

Mother of God Community  
Sunday Night Prayer Meeting  
April 26, 2015

## Advancing the Kingdom of God

(Talk #6 "Living in the Heavens" series)

Jessica Montgomery

### What is the Kingdom of God?

Jesus proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is at hand." His words and actions displayed the Kingdom of God. In Luke 7:22, Jesus tells John the Baptist's messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor." Jesus fulfilled the promise of Isaiah 61, setting people free from every kind of bondage - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. He came to bring *shalom* - peace, which in Hebrew indicates peace in every realm, where nothing is missing and nothing is broken. And in His death and resurrection, He set us free from the punishment of sin and eternal death.

In His life, Jesus demonstrated that the will of God - the Kingdom of God - is for liberation from all forms of bondage. In addition to death and sin, Christ exercised His authority over **demons, disease, and nature**.

Power over demons: Luke 4:33-36: *In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!"*

Power over sickness: Luke 4:38-39: *Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.*

Power over nature: Mark 4:38-40: *Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

Jesus imparted this power and authority to his apostles, giving them **power**- that is, the ability, strength, and might to drive out all demons and cure diseases; and **authority**- that is, the right to use the power.

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In Luke 9:1-6, we read:

*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, **he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases**, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... So they set out and went from village to village, **proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.***

In Acts 1:8:

Jesus said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

### **How do we respond to hardship and persecution?**

While experiencing intense persecution, the church in Acts 4:30 prayed together, *"Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* **After they prayed they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they spoke the Word of God boldly, and they performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.** People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall on them. In Acts 5:16 we read that crowds brought their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and **all of them were healed.**

Jesus came to show us the way. He enacted Phase I of the Kingdom of God during his ministry on the Earth and with his death and resurrection. The final phase will be His return and His final victory over evil. In the meantime, the enemy knows he is fighting a losing battle, and he is doing everything he can to get us frustrated, defeated, divided, and powerless. The truth is that we have everything we need in Him. We have everything we need to overcome sin, death, disease, and anything that cripples us and comes against us.

### **Our Weapons of Warfare**

In Ephesians 6, Paul talks about the armor and weapons that we should use to exercise our authority in Christ. In 2 Timothy 2:3 he talks to Timothy about being a good soldier in the army of Christ. We are in a battle, and we are soldiers in the army of the Church.

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In the Book of Joshua, we hear about how the Israelites went about obtaining the land that God had promised them - the Promised Land. It is interesting that the Israelites did not move into the Promised Land immediately after being liberated from Egypt. Because of their difficulty in fully trusting God and His ways, they stayed in the wilderness for 40 years. And even after 40 years, they didn't simply enter the Promised Land. They had to wage many wars, and were led by Joshua. Joshua means "Yahweh is salvation" which is the same as Jesus - God saves. Clearly, Joshua was a foreshadowing of Jesus who truly brings us into the Promised Land. While we are not physically fighting for land to inhabit as the Israelites were, we *are* called to fight for the realizing of the full redemption that Jesus has gained for us, and to fight for the same salvation and redemption of the souls around us.

*As Ephesians 6:12 says, we do not wage war against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil and the powers of this dark world. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

That is our fight - an unseen but very real fight, and it is an integral part of the Christian life. In our modern view of the human person, we sometimes see ourselves as a 2- or 3-part being, and we ascribe the salvation and redeeming work of Jesus to just one aspect - our soul. But the life of Jesus and the early church as portrayed in the New Testament clearly demonstrates that the Kingdom of God is not only a matter of salvation for our souls, but also of our bodies and our minds and every part of us that is susceptible to demonic attack.

Like the Israelites going from battle to battle as they took hold of their inheritance, some of us are more natural fighters than others. But it is up to each of us to be ready and equipped for our fight in this war. The Lord could not - and did not - simply give the land to the children of Israel; they had to wage war and fight for it. God gave them their battle plans and backed them up with His power, but they had to physically prepare for and fight many wars along the way. Some were won in unlikely ways, like the city of Jericho where God asked them to march around the city for 7 days and then the walls crumbled on their own. Other places involved bloody battles and the loss of some lives.

Similarly, God does not simply hand over salvation, healing and liberation to us and to the people around us without any effort on our part. He needs our *direct involvement* in

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bringing His Kingdom to fulfillment. And He needs us to listen to and act on His battle plan.

### **Why and how did Joshua win his battles?**

Simply put, he did exactly what God asked, to the best of his ability. At every step of his march into the Promised Land, God's voice was bigger than any other voice in Joshua's life.

And when he experienced failure, which he did, and which we will, he was distraught and sought God until he received an answer. He was continually in communication with God, expecting to hear Him and obeying when he did. After his army's defeat at the city of Ai, Joshua sought God, who showed him that one person in the camp had disobeyed Joshua's orders (which were God's orders) and had brought upon the loss of a number of men's lives. Many men lost their lives because of this one man's sin. When they discovered who this person was, and he admitted to it, Joshua obeyed God once more by stoning Achan and everything he possessed, including his family. **Joshua obeyed God even when it was very difficult**, even when it didn't seem like the loving or kind thing to do.

### **So what does this look like for us today?**

The New Testament is full of examples on how to live victoriously and advance the Kingdom of God. The first – and most important piece – is studying the Word of God. It doesn't matter how influential a person is in your life, no one will be able to plant the revelation that you need for your life other than God Himself. We need to be constantly renewed in reading and studying the Word of God. Probably all of us have heard someone speak about the spiritual battle at some point – in fact, I have given multiple talks on the topic. But starting afresh, asking God for revelation, and spending time reading Scripture gave me a whole new level of interior revelation. Revelation not only gives me knowledge, but it gives me the energy and zeal and wisdom to carry it out. And it stays with me as I face situations in my day.

In addition to seeking revelation on our power and authority in Christ, Romans 12:9-21 gives us a summary of the day-to-day life in the Kingdom of God, which is worth pondering. It talks about clinging together in brotherly love, always keeping our spiritual fervor in serving the Lord, being patient in affliction and faithful in prayer, and giving to

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those in need. *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse... do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.* Finally, it states a key point in living and advancing the Kingdom of God: *Do not repay anyone evil for evil... do not take revenge, but leave room for God's wrath... do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

This sums up our warfare – we cannot fight evil with evil. We cannot overcome an insult with another insult. We cannot overcome division and strife with gossip. We cannot overcome anger with anger. We overcome evil with good. We overcome darkness with light. We overcome hatred with persistent, undying love. We overcome bitterness and resentment with joy. We overcome anxiety and worry with resting in God.

### **7 practical tips to implement**

1. Start the day recognizing that you are in an unseen battle. Pray and position yourself under God's authority. Spend time in His Word, seeking revelation and renewing your mind. Pray for a deeper revelation of how to enforce His power and authority in your life. Psalm 91 is a good place to start.
2. Repent for any sin and crucify the flesh – don't give the devil any foothold. (Hebrews 4:22 - let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.)
3. Intercede for your family, community and the world, spending some time and effort on it. This sows seeds and attitudes in your heart to focus on the needs of others and bless them.
4. Talk to people. The more we talk to people the more they will open up about their needs, giving us an opportunity to speak the love of Christ to them and pray for them.
5. "Do not grow weary in doing good" (Galatians 6:9) especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Find ways to encourage and serve others, especially those in the community. They need it more than you might think!
6. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). The power of the Church is in our unity and our prayer together. Get together with other believers and community members as often as

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possible. Receive encouragement and be sure to share what God has done through you to encourage others.

7. Take your place in the Body of Christ, and specifically in this community. The Church, the community needs you - not to add something to your long to-do list or list of activities, but to fulfill God's calling and anointing on your life. God has equipped you with an anointing, a way to serve, that leaves a void if it is not activated - a void in you and a void in the community. It might be something you are well aware of and are actively pursuing - I think of Kinday's prophetic anointing and Dottie's warm hospitality and the gifts of our music ministry. Or, it might be that you often find yourself thinking, "I wish we did more to (fill in the blank). The community really ought to (blank)." Let me encourage you to pray about what role you could play in partnering with God and with the rest of the community to make that happen. Again, this is not an item for your to-do list, but a calling with an anointing. "God doesn't call the equipped. He equips those He calls."

We are waging a war for which we already know the outcome – we win! And every knee will bow and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord! He is Lord! He is risen indeed. He has conquered death. He has conquered sin. Let's join Him in establishing His Kingdom in our home, in our neighborhood, in our workplace, in our church, etc. We are His ambassadors wherever we go. We can cast out demons, pray for the sick, and let the world know that Jesus saves!

### **Questions**

- What most struck you in the talk?
- What power and authority has God imparted to you? What is your "territory" and how is God leading you to exercise authority over it?
- Read Romans 12:9-21. Ask God to show you how this applies to you.
- Resolve to encourage someone each day and pray for them if they are willing.
- What is your calling and place in the church and/or the community?