

## **Introduction**

It is all the rage lately for people to talk about what has gone viral. The age of You Tube and Vimeo and facebook has produced a generation in search of the next video which is the cutest, the funniest, or the most stunning. And when lots of people turn on to it, it has gone viral. As we look at Jesus' early ministry in Galilee, we see that even without YouTube and Facebook the news of what he was doing and saying went viral.

[Read Text and Pray]

This text is a summary of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Remember that Galilee is that section in the far north reaches of the promised land. It had been infiltrated by large numbers of Gentiles. Jesus had withdrawn from the main stage of Jewish life and worship to minister among a people that walked in spiritual darkness. This summary of Christ's ministry introduces to us a couple previously unmentioned features that characterized what he did. It also reveals that Jesus drew gargantuan crowds. This summary is quite general, as summaries are want to be. But in my mind, it brings us face-to-face with several important and thrilling realities of our savior as well as a clear warning we need to heed.

We will see these important matters as we examine the text in terms of four characteristics of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. First, I want you to see that . . .

### **I. HE WENT.**

The first phrase of verse 23 is this: "And he went throughout all Galilee."

Jesus' approach to ministry stands in contrast to that of John in several ways, but here is one of the clearest distinctions. John's approach to ministry was pretty much "y'all come." But Jesus' approach was "go tell." John preached out in the wilderness and multitudes were going out there to hear him. But Jesus pursued the people. He went throughout all Galilee. He went to their synagogues. He went where they were. And he reached

out to them. The shepherd goes after the lost sheep and Jesus went after the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Not only did Jesus go, he also sent his disciples to go. They went out two by two to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. Then as the risen Lord, he also commissioned his disciples to make other disciples. And the disciple-making approach was to involve going. In Matthew 28:19 translated literally, Jesus says, "As you are going, make disciples of all nations of all nations." The propagation of the gospel is a go, tell proposition. There was no time for Jesus to sit back. And there is no time for us to sit back either.

We sometimes say things like this:

"well, I would tell people about Jesus, but I don't know any lost people."

"I will be happy to share the gospel if someone would just ask me."

"I let my life do the talking."

One famous statement goes like this: "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words when necessary." The statement is commonly attributed to Francis of Assisi, but he never said anything like it. And it is completely unbiblical. Romans 10:14 says, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" It is impossible to preach the gospel without words. And it is imperative that we not wait for the lost to come to us, let us go to them.

I know it means stepping out of our zone of comfort. I feel it just like you do. But we are compelled by something far greater than discomfort. We are commanded by Christ. And Christ did it first. He went. And he went everywhere. He left no corner in Galilee untouched. He went throughout all the region. Who are the people in your region, your realm of influence who need to hear? Follow Jesus. Go. Tell.

## **II. HE SPOKE.**

Jesus' ministry was demonstrative indeed. He used his voice. He spoke up. He communicated with words and sentences. And he did so in two ways.

Matthew says he went through all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The two forms of communication with the Galilean masses were preaching and teaching.

A. We underscored the importance of preaching a couple weeks back. It is a bold assertion of the truth. No ifs, ands, or buts, just the truth, stated plainly. Jesus spoke with authority because he proclaimed truth. You and I proclaim as well when we simply tell people the truth, the truth about God and his law, the truth about sin, the truth about Jesus who came to pay our sin debt, and the truth about coming judgment. When we warn others that it is appointed unto man to die and after this is the judgment, we are preaching. And when we tell others that Jesus shed his blood on the cross at Calvary so sinners might be forgiven, they must repent of their sin and believe in Christ in order to be reconciled with God and escape the wrath to come, when we tell others that, we are preaching the gospel.

B. But Jesus did not only preach. He also taught. The emphasis of teaching is the effort to explain things. It is to fill out the details. It is to explain the truth in a way that one might have an understanding. God does not want us mindless and thoughtless. The faith of Jesus Christ is explainable and understandable. The truth of the gospel will set you free. God gave us minds for use. We should be thinkers. We are meant to use our minds. Paul says that "those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who love according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." Knowledge and understanding are part of God's purpose for us. So he gives to the church those who are teachers for a reason. We need to learn. We need to think. These are necessary not only to understand the gospel but to be able to conceive of the glory of God. God is a speaking God. He is a glorious God, and understanding and learning are essential to grasping his beauty and majesty. So Jesus both preached and taught. We need to value both preaching and teaching as well.

C. Matthew summarizes the content of the preaching and teaching in five words. He preached "the gospel of the kingdom." Jesus is messiah. He is the king who fulfills God's covenant with David. Kings are not kings without kingdoms. Jesus has a kingdom and he is preaching and teaching about

this kingdom. I want to give you four basic truths about the kingdom that help us conceptualize what we mean when we say "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven." William Hendriksen is helpful here.

1. Submission. The kingdom of heaven is composed of citizens who embrace the rule, sovereignty, and kingship of God in their hearts and in their lives. This aspect of the kingdom is expressed in the plea from the disciples' prayer "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." The kingdom comes where the rule of God reigns in people and they do his will. So the kingdom is synonymous with obedience and submission.

2. Salvation. The kingdom of heaven is composed of people who are saved. To enter the kingdom is to be saved from the wrath of God and be reconciled with him. Jesus told the disciples that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they said, "then who can be saved?" So you see the idea of entering the kingdom is the same as entering into salvation with all its blessings both spiritual and material. The salvation that Christ died to provide is a salvation from God's wrath and it is a salvation unto God's blessing. That blessing includes a future for the citizens of the kingdom in which there is no unrighteousness and no harm and no sorrow. It is a future in a new heaven and earth. Salvation is to enter into this hope and one day to enter into this reality.

3. Church. The kingdom of heaven is associated with the church of Jesus. It is the community of those who gladly subject themselves to the Lord as king. Remember when Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ? Jesus responded, "On this rock I will build my church" . . . and then he said he would give the keys of the kingdom. Churches are little expressions of the kingdom of God.

4. Heaven. We often use the word heaven to speak of the future new heavens and new earth. This is the kingdom of heaven realized. The expression of this idea is in the parable of the sheep and the goats. The sheep, the redeemed of the Lord, are told to "inherit the kingdom prepared for them."

So when Jesus is preaching and teaching the kingdom, he is proclaiming the need for men and women to bow to God as king, to own him as Lord from the depth of their hearts. He is proclaiming salvation as a gracious work of God to redeem sinful men from the misery and doom and darkness of sin. He is preaching a kingdom made up of his saved ones and an eternity of hope where the redemption is known in its fullness. It is a redemption from sin and all its evil against God and its misery and heartache and grief and sorrow and pain.

Believers in Christ should marvel today at what a privilege we have as believers in Christ to be part of this great kingdom—to be ruled over by our Lord Jesus, to be redeemed with a complete redemption, to be a part of his church, and to look forward beyond the grave to live with him under his rule in the new heaven and earth.

### **III. HE HEALED.**

The third component of Jesus approach in ministry was to heal. He went teaching, preaching, and healing. Healing was a part of what he was doing as he taught and preached.

Matthew is quite detailed in this part of his summary. He wants us to know THAT Jesus healed. But he also wants us to know the EXTENT of his healing work. He says that Jesus was healing every disease and every affliction among the people. Whatever was wrong he was undoing it. And the more the fame of Jesus spread, the more people came and they brought even more sick and afflicted. Matthew says, "they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them." Matthew wants us to catch a sense of how many were the afflictions and of how many different kinds of afflictions, and not one was too difficult for Jesus. And herein Matthew shows us two precious facts about the kingdom of heaven.

A. First, the king of this kingdom is Jesus and he is a great king. Did you know that in the United States about \$100 billion is spent each year on medical research? Think of all the resources being directed at finding cures to diseases and dysfunction. Years and years and years of research and testing have been poured into the cause, and as a result there are vaccines

and antibiotics and medications and treatments of all sorts. But at the same time old diseases flourish and new diseases appear.

What a contrast! Jesus had walked the earth for barely 30 years and here he was healing every affliction plaguing the multitudes that came to him. People having seizures were cured. Those who were paralyzed were raised to walk. Jesus administered the most successful pain therapy ever; he eliminated it. He healed every disease. He even healed those experiencing demon oppression. Jesus Christ, while he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, brought the power of the kingdom to bear upon the lives of the multitudes who flocked to see him and to hear him. That power demonstrated him to be the sovereign of the universe. Demons and disease and affliction and pain and paralysis can not exist where he speaks their demise. He is lord over disorders and misery. And they must obey.

The fact that Jesus' ministry was marked by healing of this nature in and of itself is just amazing. You want to draw a crowd, you just start to take care of the things that plague their physical lives the most. But the healing mercies he brought upon the lives of the Galileans and those who came from all over was not merely incidental to his ministry. It was not merely either to draw a crowd. Jesus wove healing into the fabric of preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. The news of the kingdom of heaven is good news. As he heralds that good news with his voice, he signifies that good news with healing power. He signifies the good news by bringing relief from the misery of sickness and disease and dysfunction and demonic oppression. I mean can you imagine the experience of such healing? You are brought to Jesus on a mat because you cannot walk and you have not been able to do so for two years, yet after you encounter him you yourself carry your mat home! Or you come to Jesus having never seen before. You are blind; you know nothing but blackness. But after you meet Jesus, he gives you sight. You open your eyes and behold! Or you suffer terribly from excruciating and debilitating pain that has dominated your every waking moment. The news is spreading that there is this man in Galilee. People everywhere are talking. Your friends help you struggle to go in search of him and when you find him, he looks at you sympathetic to the condition you are in. Putting his hand on your shoulder, he commands the pain to flee. Instantly you experience absolute unutterable relief. The

euphoria you now feel is as intense as the pain used to be. You can hardly believe it as this Jesus turns to the crowds gathered around and goes on about the good news of the kingdom of heaven.

Weaving healing into his preaching and teaching, Jesus signifies that he truly is THE KING. He rules over all things including suffering and sickness.

You can trust him. He has your best interests in mind. You should pay attention to what he is saying. This one who commands sickness and disease is the one to whom you should submit your life as well.

B. So Jesus' ministry of healing demonstrates his sovereignty. But it also declares that healing is part of the kingdom over which he reigns. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom that breaks free from sin and all its consequences, from the misery and desperation and pain associated with it, from disease and dysfunction that have come as part of the Fall. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of wholeness and wellness and happiness.

Isaiah 35 looks ahead to the fullness of the kingdom.

Verses 5-6 say: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Verse 10 says: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 53:4-5 say: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... and with his wounds we are healed.

Revelation 21:4 speaks of the new heaven and new earth this way: he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

The Apostle Paul looks forward to the release from bondage to corruption that creation is under at present. In Romans 8 Paul writes, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the

glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility . . . in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now . . . and we ourselves groan inwardly as we await eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."

We may or may not experience healing in this age. In this age, sickness and disease are used by God for good and for his glory. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove a "thorn in his flesh." And the Lord refused, saying, "my grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness."

But ultimately speaking, the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom that brings healing with it. Jesus came giving a foretaste of the healing and wholeness and redemption of our bodies that will be for everyone who is part of the kingdom of heaven. And that is good news. All our suffering and sickness are reminders that we are not home yet. But when we enter the kingdom, when we physically enter the kingdom, we will say goodbye forever to sorrow and sighing. Disease and disorder do not abide in the kingdom of God.

Even more importantly, however, sin itself does not abide in that kingdom. That is why there is no pain and misery. Jesus' overturn of physical suffering signifies his defeat of the great disorder of our souls which is sin. The root of our sorrow and sighing, our grief and our groaning, disease and dysfunction is sin. What he will do for our bodies, he will also do for our souls. This is the main reason we come to him. We come to him for reconciliation with God. We come to him to enter his kingdom through grace and forgiveness, and we get redemption of our bodies from the corruption that is in the world. That is fundamentally why you need to come to Jesus today if you have not already. The excitement of physical redemption is but a visible expression of the reality of spiritual redemption. Oh the joy! Oh the blessing of reconciliation with God. That's when you who were dead in your trespasses and sins he makes alive and redeems you



from spiritual darkness and satanic domination to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

#### **IV. HE DREW A CROWD.**

A. Matthew tells us that the fame of Jesus spread throughout all Syria. That is north of Galilee. And great crowds followed him from the south as well from the decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and beyond the Jordan.

B. And it is no wonder, is it? Great crowds flock to what interests them. A record crowd of 104,793 people turned out to the Cowboys stadium in Arlington to be a part of the final concert of George Strait. People turn out in droves to sporting events. And when crowds of people turn out online to view a horse attacking an alligator or a woman using a lighter while pumping gas, the video is said to go viral.

But if you can cure disease, stunningly you will go viral. Jesus was going viral. He drew great crowds. The world unanimously identifies sickness and disease as the great enemies of enjoying life. As Jesus was healing, he struck a nerve. In a world where there was no social media, not cable news networks, and no cell phones, the word spread like wildfire and the people came in droves. The glad result was that multitudes were exposed to the preaching and teaching of Jesus as well.

The success of Jesus' ministry was not in the numbers of people who followed him. The success was in bringing the kingdom. Outward and temporary blessings of the kingdom's advent in this age excited the masses but did not change the people's hearts for the most part. Capernaum and Galilee, as are most people, were ready to receive the gifts of the kingdom but were not ready to yield to the demands of the kingdom. They were not ready to repent.

#### **Conclusion**

If you want to enter the kingdom, you must repent of your sin and submit yourself to Christ in faith. For by grace are you saved through faith. It is a faith that submits to Christ. It is a faith that loves and worships Christ. And it is a faith that serves the Lord Jesus Christ.