

So Now What? (Just during the transition from music to sermon)

Some of you may be like me - wondering - so - now what?

In our physical world, we have gone through a couple of years of lockdowns, jobs and school chaos, health concerns, fears, separations, divisions - now what?

OR have spent time raising kids and now they are in school, off to college or moved out of the house - now what?

Or maybe if you're in the spiritual space of being baptized and completing Profession of Faith - now what?

Or maybe you just said yes to Jesus and invited Him to be King of your heart - Now what?

1) Two Kingdoms

For each of us, this may look a little different. I once heard that God doesn't have a "second string". Meaning He doesn't have a plan "b". When He called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt - and Moses hesitated because he felt unqualified - God didn't agree and went to the next person down the line. God's plan was that Moses to be the leader. What I would like to explore today is - what is God calling you and I into next?

As followers of Jesus, we know that we have been given the gift of eternal life when we believe. But what does God expect us to do while we wait for that day to come? Is living a life that keeps us out of jail and living at peace with our neighbours - as long as they don't cause drama - enough? As a child of God - that was born and raised in the church - baptised as a baby, did Profession as a teen, volunteered in a variety of areas of church life - is God asking for more? YES. Yes, He is.

So often we get caught up in the doing and forget the listening. Our Bibles collect dust because we have heard it all a thousand times. I invite you to listen again with fresh ears and meditate with me on the scripture that is before us.

PRAY: Lord, what do You have to teach us today about this scripture?

Romans 8

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

This is Paul's opening statement - his thesis, which he goes on to pull apart and explain. Here he sets up - as he often does in his letters - two opposing sides to highlight God's desire for His children. As we continue to read, one side is the "law of the Spirit" and the other the "law of the flesh". According to the concordance, the word "flesh" used in this passage is referring to the sinful state of human beings.

Let's take a moment to go back to the very first statement - Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore means "because of what was just said". In Chapter 7 Paul wrote about his struggle between loving God with all he has and yet struggling with sin. He thanks God for delivering him - therefore experiencing no condemnation. Looking up synonyms there wasn't anything that really had the same weight as the word "condemnation". This is a VERY heavy word. The best alternative is: eternal punishment for a guilty sentence. This is the reality for each of us living outside of the life of Christ.

Is God's forgiveness conditional? And if it is - what are the conditions? Scholars have spent much more time digging biblically into this than I have. At this point, I believe that accepting forgiveness is part or maybe even the FIRST step on the path to spiritual freedom. God forgives. He offers His forgiveness for all we have done, through Christ's sacrifice on the cross

1John 1:8-9 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Let's carry on starting a verse 3, of Romans 8 -

3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Here we are reminded of John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” This is the good news that we believers rest our faith on. The band -Casting Crowns wrote it simply in their song, “Glorious Day”

Living, He loved me
Dying, He saved me
Buried, He carried my sins far away
Rising, He justified freely forever

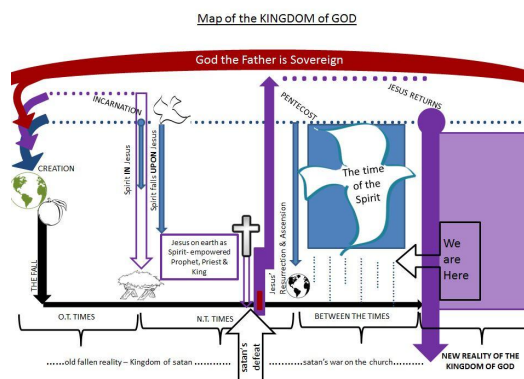
This is GOOD NEWS! This sacrificial act of Jesus stepping in and taking the blows of punishment for our sin - instead of us - frees us to live in freedom and not in a cycle of condemnation. This is not complicated. With child-like faith, we believe and accept this gift of grace.

The next step is to live into that freedom. This is definitely a bit harder.

It takes 21 days to form a habit.(Ruth's story) So it is with growing spiritually. It takes time, dedication, a focus on the Holy Spirit's guidance and willingness to learn...

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

As followers that love Jesus with all our hearts, minds, soul and strength - we are free to live. Truly live. Live lives that are peaceful, and focused on God's desires. It is important to know where we are so that we know where we are headed. Since Christ's death and resurrection we are living in the “time of the Holy Spirit” ([Show map](#))



This map is a collaboration of a week-long course through Dunamis. For today I would like to show that God is sovereign. He always was and will continue to always be. There are three separate but joined persons of God. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three were present at Creation. There are 4 distinct times in our history. The OT times started with creation and includes the Fall as an event when sin entered creation through the temptation from Satan and the actions of Eve and Adam. It was a falling out of the relationship with God. This time period stretched to the birth of Jesus. This is where the NT starts and writings include the ministry of Jesus, death, resurrection to this earth and ascension to heaven to prepare a place for us. Even though Jesus conquered Satan and death through this sacrificial act - Satan continues to be at war with the church in the between times. This is where we are living. This is the time of the Holy Spirit. ([remove map](#))

Jesus says in John 14 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you.

As Christ's disciples, we are called to move in God's Kingdom here on earth as we wait for Jesus to return and usher in that 4th, new everlasting reality of God's kingdom.

As a church, we put into practice Matthew 28 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2) An invitation to move within the Kingdom of God

We baptize, we look after the needy, we pray, we attend church and Bible studies. But have we understood what it takes to obey everything that Jesus has commanded us? Have we really taken to heart what it takes to be His disciple?

So often we are so good at gaining head knowledge but have a hard time letting that sink 14 inches to our heart. And allow what we read in the Bible about being a disciple - a follower of Jesus radically change the way we think and react. How do we move from being a fan of Jesus (someone who agrees with what the Bible says and thinks that this is all good stuff) to a follower of Christ? (someone willing to go the distance, listen to the Spirit, allow Jesus to change us from the inside out - to live authentically for Jesus - meaning that who I am on Sunday or a Bible study on Wednesday is the same person you will meet at the job site or on Friday night going out for drinks. According to the Bible, one day a week Christian is not a thing.

You may be thinking that is all well and dandy but I need to live in the real world. Bills need to be paid, bosses need to be answered, homework needs to get done and kids need to be taken to soccer. Yup. I hear you. But I believe that God is asking and encouraging us for more. Jesus uses the phrase - let those that have ears - let them hear. He is encouraging us to sit up and pay attention! My words alone will not change the way others think - it is the work of the Holy Spirit that will change hearts and minds. Are we willing to listen?

When we say yes to Jesus - believe in Him, we move from the realm of flesh or sinful nature to the realm of the Holy Spirit... picking up again at verse 7

7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Did you notice how many times Paul said "IF" ? - 6 times. Here again, God is highlighting through Paul's words His desire for His children. IF the Spirit of God lives in you - you are in the realm of the Spirit. Which is His desire. IF you don't have this Spirit within you, you do not belong to Christ. There is no grey area. We cannot be in both camps. There is no sitting on the fence here. Jesus is asking for ALL. ALL in. We can ask ourselves - where I am at? Am I ALL In? Let's take a look at what that means.

What is this obligation that Paul mentions in verse 12? I believe he is referring to knowing the expectations of being a disciple of Christ, or the responsibilities we have in moving within God's earthly kingdom. In Luke 14:15-23, Jesus tells us there is a cost to following Him. He uses a parable to illustrate that nothing should come between our call and moving within His kingdom as His disciple. Do you remember the story of the great banquet? Guests were given an invitation and agreed to come - but when it came time to come to the banquet they gave excuses why they couldn't fill their obligation. The gaining of wealth, power and putting family was the reason for these guests to skip the banquet. Jesus continues in Luke 14 to highlight the cost of being a disciple is loving Him FIRST.

3) Equipped as a member of the Kingdom (disciple)

If we take an honest look - I think we can see a bit of ourselves in one or more of these excuses. How often have we used the excuse of I'm too tired, I'm not equipped, or when the kids get older, I need to look after my aging parents, I need to be more financially stable, or when I am done my courses and have my Ph.D.- then I can concentrate on being a disciple and move in God's Kingdom here on earth. These excuses can cloud or even cause us to delay what the Spirit is asking us to do when we feel those nudges or have been given a thought "out of the blue". God does not expect us all to drop what we are doing and become full-time missionaries. As His disciples, we can work in His mission field in the areas we are. From raising kids & modelling our love relationship with Jesus, to taking a meal to a sick neighbour, to giving due praise to a coworker, to offering a listening ear to a friend, modelling Christ-like compassion and love to a divorced neighbour, to walking with honesty and integrity both at church, home and the workplace - there are so many ways the Holy Spirit can be calling each of us to move within this time of God's kingdom on earth. 1 Cor.12 describes a few other ways the Holy Spirit gifts can be used

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **8** To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

What Jesus is saying in these passages is that there is a cost, expectation and obligation as His disciples.. No relationships last without loyal commitments and actions (JK Brown).

IF we stopped right there - it would be a heavy pill to swallow. This can all seem overwhelming and unattainable. How do we digest the truth that Jesus is teaching?

Let's pick up Romans 8 at verse 14...

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15** The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." **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, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

God has equipped each of us to do great things through His Spirit. When we live in step with the Holy Spirit we follow Jesus' example of being connected to God through prayer. Did you ever notice that Jesus didn't start His ministry until AFTER He was baptized by the Holy Spirit. Matthew, Mark & Luke account that the heavens opened up and the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove and the Voice said, "You are my Son, whom I love, with You I am well pleased."

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus communicated and listened to His Father. In doing so He fulfilled and did what God the Father asked. John 5:19 "The Son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees his Father doing. What the Father does, the Son also does. We continue to read about Jesus and how He healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, preached, taught and showed love to those around Him. He also demonstrated His power over nature and promised that we would do the same things. John 14:12-13 Anyone who believes in me will do the works I have been doing. In fact, they will do even greater things. That's because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do anything you ask in my name. Then the Father will receive glory from the Son.

He did all this to model being in step with the Holy Spirit to us. I just want to stop a moment to let that sink in. Jesus emptied Himself to walk as a man on this earth, then was baptized with the Holy Spirit and then He gave God glory by preaching, healing, casting out evil spirits and loving others through the power of the Holy Spirit. We as His disciples are to do the same... We are equipped by the Holy Spirit.

****Doubt likes to spout up every once in a while and make us question are we filled with the Holy Spirit? The Bible teaches that those who are filled with the Holy Spirit have visible Evidence. Taking dry paper towel and placing it in the bottom of a glass and then I will turn the glass upside down in the water. The paper towel stays dry because the air pushes the water out of the way. This experiment gives visible evidence that invisible air has properties just like our invisible Holy Spirit has visible proof that He lives inside us.**

At one of the Dunamis Training weeks, I had the privilege of chatting with a former witch. She opened my eyes to how the disciples of satan saw believers. She described times when former friends of hers would have to cross to the other side of the street because the light of Jesus was so bright in a believer walking on the sidewalk. Isn't it neat to know that others can see Jesus' light shining out from us?

Gal 5:22 -25 says there is visible evidence of having the Holy Spirit inside. Lives are bearing fruit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Often when we can't see these attributes blooming from ourselves - we can go back and ask what is causing a blockage to these fruits forming. Do our feet need to be planted more in God's word? Do we need refreshment from the Holy Spirit to rain down on us? Do we need to lift our eyes to and soak in the presence of the Son of God?

I know what I am saying – most of you know (point to head) but have we moved that knowledge from our head to your heart? Many of us believe in God and have asked Jesus to be Lord of our lives – but have we given over our self-will to be Spirit-willed? Are we in step - Living life through the Spirit?

Often for me, it takes a period of time that is hard and difficult to walk - like hiking with mud-soaked boots - for me to realize - that I have not asked God what His plans are for me - I just assumed and asked for His blessing. We please our Abba Father, by walking where He says to walk. We have hope for the future - even though we don't know what tomorrow brings, we live in peace and freedom and wisdom from above.

So now what? Join me in shaking off the moss, dirt and grim and prepare ourselves to move in God's kingdom in the countless ways He is calling us to. Now is the time. God is calling us now. In the places we are with the talents He has given us to work as His disciple in His kingdom here on earth.

Prayer: Lord we humbly come before You knowing we often want to be the writers and directors of our own stories. We confess we want to be in charge of our lives. Come Holy Spirit refresh us, renew us, cleanses us, ...

Welcome/Greeting/Call to Worship

Good Morning! Welcome to Bethel! We are glad you are here! How was your week? For some, we come this morning eager to worship and soak in God's presence as a family. Eager to celebrate together the women that have been an influence in our lives on this Mother's Day. From our moms to aunts to GEMS leaders we are grateful for the love, attention and encouragement you have given. We are especially blessed when you modelled your walk with Jesus.

For others of us we are thankful for the habit of coming to church on Sundays - because, to be honest, it is work to get here. Whether is it rounding up the little ones or requiring teenagers to get in the car - it takes effort to come. For others of us are experiencing a funk - ranging from finding it hard to get out of bed to having no joy in our daily routines.

The GOOD NEWS is we serve a God Who loves us as we are and welcomes us to this place of corporate worship no matter where our hearts are at.

Taken from Psalm 34

Come Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.

Fear the Lord, you His holy people,
for those who fear Him lack nothing.

Glorify the Lord our King with me;
let us exalt His name together.

Parting....

SO now what? The choice is ours. God has always given His creation - us a choice. You can leave here today - thinking that what I said was out in left field, or maybe at some point you just stopped paying attention. But if you felt compelled by the Spirit to explore even a taste of what was talked about - I urge you to listen to the Spirit. We all have growing to do - what ways is the Spirit asking you to move this week?

For some of us that might mean doing something we have never done, for others that might mean letting go or stepping out of teams we are involved in, and for others, it might mean stepping into ministries or teams.

As we go out into God's mission field - I encourage us to live authentically for Jesus. Explore what that means for you. Chat and listen to Him on His plans for you today and the rest of this week. It's going to be good!! May the peace of God go before us, the Love of Christ fill us as we go out from here to live a life filled with the Holy Spirit.... Amen.