

## Giving Away the Kingdom: *Sharing the Good News*

I was so happy when Panera Bread, a pastry, sandwich and coffee shop, opened a restaurant in Knoxville, Tennessee, where I was a chaplain at the university. I could literally walk down the hill in the morning to a scrumptious Danish or bagel, latte, and good conversation with a friend. Imagine my delight when I noticed these large garbage bags of discarded Panera morsels early one morning waiting to be carted off to the dumpster. Having gotten to know the manager a bit, I asked about the bags and he told me they were day old bagels and pastries slated for the trash.

This formed an idea of how we could make these day old delicacies available for our students. I quickly loaded the bags into my van and carted them up to our student center to be enjoyed by all. Thus began a daily pick up of day old pastries from Panera Bread. I was quickly becoming the best-loved pastor on campus. However, I soon discovered that my rescue was even more than our students could handle, so I began looking for other places where I could share. Next, I was driving up to married student housing and dropping garbage bags full of day old delights to graduate and international students. This, of course, brought me into contact with lots of people I would never have met without the Panera freebees.

What if sharing the story of Jesus was really as easy as giving away sweet rolls? What if this is what Jesus meant when he sent out the disciples two by two with the instructions to drive out evil spirits, anoint the sick, and proclaim good news to the poor? Is this what it means to evangelize, to announce the good news of Christ and his Kingdom by introducing others to his new authority in their lives, God's forgiving grace, perfect justice, and a new birth?

### Journeying Together:

- 1). What do you like most – to hear or secret or share a secret? Why?
- 2). What's the best news you have ever been privileged to share?

### Road Map: Luke 10:1-24

1. Jesus' instruction to the seventy disciples in verse 9 was *"Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'"* How does care for others translate into a taste of the Kingdom? What have you learned about the benefits of God's Kingdom that are revealed in acts of kindness and justice?

2. Why were the Disciples so excited that even the demons were subject to them? What does this victory over evil reveal about the overall purpose of Christ? Why did Jesus caution them to be more grateful that their names have been written in Heaven than their trampling down of Satan? Why does Jesus express such joy in the Disciples' experience here?

3. What benefits of God's Kingdom have you received or been blessed with that you can happily share with others? When has giving away the Kingdom produced great joy in your life?

**Surprised By the Kingdom:** *One day while I was walking our dogs, a woman with a black mid-sized dog stopped me and asked me to share a treat with her dog. It seemed a rather strange request, so I questioned her. She explained how this was part of the dog's rehabilitation therapy after being used as bait in attack dog training and pointed to the dog's missing ear. Getting the dog out on walks was helping her overcome her fear of other dogs – a fear that was now being transferred to men, the real cause of her terror. Having different men stop and give her a treat helped the dog realize that all men were not so cruel.*

*I stooped down and offered the dog a treat from my hand while gently stroking her head as she would allow. As I walked on, I could have sworn hearing the whisper of God in my ear that I had just witnessed the presence of the Kingdom. Maybe acts of compassion are the subtle gentle workings of the Mustard Seed Kingdom – a mustard seed that will one day develop into a large bush offering nest and shade for all the birds of the air. If so, I want to belong to that Kingdom - where the hurts and abuse from the Fall are transformed by acts of tender compassion into missions of mercy and grace.*

### Advancing the Kingdom: Matthew 25:14-30

4. What is the relationship between investing God's property and giving away the Kingdom?
5. What is a talent? Why does the third manager hide his talent? What does hiding our talent translate into in this story? What great investments have you already made or can you make for advancing God's Kingdom?
6. What excites you most about giving away God's property?
7. What further questions do you have from this week's reading?
8. How can this group pray for you right now?

## My Journey:

1. How is God using *Journey* in your life and witness this week?
2. We have all been affected by the Fall and injustice of Satan's rule in our lives. Talk about a hurt or painful experience in your own life that helps you appreciate the coming of the Kingdom.
3. How has the simplicity of advancing the Kingdom changed your perspective on sharing the good news?
4. How can this group pray for you right now?

**Backstory:** So far in our journey with Jesus, we have seen that Jesus is more than a personal savior from sin. He is the messianic king re-establishing God's rule on earth. Bringing glory to God on earth was his *mission*. "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" (Mark 1:15), was his *message*. He came to invert the Fall by calling us to repent of our smaller self-serving lives and to proclaim the good news about a Kingdom order where God is now at the center of everything. In this government, God is our king and we are his people. A kingdom is wherever a king or queen's dominion extends and the subjects over which they rule. In this government, God rules from the throne of our hearts. When God becomes the center of our lives, everything else begins to fall into place. Jesus came to turn everything back to God!

In ancient and medieval times, the birth of a son and heir to the throne was good news. The birth of a son was especially good news if the King was a good king and the kingdom was prospering under his government. This is where the term "gospel" comes from. The good news or gospel, was about the extension of a king's rule. The "evangel" was the one sent on the mission of announcing the heir to the throne. Evangelists were specially commissioned agents of the empire announcing the good news that the King and Queen had given birth to a son and thereby extending their dynasty. The term "long live the King" meant the King would continue his rule through a rightful heir.

The mission and message of Jesus is that God's rule has been extended! The King has given birth to a son, and God's rule has been re-established on earth. As citizens of God's Kingdom, we have the

privileged role of the evangel – announcing the good news that the government of God has been established on earth in the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of God's son. ***Long Live Our King!***

Our role is not to pressure anyone, cajole anyone, or guilt them into following God. Our primary role is to announce the Good News of God's government. Our message is a call to hear the Good News about God, recognize the opportunity to join in this new life under God's rule, repent of a life centered on ourselves, and turn to a full life where God is the center and priority in all that we do.

The mission is larger than our own personal salvation since it has to do with the renewal of all things. It involves a renewal of the earth so it has an environmental impact. It affects our relationships with one another and how we view others as people made in God's image and the image of God being restored in us. It has to do with the economy of all things, since God is interested in all that we do – the way we spend our money, what we value – the way we spend our time. and the larger issues of justice, poverty, and human suffering.

All these issues are important to God and part of his Kingdom rule. We see this as we study the message of the Old Testament prophets and why God was bringing judgment on a people who were exploiting their neighbors and had no concern for the poor. When Israel began acting and behaving in such careless and inhumane ways, they had ceased representing God to the nations around them.

It was also central to the mission and message of Jesus since the disciples were appointed "*that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons*" (Mark 3:14, 15). Jesus instructed them saying, "*As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give*" (Matt. 10:7, 8).

His mission must become our mission and his message our message. It has been said that people will never care how much we know until they know how much we care. The focus in Lesson 11 is to change the way students think about evangelism from teaching and explaining doctrine

and convincing people to join a church to giving away the Kingdom. Church affiliation will come. Our primary role is to be the evangel declaring God's Kingdom rule now by being the eyes, ears, hearts, and hands of Jesus on campus. It is to announce that the Kingdom of God has already begun. The change begins right here and right now! We have been given the real estate of the Kingdom and God is calling us to open the doors to others! This is our mission, and the Good News of God's Kingdom rule is our message. "Repent," Jesus said, "and take hold of the good news!"