



KINGDOMS OF GRACE AND GLORY (Sermon)

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Scripture Reading: Titus 2:11-14, NIV

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, **while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (emphasis supplied).

When we are confronted with the dark realities of suffering and the consequences of sin in this world, we begin to appreciate the great hope that we have that soon Jesus will appear in clouds of glory to take us to His glorious eternal kingdom where there will be no more tears, sorrow, or dying. In our excitement, we can’t help but share that hope. Such was the case in the heart of John the Baptist as he proclaimed and anticipated the ministry of Jesus. Travel with me to four scenes in the gospels that help us to know what God calls us to do while we eagerly anticipate the second coming of Christ.

Scene 1— In the Jordan Valley—Crowd of people from Jerusalem and the region of Judea. Matthew 3:1-12—Kingdom of Glory

- John the Baptist—Preaching—“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
- People are confessing their sins, they are being baptized by him in the Jordan River.
- John is wearing clothes made of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist. His food is locusts and wild honey.
- We see Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he is baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
- “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit

and fire. **His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire**” (emphasis supplied).

Note: John the Baptist anticipated that Jesus would usher in the kingdom of glory during His ministry in Galilee. He referred to final judgement in the context of Jesus’ ministry on earth. Yet, the following scenes—two and three—show a different picture of what Jesus actually set out to do during His time here on earth.

Scene 2 — On the path from the lakeside going into Capernaum

Mark 5:21 ff—Nameless Woman

- Crowds are noisily surrounding Jesus as He returns from Decapolis—that Gentile region across the Sea of Galilee.
- The crowd parts for Jairus—Ruler of the Synagogue—He requests Jesus to come heal his twelve-year old girl—the mob tightens and moves.
- Positioned in the midst of the road is Nameless Woman—twelve years of isolation (According to Jewish law, a woman with an issue of blood was not allowed to be out in public, as she was considered unclean and excluded from the synagogue or the temple. She could not have intimate relations with her husband. She was basically shunned.). She touches the hem of Jesus’ garment, is healed, and Jesus notices her.
- Jesus stops for her and assures her that her faith has made her whole and listens to her story. In the meantime, Jairus waits and his heart sinks as he learns of the death of his daughter—Jesus turns to Jairus and challenges him to have the same faith exhibited by Nameless Woman—the interruption opens the way for a greater miracle.
- Jesus exhibits social justice by providing Nameless Woman just what she needed, in spite of the fact that He was on a mission to serve the ruler of the temple.

Scene 3 — Jericho

Luke 19:1ff—Zacchaeus

- Jesus is walking through the city of Jericho.
- Zacchaeus, the tax collector, learns that Jesus is coming and longs to get close to Him but cannot get to Jesus, because of the crowd.
- Jesus seeks Zacchaeus out and invites Himself over to his house.
- Zacchaeus repents of his wrong and Salvation comes to his home.

Scene 4 — Jesus is teaching and preaching in the cities of Galilee

Matthew 11:2ff—Are you the One?

- John the Baptist, who is in prison, has sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”
- “Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.’”

John expected Jesus to bring judgment and condemnation on the evil in the world and immediately usher in the Kingdom of Glory. He found it hard to see how Jesus' teaching, healing, and gracious miraculous signs were getting that accomplished.

Yet it is evident that **Jesus wanted to prepare people for the Kingdom of Glory by first creating a Kingdom of Grace, based on Kingdom values.**

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3
- “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.” Matthew 13:24, 25
- “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.” Matthew 13:31
- “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” Matthew 13:33
- “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.” Matthew 13:44
- “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.” Matthew 13:45, 46

In His Prayer, Jesus said, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10, KJV). His prayer is in the present tense and in the “forever tense” (vs. 13). Kingdom values must happen *now* before His Second Coming, and will continue throughout eternity. While we wait for His Coming, His Church must position itself to foster heaven on earth—*now*!

In the *Great Controversy* p. 347-348 Ellen White portrays “the kingdom of heaven” in two parts: “the kingdom of grace” and the “the kingdom of glory.” Because “the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6), and we still await the Kingdom of Glory, we must arise and shine now and concern ourselves with Kingdom living and action that shares God's love and grace.

“Social action is a living witness to our soon-returning Lord. When we take a stand for justice, compassion, and healing, we demonstrate the values of the coming Kingdom.” Patricia in southern Africa demonstrates coming Kingdom values as she lovingly cares for nearly 20 children who have contracted AIDS or have lost their parents to AIDS. She does this in her home. When asked why she did it, she replied, “I want them to have a little bit of the Second Coming now.”

An advertisement on the side of a plumber's van in South Africa reads: “There is no place too deep, too dark or too dirty for us to handle.” By God's grace, that will be our attitude toward Kingdom of Grace ministry in our community.

As Adventists we preach the Second Coming of Christ. Read the words of 1 Thes. 4:16-18: “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (NIV).

While we preach and anticipate the second coming of Christ, let us create a kingdom of grace wherever we are, in anticipation of the Blessed Hope. Titus 2:11-14 says: “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”