

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
Series: A Mans Guide to the Bible
The Message: the good news of the kingdom of God
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Good Morning, Men!

Open your Bibles to Luke 16 and Ephesians 1

We want to begin this morning by giving a shout out. It goes to TGIF (our original name many years ago). TGIF is about a dozen men meeting in Fernandina Beach under the leadership of John Van Tommy. John used to be a member of this Bible study and then moved to that area and started the group up there. Join me in welcoming the men from TGIF this morning.

This morning we are continuing in our series A Man's Guide to the Bible. We have spent some time getting to know about the Bible and now we are onto what the Bible is really about. The unique purpose of the Bible is the good news of the kingdom of God. I am very excited about next week when we will move into living the Bible. I am going to give you a laymen's guide of how to interpret the scripture, classic rules of interpretation and how you can do a deeper study of the Bible on your own. Then we will follow that with some ideas on how to study the Bible on your own and internalize it and so forth.

One of my very favorite stories was when my wife and I were expecting our first child we were going through an evangelism class. We paired up with people in the class and went out on visitation to visit with the people that went to church that morning. My wife got paired with the pastor of the church. My wife was absolutely terrified of sharing her faith out loud and being a witness – her gift is mercy. She pleaded with the Pastor 'please whatever you do don't make me say anything'. Out on the visitation they are sitting on the couch making small talk and the pastor turns to Patsy and says 'why don't you tell them the good news.' She froze up and then for the next 15 minutes she rattled off all that she new about the 'good news' the Bible. When they got back she said 'why did you do that?!' and he said 'why did you do that? I just wanted you to tell them the good news that you were having a baby!'

We are going to talk about the good news of the kingdom this morning. The kingdom of God is the ultimate prize. Jesus preached and proclaimed the kingdom of God.

In Luke 16:16 it says

16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached,

Now go to Ephesians 1.

Today I want to answer two questions and give you two applications.

The first question is where do these special moments come from when we sense the power and the presence of God in a very unique and special way? Studies show that most people have an encounter with transcendence.

In the book *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto writes this, the *mysterium tremendum*. The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over in a more set and lasting attitude of the soul. Continuing as it were thrillingly vibrant and resonant until at last it dies away in the soul resumes its profane non religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in sudden eruption; up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport to ecstasy. It may become the hush, trembling and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of whom or what, in the presence of that which is a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures.

We feel like we have come face to face with the living God. We experience the full measure of his love, power, presence, grace and purpose. The veil is pulled back and we see and then the veil returns and we go back to our normal experiences.

Where do these special experiences come from? That is our first question. The second question follows on, if the kingdom of God, if the gospel is such good news why do I feel so lousy?

What I want to do is look at these questions in Ephesians 1. At the bottom of Ephesians 1:14 it talks about

the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—

There is this idea that the kingdom of God is our inheritance. Something you will receive from someone who wants to give it to you. This passage in Ephesians captures it in a unique way. Almost like every phrase in this text is like a different facet in a sparkling diamond. It is almost as if this passage is like God's Will to us.

Let's talk about the perspective of the week first. We are talking about the Bible and the perspective of the week: the Bible it is the sole repository of the knowledge of the gospel of the King. God's message of love for a broken generation; in one sense already for the atoning sacrifice for Christ and in another sense not yet, so we groan until our father again sends Jesus, next time to gather us, His much loved sons, into His eternal kingdom a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more tears, no pain, no mourning, no death only joy!

So we are going to learn about this perspective in a reading of the Will. Ephesians 1:3

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the

times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. 11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

It is interesting just looking at this text for the week and you look at what is given, He has blessed us, chosen us, adopted us, given us grace, made His will known, predestined us, included us, given us deposit in the Holy Spirit; it is an incredible inheritance. Another thing that is interesting is the giver of these things can get lost in the reading but you go back and in each verse you see that God has done this, God in love has done this! God is the one who has done this! How is it given? In virtually every verse He gives it in Christ, through Christ and sealed with Christ. It is the good news of the kingdom of God and you can see what is given is incredibly good news. God is the one who is doing it and Christ is the one through whom He is doing it.

So what is the good news, what is the gospel? It is salvation but it is also the person of Jesus Christ. It is his historical presence, his actual living, death and resurrection. It is because of the person of Christ that our salvation actually is in Christ.

Salvation means to be in relationship with Jesus where ever he is in his kingdom and anything less than that is not Christianity.

There is a whole movement, the emergent church – simply put it is an effort to take post modern thinking and merge it with Christian thought, which is calling into question the concept of original sin and now even calling into question the deity of Christ; dare I say this is an apostate movement. It doesn't mean there aren't a lot of good Christians caught up in the movement; you can be a believing Christian and be caught up in this movement.

If we want to call into account the history of Jesus Christ you are not talking about Christianity any more. Christianity is Christ. And the gospel of the good news of the kingdom means we are with him where ever he is in relationship with him, where he rules.

It is so broken, you look around and there are so many broken parts. How does this fit together? It fits together very simply, because there are so many broken parts (the Fall) God has intervened. And Jesus Christ is how he has intervened. This is the gospel; this is the message, that Jesus Christ is God's message of love for a broken generation.

Why do we have these special moments? We have them, and there is only one reason we have them, because we have the Holy Spirit; we have God living in us.

Turn to Romans 8 where it says that the spirit testifies with our spirit that we are the son's of God. The beginning part of Romans 8 is worth looking over sometime.

Look at Romans 8:22

If I was allowed to only rip out one page of the Bible to have for the rest of my life I would take Romans 8, it is by far the richest for me.

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ

That is the kingdom of God.

We have these special moments, whatever and where ever they may be, of sensing God's presence because we have the Holy Spirit, the deposit. You should recognize those moments as exactly what they are, God revealing himself in the fullness of his kingdom, power and presence.

It is a foretaste of the joy that is to come.

The kingdom has already come; it has come in the person of Christ and we are part of his kingdom. C. S. Lewis calls them 'stabs of joy'. That is the kingdom of God. There is also a sense in which the kingdom has not yet come.

That overwhelming sense of awe that you experience is what you will experience all the time someday. Pick the most joyous moment and you will feel that way 100% of the time someday. What we will be we do not know (I John 3) but we know what it will be like because we have the deposit that has been given to us. The kingdom of God is on deposit.

If this is such good news why do I feel so crummy? I can barely walk for two weeks; you know what back pain can do to your overall joy. Some of you have lost loved ones.

If it is such good news what is that about? Looking in Romans 8:22

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Here you see the distinction between the already and the not yet; the first coming of Christ is like dawn, the first light of day, but we live in that era of time before sunrise. We have seen the first light but the second coming of Christ is like the sun breaking on the horizon. This light is beautiful, but it is nothing like when the sun breaks on the horizon. That is the difference between the already and the not yet.

It is kind of like being a minor, and our inheritance is being held in a trust for us until we come of age.

The next thing I want to look at is how God uses the gospel to break us down. There are texts in the Bible that when you first read them you say I don't believe that or no way!

I remember when I read Jeremiah 17 that the heart is desperately wicked and beyond cure, who can understand it. I said that is ridiculous! God said Oh? And then He revealed to me just how true that text is. There is a group that says if you only see yourself as a little sinner then you only need a little savior. But God knows that we need a big savior so he wants us to see that we are big sinners. If you don't know it is true you might be in the place where you don't think it is true.

Another verse: out of the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.
No way! That is a joke! John 1:16

16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

I have good news for you; God is going to use his gospel to break you down, because the truth – if we abide in his word and his word abides in us, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free and we will really be his disciples.

God has to break us down and he uses the gospel to do this. There are these groans that we will go through; it is like earth is heavens womb and we are all in gestation. We are not ready to be born into the kingdom we are in gestation.

For me it was I Peter 4:1, 2; I was having terrible migraine headaches, I don't get them so much any more but for 25 years I had them basically everyday. Sometimes the medicine would work and sometimes it wouldn't. One day I read:

1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

Bring it on baby, let me groan, if that is what it means; if by so doing I will no longer chase after evil human desires, but rather for the will of God don't just give me a migraine; after you take my arms and legs, leave me blind and deaf. A little extreme I guess, but you get the point. Your sufferings are a precious gift from God.

If the gospel of the kingdom is such good news why do I feel so lousy? Because your sufferings are a precious gift from God; it is through many sufferings that we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

That is the first application; understand that God is using the gospel to break you down.
The big idea: Jesus Christ is God's message of love for the broken parts of our lives.

The final point, and second application, spread the message. To the Christians, this is our inheritance. Know that when you have those special moments of joy it is the Holy Spirit. It is the deposit of your inheritance that is in you and that is why it is such good news.

When you go through sufferings understand that is the not yet. The message that you and I take is that this really is good news and it starts already.

Jesus Christ is God's message of love for a broken generation.

Let's Pray;

Lord Jesus, take us and let us rise up in your spirit, way above all the human frailties and worries of this world and our personal problems. Lord, give us a glimpse of how you see these problems as ways that you can bring us down and into the presence of your glory.

Lord, give us that special moment of the glories of your kingdom and let us put things into perspective. We ask this in the name of Jesus –God’s message of love for a broken generation – AMEN.