

Life in the Kingdom: God at Work Sunday

Testimonies: Spencer Price, Alexis Maikapar, Art Schlak

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Dan Hoffman

If you've been with us over the last couple months you know that we are just at the end of our Life in the Kingdom series. In this series we've been looking at the gospel Jesus preached. And what we've seen over and over again is that the gospel for Jesus wasn't a step by step process for how to get saved – it's not about believing some right things and praying a prayer in order to be able to go to heaven when we die. Instead Jesus' good news is that God's kingdom has broken into our world and become accessible.

So the very first thing Jesus said as He began His ministry was:

“The time has come... The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15)

What this means is that for Jesus the good news or the gospel was that since He was here, God and His kingdom were now available to normal people. So in the Old Testament times God was present to the people of Israel, but He lived in the temple and hung out behind the curtain in the holy of holies. And only the high priest had access to Him once a year.

And so if you weren't the high priest or the king or a prophet then your access to God was limited to going through one of these other people. You needed a sacrifice and an intermediary to stand between you and God.

And Jesus' good news was that this had changed. God was breaking out of the temple. He was about to tear the curtain in two never to be repaired. And through Jesus' once and for all sacrifice, everyone was now going to be able to have access to God. So Hebrews 10 tells us:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Friends, the good news is that you and me have access to the throne room of heaven. Jesus is the only intermediary we need. And that means not only are we able to speak directly to God – we can bring our requests to Him like we would go to our own father – but He wants to show up in our lives. There is an “already” aspect to heaven that has come to earth. And this kingdom is available to everyone who repents and believes.

Now repentance isn't primarily about saying "sorry" for the bad things we do, it is about reorienting our lives to align with Jesus' kingdom. So the repentance Jesus talks about doesn't happen when we pray a prayer "Jesus, come into my heart" but when we make Him the King of our heart. It happens when we choose to gamble our lives on the promise that investing our abilities and gifts into the kingdom we can't see will be more rewarding than storing up treasure in the kingdom we can see. This is what it means to repent.

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And today is the final episode in this series and so the deacons thought it would be beneficial for our church to hear some stories about God's kingdom breaking into our lives. And so I've asked three people to answer two questions each this morning. First I've asked them to tell us about a time, or a couple of times, when they saw God's kingdom showing up in their lives in a way that inspired them to faith. And second I've asked them to share about something God is doing in their lives right now. Perhaps where He is calling them to grow or something He is teaching them.

Now these are faith stories, and what that means is they aren't proofs for the existence of God. The kingdom is subtle, and it has been from the time Jesus set foot on earth. Jesus has no desire to remove the need for faith from following Him.

And so as you hear these stories allow the Holy Spirit to pour faith into your hearts.

The first person who is going to share is Spencer Price. I've known Spencer for 5 years. He's a young man who deeply desires to live his life in a way that honours God. He's just completed a four-year degree at Bible School and now is back in the city looking for what God has for him next. And I'm confident that whatever it is, it is going to be good.

Several months back Spencer told me the story he is going to share with you this morning and I was greatly encouraged by it. Spencer is a man who has seen God on the move.

Alexis Maikapar is the second person who is going to share with us this morning. Alexis has been part of our church for four years, he is a deacon here. And Alexis and I have had a lot of opportunities to chat deeply about life over the last four years, and he is someone I can say with confidence has grown in Christ-likeness since I first met him. That doesn't happen by default to everyone just because they come to church. Alexis is not static in his walk with Jesus. And that is incredibly exciting and encouraging for me to watch.

Art Schlak is the third person who will be sharing with us this morning. For any of you who don't know Art is a pastor – he has a pastor's heart – and he used to pastor the German Baptist Church here in town that planted our own church almost 60 years ago.

Art is also a deacon here at Fort George, and so I've had the opportunity to serve fairly closely with him over the last couple years.

The thing I love most about Art is that in spite of the fact that he has decades more pastoral experience than I do not one time has he ever given me the sense that he looks down on me for my inexperience. He's humble, and he is a man who deeply loves Jesus. And while Art's "glory days" may have been 50 years ago he wants to be part of what Jesus is doing today.