of darkness is not talking about Satan worshippers - it's talking about everyone who has not yet entered God's kingdom through repentance and faith in Christ.

Jesus said in John 12:46

I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness.

People without faith in Christ live in darkness. They're in the dark about life, about God, about problems and about their future. In John 9:5 – Jesus said

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus was the light of the world while He was on earth. But what happened when He left? In Matthew 5:14 Jesus told the disciples

You are the light of the world.

While Jesus was here He was the light – now His light shines through His followers. People won't see clearly unless they know the light of the world. That means they need to know Jesus and they come to know Jesus when they see His light shine through us.

We are not only saints, kings and priests in God's kingdom - we are also all evangelists called to share the good news of the Kingdom.

But our first role in advancing the kingdom is the priestly role of interceding for the lost. Our second role is the kingly role of taking authority over the spirits that have blinded them. People who are not born again cannot see or experience the kingdom of God. They are blinded to spiritual truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

That's why there are people you try to have spiritual conversations with who cannot understand what you are saying. You must intercede for them by going to God in prayer on their behalf. And you must bind the spirits that have blinded them to the truth and then loose the light of God's revelation to them.

The invitation to be part of God's family is universal, but there is one condition: profession of faith in Jesus. John 1:12 says:

To all who did accept Him and believe in Him He gave the right to become children of God.

No one is exempt from the need to be born again to be saved. And no Christian is exempt from the command to share the good news of the Kingdom. I want to give you some practical ways to do that. But first, before anything - you must take on the priestly role of intercession.

How can you pray for unbelievers?

John 6:44 says that no one will come to Christ unless the Father draws them, so we pray for the Father to draw them to Christ.

Secondly, according to Colossians 4:3-5, we ask God to ***open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ... and pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.***

According to 2 Timothy 2:25-26, we pray that ***God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.***

2 Corinthians 4:4-5 says that ***the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

So we bind the enemy in Jesus name and pray their eyes will be open to the truth about Jesus.

After you have prayed for people, look for ways to tell them you're praying for them. Most people are very open to prayer. If they are sick or someone in their family died, tell them you are praying for them. Then pray. Then follow up. This is great way to plant the seeds of the gospel to them.

Then, when you get the opportunity, share the gospel with them. Yes you! There are some people that you can reach that I could never reach!

One easy low-pressure way to witness is through social media. Check in to Facebook when you come to church. Share our reels or services on your page. Use our social media invites to invite people to church. Easter is coming up and that is a great time to invite.

And when you get the opportunity - share the good news of the kingdom. People living in spiritual darkness don't know they are spiritually blind.

**Why are they spiritually blind?
 Either they haven't heard the gospel of the Kingdom, or
 Their minds are blinded to the truth, or
 They have heard the wrong message of the Kingdom.**

We cannot help their spiritual blindness if we do not preach the right message - the good news to them. Many times Christians just preach the bad news like "Turn or Burn!" But **the word evangelism literally means "to announce good news."**

When Jesus ministered, people were clamoring to get into God's kingdom. So why are people not clamoring to get into the kingdom today? Because they haven't heard the truth about the kingdom. And because what they've seen modeled by most Christians is not something that makes them desire to have what we have.

I believe when they hear the truth about our King and when they see the impact the kingdom has on our lives – they will want to be part of it! Just because the natural man cannot see the kingdom of God – that does not mean they cannot see the impact of the kingdom of God. What is the impact they can see? They can see changed lives.

The best argument for Christianity is Christians when they live joy-filled, gracious, peaceful lives of integrity. Unfortunately, the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians when they live joyless, legalistic, self-righteous, graceless, judgmental lives. We must live and work in a way that people observe the true message – the good news of Jesus!

You see, every Christian is a witness, whether they want to be or not. You are a walking talking living breathing advertisement for Christ. What is your life preaching?

Our church is full of people who used to sin in every possible way. But we've been washed by the blood of the Lamb! We are new creations in Christ. And people can see it when our lives change.

The way we live can give us an open door into people's lives or it can slam the door. When the door is open, we need to care enough to share the good news of the kingdom. Romans 14:17 says:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

These are three things that everyone wants:
 They want to know they are right with God
 They want joy and they want peace.
 So they need to see us living in righteousness, peace and joy.

People need to see that we have peace in the midst of storms. Things may be falling apart all around us, but we're at peace. When we have that, people will say to us, "I don't understand it. How do you stay so calm when things are so stirred up? What's the key?"

That gives us an opportunity to preach the good news of the kingdom by telling them that there is no peace without the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the key to peace! And because of Him, we have peace that passes understanding!

People need to see that we have joy in life. We may have all kinds of reasons to be down and depressed, but we stay in faith because we know that weeping may endure for a night, but joy always comes in the morning! So when they ask us “What’s the key to happiness?” – that gives us the opportunity to preach the good news of the kingdom by telling them “On my own I’d be down and depressed – but the joy of the Lord is my strength!” Jesus is the key to happiness!

People need to see that the love of God in us! When they see us loving our enemies and forgiving those who wrong us – they will ask “What’s the key to getting along with people? That gives us the opportunity to preach the good news of the kingdom by saying – “On my own I can’t stand those people either – but since Jesus came into my life – God loves unlovable people through me by the power of the Holy Spirit!” Jesus is the key to love!

People need to see that we have hope for the future! Yes, there are earthquakes everywhere and wars and rumors of wars – but I thank God every time I hear about earthquakes and wars because I know that I’m one step closer to the second coming of Jesus Christ!

And if He doesn’t come back in our lifetime, we still have the hope of heaven for eternity! Why? Because we are citizens of the kingdom of God!

We were created for righteousness, peace and joy. And so is everyone else. They just don’t know it yet!

God has put the responsibility on believers to go to unbelievers and share the truth about His desire to forgive their sins and change their lives.

If Jesus lives in us, He will live His life through us to draw others to Him. That means that the quality of our lives – our marriages, our family, the way we do our jobs, the way we deal with life in general – should be different from unbelievers. It’s only when they see positive qualities shine through us that they are drawn by that light.

You don’t have to be a biblical scholar to tell someone about Jesus. You are called to be a witness. What does a witness do? Tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what they have personally experienced. What has God done for you? That’s what you witness to.

Witnessing is what we are called to do, not convert, save, or win souls. Our part is to witness, to tell what God has done for us. That means you must have something to share! You must have some good news. You don’t have to have a degree in theology – just some good news!

There was a man in the Bible who was healed by Jesus. The theologians asked him some difficult questions that he could not answer, but the man said this in John 9:25

One thing I know: once I was blind, but now I see.

I believe that all of us need to get our stories down to one sentence to share with others. Share your story! What's Jesus done for you?

Can you say:

Once I had a life headed nowhere, but now my life has changed!

Once I was blind, but now I see!

Once I was lost, but now I'm saved!

Once I had no purpose in life, but now I know my destiny!

Once I was headed straight for hell, but now I'm on my way to heaven!

Once I was sick, but now I'm healed!

Once I was empty, but now I am full!

Once I was addicted, but now I'm sober!

Once I was depressed, but now I'm happy!

Once I was full of fear, but now I am full of faith!

Once I was lonely, but now I'm part of the family of God!

Once I was defeated, but now I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ my Lord!

Once I wanted to die, but now I have a reason to live because I have an abundant life in Christ!

Has Jesus done anything good for you?

Then shine your light by sharing what Jesus has done for you.

That's how you advance the kingdom of God!!