



May 30, 2010
Pastor Mark Toone
Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

Thy Kingdom Come: Don't Come Matthew 13. 53-58

This morning we come to the last of our sermon series, “Thy Kingdom Come.” Just to refresh our memories, let’s remember what has happened so far: Jesus launched his ministry with the Sermon on the Mount, healed a leper and a paralytic and a blind man and others. He calmed a storm, cast out demons; raised a girl from the dead! Not a bad career start for a carpenter’s boy, right? Now he has just wrapped up a series of parables teaching us about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. And Jesus decides to make a pilgrimage back home. Where? Nazareth. So...how will the hometown crowd react when Jesus comes back to visit? Maybe a ticker tape parade for the conquering hero? Well...not exactly. (Read)

When Jesus returned to his hometown, where did he go? To the synagogue where he began to teach them. And what is their response? They are amazed. Listen to their initial reaction: ***“Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?”*** Jesus blew his fellow Nazarenes away...at first, anyhow.

And then something changes. “Wait a second! This is the same little boy who used to crawl around in diapers in this synagogue! How can **he** be amazing? **He is just one of us!** How can anybody from Nazareth... be a **somebody?**” (Do you hear the self-loathing?) ***“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?”*** And then, the final judgment from Jesus’ hometown crowd: v. 57 ***“And they took offense at him.”***

Where did their opinion of Jesus start? **Amazement!** And where did it end up? **Offense!** They just could not believe that **anyone** from Nazareth could have the talent or the right to behave like this. **It offended them.** And for the only time in the gospels, we read of the limit of Jesus’ power. ***“And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”*** Was Jesus any less the Son of God here? Was his teaching any less powerful? **Was Jesus different in Nazareth than in Capernaum?** No! What **was** different? **The people...** their hearts. The people of Galilee were amazed and welcomed the in-breaking of the Kingdom of Heaven. **The people of Nazareth were offended by it.** And so, the Son of the Most High God... **was stymied.**

Here is another Kingdom principle: **God grants us the prerogative of disdain.** God grants us permission to deflect the Kingdom of Heaven away from ourselves when we find it irksome. God allows us to say, “I don’t want anything to do with you, Jesus. You offend me! Whatever you want to do in me or through me...not interested!”

Two weeks ago 69 of us rolled into Mexico expecting to find five families who would welcome us. Now... let me ask you this. What if, when we drove up--ready to work-- we heard something like this: “Oh you’re here. Big deal. A bunch of rich *Presbyterianos* from *el Norte*? Dentists and businessmen and contractors? What did you come here to do, build some poor *Mexicanos* a dinky house? We know your kind. You don’t really care about us. So go ahead, just try to do whatever it is you came to do.”

What **would** we do? If the families were... **offended** by us...what could we do? Nothing, probably! Drive back to San Diego for double-double at In and Out Burger.

But that's not what happened. We showed up and every family was waiting and anxious and prepared. They welcomed us like Galilee welcomed Jesus. And the kingdom of heaven broke in for them...for us, too. I've asked three men to tell us about it:

Hola! My name is Gregg Colbo. My personal path to this Mexico trip began about 3 years ago during the first year of Men's Life. I have been coming to Chapel Hill since 1998 and a member since 2001 yet my "walk with Christ" at that time was more of a crawl than anything. It was during Men's Life 1 that I realized that I had a huge childhood wound that had never fully healed. Until that time I felt lost and my life was a well concealed wreck. God spoke to my heart through the words and teaching of Pastor Mark and thankfully the door to a painful past was closed. In a matter of weeks the Lord picked me up, dusted me off and aimed me in the right direction: His direction.

An opportunity to take more steps along the path came when it was time to sign up for the 2009 Mexico trip but I was a fence-sitter. Going to Mexico to build homes for poor families sounded like a worthwhile cause but it was just a little too far outside of my comfort zone. After all, going on mission trips to other countries is something that some other guy does, not me! But God had blessed me with spiritual growth and I wanted more. As it turns out it was at this very service a year ago that I committed to going in 2010 for what would be my very first Mexico build trip.

For months I heard stories of men's lives being changed and the great joy that comes from working together serving others and how humbling the whole experience can be. The high expectations I had placed on the trip were quickly exceeded. Less than 5 minutes after we crossed the border into Mexico the landscape changed from San Diego style scenery to Shantytown style and I could already feel God softening my heart. As far as the eye could see there were shacks made from a hodge-podge of different materials: wood pallets, garage door panels, cardboard, cloth, disintegrating tarp, you name it. To add to the ambience there was garbage all over the place, dead animals lying in the streets and more. I started to feel a **lot** of compassion for the Mexican people. My heart continued to soften more and more each day during the build as we laughed together, cried together, and joked around with each while we shared in this transforming experience.

Each day we would return to our campground exhausted from a full day's work yet full from being loved on by our Mexican family and each other. I sensed God hand in all of it. He had to be smiling as our large group met towards the end of the day to sing, pray and listen to Chip Slothower and Pastor Mark's messages and again in our small group where we reflected on the day's message and shared what was on our hearts. Although each day began with some peaceful reflection and prayer time the day always ended with the **not-so-sweet** echoes of the Chapel Hill **Snorchestra** wafting through the campground. ☺

A few weeks ago Pastor Mark talked about the Parable of the Sower and the types of soil we choose to be. I got a large dose of Miracle-Gro added to mine while in Mexico and because of my experiences there I'm at least one step closer to being able to truly love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength! I went to Mexico so that I could become a better Christian, man and dad. My sons don't know Jesus the way I do and I want to model for them what it means to be a great follower of Christ. He tells us in Mark 10:43 that "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." I get it...now.

Hello, my name is Lee Dietz. This was my third year participating with the Men's Life Mexico Mission Trip. When we arrived in Mexico we were driven to an empty plot of land with an A framed ladder and

blanket as shelter along with a one man tent. Our mission was to build a double-sized home for Maria and Gerardo Martinez, but we knew very little of their situation. Two teams spent the next three days hard at work building their home.

On the last day, Monty Sisson and I were standing by the work truck when a van pulled up. Maria jumped out and asked if we would like to go with them to their church. We accepted and set out for what we thought was a short drive to the local church. Thirty minutes later when we were driving into downtown Tijuana, we were a little nervous...and trying to remember if we had told anyone where we were going.

When we arrived at their church, the pastor and his congregation welcomed us warmly. They were thrilled that we had come to visit but they were MORE thrilled that our group had come to Mexico to help the Martinez family. You see, that family has 7 children. Four years earlier, the parents made poor choices and got involved with alcohol and other bad habits. Without warning, the police came, arrested the Martinezes and took their children from them.

Shortly after this incident Maria accepted the Lord and they both began to turn their lives around. They began attending church and took parenting classes 4 days a week. They also made the decision to fight Social Services and try to get their children back. Today they are allowed to see their children every 3 months for just 15 minutes. Their Pastor told us that the congregation has been praying faithfully for this family and advocating for their children's return. For that to happen they needed a home and the Pastor put them in touch with Amor Ministries.

They began to see their prayers being answered when the Martinezes were offered a piece of land to purchase. They had the land; now they needed a home built on that land. The congregation continued to pray. When we arrived in Mexico, we were the literal answers to their prayers. Over and over again during their church service, the people thanked US for what we had done. We couldn't speak the language but we just kept pointing up; it's not us. It's the Lord.

We came to Mexico to build a house. We didn't realize that God would use us to help reunite a family. During the key ceremony Maria's only words during a flood of tears were, "This is beyond my heart's wildest dreams." Now, Maria and Gerardo have a home and are God-loving, clean-living, joy-filled parents who long to be reunited with their children. God used us to accomplish that.

Hi, my name is Marc Samsen. *I wasn't raised in a spiritual home, but had a mother who showed me what compassion was as we would frequently feed and sometimes house people who were in need. I didn't think much about it then; I just figured we were normal, good people. In my late teens, as I was discovering my craftsman hands, I began to dream about building homes and schools for people in third world countries. But those ideas did not come to fruition, as God was simply planting seeds.*

Fast forward twenty years to 2007. I went through a divorce a year prior and in the aftermath, longed to discover a better way to live. I began to pursue the Christian faith. I started reading books by CS Lewis, J.I. Packer and Lee Strobel. I wrestled with the idea of God's grace and our works. I studied the Bible and prayed for understanding in all of this.

Then earlier this year, God started knitting it all together for me, and Chapel Hill was His workroom. On my second visit here, if you'll recall when Pastor Mark was "Getting ready to Rumble," he closed off

the balcony and mixed up everyone's self-appointed seat assignments. I got up and sat down next to someone I hadn't seen in years. He told me about the Mexico trip and I was definitely interested.

But that wasn't the end of it because I still had some struggles to contend with. Finances were a part of it, but mostly, I still hadn't really figured out the "Reason why I would go." In fact, even into the last two weeks, I thought, "There are more than enough taller, tougher, contractor-looking guys to do this thing. They don't need me." I mean, I look at team 4, and it's like I'm standing in a grove of Sequoias. I just didn't see why God was calling me to do this. It wasn't until our team met at the Tides that I got a taste of what was to come. It was fellowship with a band of brothers on a mission to carry out God's plan through an act of obedience. I hadn't experienced any of these things yet, and I was definitely excited to be a part of it!

There were so many great things that happened on this trip. The glimpse of hope in the eyes of two parents who were one huge step closer to regaining custody of their kids. The men whose sweat turned to tears as the keys were handed over to the family. And those same men, running and laughing as we tried to catch marshmallows in our mouths... marshmallows fired by slingshots from across the camp.

But what stands out above all else, culminated on Sunday night, when I actually prayed a prayer for the first time, accepting Christ not just into my life, but into my heart, as my Lord and Savior.

God gave me the blessing and privilege to be a part of His Kingdom. This trip really marks the beginning of something new for me, a personal relationship with God and a deeper understanding of how He so loves us. Who else could send me away practically a stranger to the same men I am now proud to call my brothers.... Thank you.

Maybe the most amazing reality about the Kingdom of Heaven is that we can reject it. We can deflect it. The King of the Universe...who wants to break into our world and transform our lives...could insist on having his way. He is the king, after all. But he doesn't insist. He offers. He invites. And if we are offended by the offer, it stymies him. AT least for now. Because he will not insist on his way; will not insist on breaking into our world. But...if we will receive and we will welcome and if we are ready to offer him whatever we have, the Kingdom of Heaven will break into our reality and change our lives forever.

As you heard, our theme for the Mexico Build was "Shema;" the Hebrew word for "hear": "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." We focused on that theme the entire time we were there. God...the King of the Universe...who could demand anything he wants from us: loyalty, obedience, faithfulness, sacrifice. But what does he demand? Love! God wants our love.

Every morning and every night the Jews pray the Shema. So we did the same thing. Over and over again we reminded ourselves that what God wants most from us is that we love him...with our hearts and our souls and our strength... with everything we have. And IF we love God that way, if we welcome him that way, his Kingdom will break right into the middle of our lives...an other lives, too. So, to close our service this morning, I thought I'd ask our men to come down and bless all of you us the Shema.

The fact is, our society is more like Nazareth than Capernaum. We don't want the Kingdom of Heaven to break in and disrupt our lives. In fact, we find it offensive. How about you? Are you offended by what Jesus might want to do in your life, your family, your community, your workplace...if you actually welcome him in? Or are you so filled with self-loathing that you cannot imagine how Jesus would ever work through you? If you love him, you will welcome him. If you welcome him, his Kingdom will break into your life and change you and change your whole world. Forever.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Matthew 13 is a series of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. Review the parables together and summarize the things Jesus wants to teach us about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. Read vv 53-58. In what ways are Jesus' previous teachings in these several parables reflected in the story of his return to Nazareth, his hometown?
3. What was the initial response of his hometown crowd? How did it change? Talk through that process together. Why do you think this occurred?
4. If Jesus is God, as we assert, and one of the qualities of God is omnipotence, how do we explain verse 58? Should that be disturbing to us?
5. Essentially, the people of Nazareth said, "We don't want the Kingdom to come." How much power does God grant to human beings to resist his purpose or will? If we are able to do so, in what way does God continue to reign sovereign over all things?
6. Does this story bring to mind any way in which YOU have said, "No, thank you," to the coming of the Kingdom in your own life?