

Mother of God Community  
Sunday Night Prayer Meeting  
January 18, 2015  
May Your Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven  
*Talk #3 in the 'Living in the Heavens' Series*  
Tom Singer

In our last talk, Don gave us a picture of how we can behold God himself in the glory of heaven and he gave us a longing for communion with him, to be part of communal embrace of the Trinity. Tonight, we are presenting the fact we the church are called bring this heavenly reality, the Kingdom of God, to earth through the Cross of Christ, decision for ongoing conversion and a desire to witness!

## 1. The Lord Jesus has come to bring 'the heavenly reality' to us.

At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark 1:14-15 we hear, After John was arrested, Jesus came forward and proclaimed: "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Good News"

The heavenly reality takes place in a concrete expression of the Kingdom of God. The coming of Jesus in the flesh means the fullness of time has come. The birth of Jesus by the virgin and the Holy Spirit means heaven itself has come to earth. This is a new birth, a new reality, and is giving a new meaning to life. The Jewish scriptures and tradition had spoken of a Messiah to come. *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come"* Matt. 11:13.

Jesus died to make atonement for our sins once for all – all the sins, even those not committed yet. When Jesus rose he gave man a new life, a life free from sin. When he ascended into the Father's glory, he wanted to give us this new reality, indeed the Holy Spirit! And now that He sits at the Father's right hand, he bestows on us the authority of sons and daughters.

When Jesus preaches that the Kingdom of God is at hand, he is proclaiming that he has brought the life of heaven to earth. Therefore, he teaches us to pray: *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!* Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God which already exists in heaven, and now I am bringing to earth. In fact, by my birth, cross, resurrection, ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit it already exists on earth. He could have brought the Kingdom to earth instantly, but instead chose to bring it to earth through the people he had chosen, the church – which includes us.

It must be a real tangible reality, a visible expression of a new reality or culture – like St. Augustine shared in his book: *The City of God*.

## 2. Can we embrace the Heavenly reality and to overcome obstacles.

What does it mean to embrace something? It means that I want to open my heart to it. It means I see it as a good and I want to welcome it, learn about it, study and ponder it so that I really know it! This was the life that Jesus desired for us, to know the intimacy of Jesus, saying: **Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

The reality that prevents us from living for the Kingdom of God, in the heavens with Christ, is sin. From the beginning of our scriptures we understand that the Lord made everything good, especially mankind. Right away in Genesis 3 we learn that there is an enemy to the heavenly reality who is very subtle and tricky. The enemy lures us into doubt about the reality of God's goodness by saying: Did God say, 'You

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shall not eat of any tree of the garden? He changes the Lord's command; man is duped by the enemy. The community has always had a great understanding of the power of 'sin' and how that power is our main obstacle from living in the 'heavenly reality' We have been privileged to understand that the power of sin is overcome through the Cross of Christ! St Paul knew that mankind could not overcome the power of sin himself and the Jewish people themselves knew from their scriptures that a man from God, a Messiah was necessary to redeem them from sin.

*"We know that our former man was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin"* Romans 6:6

We must keep our focus on Jesus. He has already conquered sin and the power of sin. He has conquered it for our own personal lives and for the life of each person in the world. *"Therefore, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus"* Romans 6:11. Our challenge is to desire ongoing conversion. It is not just a few past events or a memory. The enemy of the Kingdom of God wants us to forget about the power of sin and to say we are just human and we can't help but falter. No, an alert person will be keen to the fact that the enemy is always looking for someone to tempt and to bring under the power of sin.

*"Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood around the world."* 1 Peter 5:8-9

### **3. We must press on for the prize.**

*"I appeal to you brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God your spiritual worship"* Romans 12:1

In 1998 I decided to run a 50 mile race with my brother-in-law. I ran this race not out of a duty but out of desire for fellowship with him. I set up a plan in January to increase my miles and my workout schedule for the whole year.

When I look to continue to run the race of my life, I do it out of joy of attaining the heavenly vision, the prize of union with Jesus. As my family welcomed me at the finish line, I want to see Jesus at the finish line of my life. And I trust and hope he will say: well done good and faithful servant. And then I will worship him and the Father and Spirit!

St Paul appeals to us from the mercies of God. The question I ask myself is: Do I understand and experience the mercies of God? In the end this is the heart of prayer! Whether I am examining my conscience, being grateful for the blessing of the day, or interceding for the church, do I perceive and get the Lord's loving kindness in my life. I am constantly complaining, criticizing, arguing with the Lord, but in the end when it is all said and done, I am grateful for his mercy in my life! And therefore, I am happy to offer my body as a living sacrifice as my spiritual worship. Brothers and sisters, if we are not

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giving our service to the Lord out of love for him, out of a desire to please him, we are fools and not witnesses.

Secondly, we must make decisions on how we are offering our bodies to God. What are my plans this year to grow, to change and to start new habits. I'll tell you one of mine. In six months, by the end of June of this year, I want to grow in the Examen Prayer, which is a means to review every day with the Lord and to use a journal to see how I'm doing. Then I hope to set another goal to challenge me to grow. My desire is a communion and a relationship with the Lord. If I want to live in the heavenly or beatific vision, then I must make new decisions and create habits to get me there.

*"Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him."* Philippians 3:8

#### **4. Living under the authority of Christ means victory!**

The first thing I have learned about putting my life under the authority of Christ is my personal prayer time. Deciding to have personal prayer every day was the most important thing I have done. Why? My prayer starts out with a commitment to Jesus as my Savior and Lord.

St Paul has an understanding of the **power of sin** in Romans 6 that is very profound. It is not just sins we are trying to overcome, but the power of sin which is from the devil himself. Only Christ has authority over sin and Satan because of what he did for us as the perfect God-man on the cross. Dealing with the power of sin in our lives is critical. As a Catholic, I struggle to go to the Sacrament of Penance because I don't like to face the fact that I am still living under the power of sin and not in the power of the Holy Spirit. The temptation is always to think that since I repented once, sin does not rule in me or to be discouraged that because I'm still sinning I'll never change. I go to confession once a month and I want to go more often because I am set free – but I still hesitate as I battle with the power of sin. That is why this scripture below is important and why I am called to be a slave to obedience/God rather than a slave to sin.

*Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness. But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves to sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.* Romans 6: 16-17

We must be committed to the standard of teaching from the church over the last 2,000 years. We must understand that this teaching will help us overcome the power of sin and make us an instrument of righteousness and thus be a witness for the glory of God.

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## 5. Disciples on mission to build up the Kingdom of God

Pope Francis in "Evangelii Gaudium" (24) says we must be disciples on mission! This means going from the comfort of our fellowship in Christ to going out for the Kingdom! "Life grows when it is given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort (10).

"The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to a greater love of him (264)". When we are in love with someone, we cannot resist telling everyone we meet. That is why personal prayer is paramount if we are going to be an effective witness. To breathe out life to the world, we must have time receiving that breath into us. Being on mission also means that I have a heart for it, a desire for it. I have found that I can love others and share the love of God with them when I have kind thoughts and am interceding for them.

As disciples we are called to live under the authority of Christ as St. Paul acclaims: "we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Romans 1:5). As we understand through our cooperation with ongoing grace more conversion in our lives, we can speak words of life and truth to others.

### Scriptures

- Mark 1:14-15
- Matt. 11:13
- Romans 6:6, 11-12, 16-17
- Phil. 3:8
- Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 1:5

### Questions

1. Do you understand that the Kingdom of God is a concrete expression of bringing God's will to earth?
2. Do you experience the power of sin in your life? How do you overcome it?
3. What are your goals for personally growing in the 'heavenly reality' this year?
4. What compels you to go out and share the Good News? What are the different ways that you witness to people?

### Books

St Augustine: *City of God*