

Sunday 5 November 2007 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

**Renovation of the Heart Sermon Series
Week 6 – What's real? Looking towards the unseen realm**

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Reading: Luke 1:35-7 “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. **For nothing is impossible with God.**”

Introduction

Last week KC staff did Christmas planning – early I know! This passage is a record of words spoken by an angel – a heavenly being – to Mary who was to become Jesus' early mum. The words are not just relevant for her 2000 years ago, or for the Christmas story – its just as relevant for us today. In fact, the Angel spoke of timeless truths, which you and I must take hold of:

- 1. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
- **2. ...nothing is impossible with God**

Here's another biblical truth – “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” [1 Cor 4:20] (see also 1 Cor 1:17, 2:4; 1 Thess 1:5)

Personally, I'm being encouraged by the Lord to press-in for more of this dynamic life as I follow Jesus. I've been impacted again by people like Bill Johnson, John Wimber, revivals & great saints – power. My feeling is, like the song, that ‘There must be more than this’. For me, seeing signs & wonders happen around me is *partly it*.

So this morning I want to challenge and encourage you to approach this life with a Godly attitude which says **‘power and the impossible are my every day companions’!**

We are continuing our theme of the Renovation of the Heart – Cultivating the Character of Christ. I want to build on Paul Mac's theme last week of walking into our inheritance as Christian - occupying the land, inheritance which is rightfully ours in Christ Jesus. With a reminder of Jesus' own lifestyle and attitude of heart – his character that we are aiming to cultivate.

As we do, its helpful to keep this differentiation in mind. We are aiming at:

- Jesus' Character (what he was like at heart, his motivations etc)
- not Jesus' personality (eg. chatty or quiet, detailed person or off-the-cuff)

Today we'll look at examples of Jesus' modus operandi – how he did Kingdom life. And the encouragement and command that we should do the same. Think the same. Have the same mindset. Have the same spiritual antennae, have the same outlook (we're going to understand today that. Jesus operated from the unseen towards the seen – not the other way around.)

The big picture is REPENTANCE & FAITH. (Mark 1:15 as ever)

- Repentance – change of mindset (from which behaviour follows)
- Faith – looking beyond circumstance to seek the kingdom and will of God, whatever is going on around you

Repentance

The Sermon on Mount (Matthew 5-7) is about different perspective on what is ‘real life’ and what is significant in it. Beginning with the apparently upside-down and even offensive set of Beatitudes, it’s a treatise on the Kingdom. In it Jesus reveals the attitudes that help His followers to access the His unseen world.

The lesson is: **Inner heart attitudes** (outlined in Sermon on Mount) **achieved through proper process of repentance** (change of mind) **beget** (bring about) **kingdom life**.

The Sermon on the Mount encourages a shift in our mindset

- From external ‘observance’ of law, legalism, behaviour. Focussing on the material world and what you can see/hear/touch and make happen yourself
- To an internal heart attitude which realised we can’t MAKE God do anything, or make the material world a much better place from our own efforts

But that with a humble attitude, not being haughty but letting God be God, not holding grudges but showing mercy, not taking revenge but being peacemakers....

Hunger humbles you doesn’t it? Hunger for God brings about inner humility. With an attitude like that which is hungry and thirsty for Godly ways, this change of mindset which perhaps you hadn’t even realised, then God is pleased to visit our lives with his kingdom power and transformation

So you get to Jesus saying Matthew 6:33, Don’t worry or be fearful, about your present physical/material condition (because that erodes faith). But instead, seek first his Kingdom and righteousness and all the things you need to get by will be given to you anyway. Press on, get right with God, and you’ll be able to stand.

Summary of recent prophecies to churches (KC & Philadelphia)

- Promise of new wave, new move of Holy Spirit
- Things coming which will be tough and a trial
- Refining fire
- The images are of God’s people standing firm if we first (NOW!) get rooted in God’s love, in deeper relationship, in our identity in Him.

Jesus own example

Let's look at Jesus' own example, and as we do let's remember that you and I are called to be like this! And that's not an impossible dream, it's a command of our mentor Jesus, so it must be achievable to some extent in our real lives.

Jesus performed miracles, wonders, and signs, and he performed them as a man, as a human, in right relationship to God – not *as God*. If he just did them because he was God, then they would be unobtainable for us (not being God!). In fact he said “The Son can do nothing” (John 5:19) and while He was 100% God, he chose to live with the same limitations that humans would face after Jesus had finished his earthly work. He did them as a human – so I can pursue His lifestyle and mindset, the way He related to his heavenly Father, and I can do the same.

- Jesus
 - No sin to separate Him from his Father
 - Completely dependent on power of HS working thru him
- Us?
 - No sin to separate us from our Father
 - We are sinners cleansed by the blood of Jesus.
 - Jesus' sacrifice has successfully dealt with the power & effect of sin for all who believe and practice repentance. Nothing separates us from the Father....
 - SO.... How dependent on the HS are we willing to live?

The way to inherit the kingdom is to have a renewed heart and mind, and the way to that is a surrendered heart. (That's the lesson of the Sermon on Mount)

That deals with the REPENTANCE side of the equation..... now for the FAITH element.

Faith

I want to remind ourselves of some the accounts of Jesus' miracles. As we think of them, understand this: **Jesus operated with a vision of the UNSEEN**, what God's realm is actually like (**then and now**)– healing, forgiveness, restoration, holiness, peace, whole-ness.....

It was a vision for what the Kingdom of God is like, and just how it can break into our earthly existence at any time if we make way for it. The miracles of Jesus show that he was rarely defined by the material circumstance in front of him. He saw past the *natural*, to kingdom realm which is unseen, beyond-the-natural, *super-natural*.

Faith is looking at circumstances from an eternal, unseen, kingdom perspective.

- So Jesus says.... “You have leprosy, am I bothered? No, because the kingdom of God is coming near to you – your faith has healed you.”

Night vision

One of the reason why USA & GB forces are having some success against the Taliban in Afghanistan is because of their superior equipment. In harsh desert terrain, up against people with local knowledge and local support, they can fight successfully at night – the most dangerous time of all – partly because they have NIGHT VISION GOGGLES. They are not restricted like their enemies are to what you can actually see with the naked eye, they can see beyond the material reality in front of them – they can literally see in the dark!

That's what faith is like

- The ability to see the possible, to hear the word of God from His eternal perspective,

- to realise there is potentially a whole different side to what you are looked at in the natural circumstances of life
- **Faith means we can still see in the dark!**

Reading: all of John 9 - mud in eyes

A man born blind – can't get any more blind than that! Naturally, materially, on the face of things – he had no hope.

- Jesus – doesn't think its judgement on him – because **our Father wants us well**. That is the condition of heaven, no sickness, so that this the kingdom coming on earth
 - The kingdom coming to that man could also be in comfort, in hope, in practical help for his situation (because not everybody is healed these days)..... but it certainly does not mean that God wants them ILL
- **Jesus sees beyond the present condition**. He can see that the blind man's heavenly father wants him to see again – spits in the mud

The reaction of others is really interesting

- The onlookers are simply astonished. What was impossible, on the face of things, if you're only horizon is the material world and present conditions in front of you..... **what was impossible has happened**.
- The Pharisees retreat into being overly religious. They show how they are caught in the present and the past, and have no faith for the move of God, the dynamic overshadowing of the Holy Spirit on humans in the present
 - Firstly they are offended bc what's happened breaks out of their religious box, of how religious people are supposed to behave – they complain Jesus broke the Sabbath by healing someone!
 - Then they simply can't believe – 'is this the same man? Check with his parents'
 - Then they simply won't believe – and insult & reject – in the sight of the local community because they care so much about what other people think - the very man who has just been set free by the impossible, by the unseen reality breaking in.

Jesus ends by telling us the true state of affairs

- His Kingdom has come into this world to set the prisoners free, so that the blind might see
- But there remain those who are spiritually blind – they might think that they understand, they 'get' the world around them – but actually they are the very people who really are blind.
- Because the superior reality is actually the UNSEEN reality. **The spiritual realm of God's kingdom, power and possibility** which can break into the material and turn it upside-down.
 - Heaven isn't bound by the natural world. And the kingdom coming is heaven on earth.
 - **Nothing is impossible for God**

Which means that we can take on that outlook:

- Seeing what could be possible, hearing God's heart and agenda instead of the world's rather restricted view on things
- looking for heaven to break into earth more and more
- **then Nothing is impossible for us** to see, imagine, press-in towards either

Other Biblical examples of Jesus seeing past the natural state of things into the unseen realm of kingdom possibility:

- **Water into wine at the wedding at Cana**
 - The wedding guests could only see empty pots, no wine, and impending embarrassment for the wedding hosts
 - **Jesus saw** that the Holy Spirit is not defined, not constricted by earthly material circumstances – because “Nothing is impossible for God”
- **Feeding of the 5000**
 - The disciples saw well over 5000 hungry people with no shops around
 - **Jesus saw** God’s heart for those people there – God’s heart of provision, of blessing, of plenty
- **Crippled man dropped in thru roof by his mates**
 - There were overwhelming physical circumstances to overcome – a full room, so the men have to take the roof apart to get him in there on his mat
 - **Jesus saw** the spiritual reality - great faith in the man and his friends – and he rewarded the great faith

What is really real?

Jesus taught that the material world is not the superior reality. The material world means concentrating and being defined only by the physical world you can see/hear/touch. Scientists among others are often like this. Very empirical.

We are born again into a new spiritual realm existing within and outside the present ‘reality’ of the physical. I acknowledge that the **issue of faith is the big step**. And I acknowledge – the material world isn’t evil just because its inferior to the eternal spiritual realm. Its still God’s good creation in which he moves and can be seen.

“The bible instructs us to turn our attention toward the invisible. This theme is repeated enough in Scripture to make those of us bound by the logic of this Western culture quite nervous!” (Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.44)

Modern examples of this mindset

Todd Bentley & Smith Wigglesworth – often acted **physically what they SAW from heaven** (Todd – calls out women, colour of clothing, condition etc – bc he’s seen them earlier that day in prayer) (Smith - punching in stomach – looks bad on the face of things, but it cured cancer)

The Allums (a highly prophetic couple from Canada) – When they prophesy, they say “I see.....” because Isobel **really was seeing what she was speaking out**. She prophesies things which in a material, present, here & now sense don’t exist. But she is speaking-forth the truth which does exist in the unseen realm

Perhaps it should better be called the ‘as-yet unseen’ realms

Jesus usual outlook was on the unseen, beyond the mere seen **conditions or conventions** which are only temporary ‘realities’.

- **This is why we teach on the kingdom so frequently.**
- We need to understand what the kingdom of God is like (just read the gospels more!) **so that we can faith** - have eyes to see it and ears to hear it.

This is how the Apostle Paul was able to say he has learnt to be ‘content’ in all circumstances (Phil 4:11-13) – because the circumstances weren’t what defined him, defined his reality. They were

merely the context, the setting for the heavenly reality of life “hidden in Christ” to unfold. [So he surprised people by being bitten by snakes and not dying....(Acts 28:1-6)]

Conclusion

Where are you anchored? (in the seen or unseen realm?).

Do you need a mindset change?

Are you living both repentance and faith? (or is the balance out of sync?)

Seek the kingdom and a right relationship, and you’ll see & experience your mindsets and experiences transformed (that’s J’s promise, and **my experience** if only in very small measure so far).

God either IS GOOD or he is NOT GOOD. He isn’t a bit good, some of the time and a bit bad at other times. **“Unbelief is actually faith in something other than God.”** (46)

“When we submit the things of God to the mind of man, unbelief and religion are the results. When we submit the mind of man to the things of God, we end up with faith and a renewed mind. The mind makes a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.”

Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, p.47

Let’s focus on the example of Jesus, our lifecoach.

Let’s live a regular cycle of repentance and faith.

Let’s aim everyday to take on his mindset, and his character of complete surrender to the Holy Spirit, and seeking first the kingdom of God.

Let’s realise deep down in our hearts that actually ‘Nothing is impossible for God’!

Whatever your circumstance this morning – I realise some of you here today may be experiencing bad, uncomfortable, painful circumstances.

- The place of surrender is a place of rest (“take my yolk” said Jesus “and you will find rest for your souls”)
- A surrendered heart is a heart of faith
- And where you need to step out more..... get on with it!

Response

PRACTICAL – everyone prayed for healing or another need of someone around them at end, led where possible by prophetic words/pictures.