

FM72 WACO – LIFE IN GOD’S KINGDOM

Good evening, everyone. My name is Janet Ross. I grew up in a church in Waco pastored by my parents. We had a lot of intimate worship and great Bible teaching. We often sang a chorus with these words, “*I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, over mountain or plain or sea. I’ll say what you want me to say, dear Lord. I’ll be what You want me to be.*”* I meant it with all of my heart, but I would end that chorus with, “*Anywhere but Africa!*”

When I was 13, the Lord began to ask me, “Will you *really* not go to Africa?” I wrestled with Him, but after a few months, I said, “*Yes, Lord, I’ll even go to Africa!*”

Ten years later, God sent me to South Africa. I thought I would be there about nine months. My plan was to return to the USA, get my Masters & Doctorate degrees, and open a counseling ministry. But after living in South Africa for six months, I heard the Lord tell me to stay there indefinitely.

Since I grew up in a very close family, I said, “*Lord, why don’t you call someone to Africa who doesn’t like their family? I love my family! There are a lot of people who don’t like their families; call one of them!*”

The Lord replied to me, “If you will allow Me, I will sever your unhealthy soul ties to your family that would keep you from obeying My will. And I will become your family. I’ll be your father and mother, sisters and brothers. I will be *everything* to you.”

God did surgery on my soul that day, and from then on, I was free to serve Him without a strong yearning to return to America. I grew in trusting and loving Him. He did become my father and mother, sisters and brothers... Jesus became *everything* to me.

I served God in South Africa for seven years. Then a bachelor from Israel came to South Africa to preach, and I rescued him from his bachelorhood! We married in Waco, and I joined him in ministry in Israel.

If you have a Bible, please turn to Matthew 4:17. Jesus had recently been baptized in water, was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness by the devil, moved to Capernaum, and began His public ministry.

Matt. 4:17 says, “*From that time Jesus began to preaching and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’*” The King of God’s Kingdom had moved into their region, and He was urging them to get their lives right with God. To repent means to turn from going our own way (which is naturally carnal and sinful) to going God’s way. Repentance is the entryway into the Kingdom of God!

Jesus didn’t begin His ministry by inviting the sick to come for healing or by raising the dead. He began by preaching repentance! He knew that miracles would only produce *temporal awareness* of God’s Kingdom and not the *lasting* fruit that repentance would bring. He didn’t want His listeners to just be *aware* of His Kingdom; He wanted them to be a *part* of it! He wanted them *in* His Kingdom!

That’s still His heart today! You can *observe* God’s working on the campus, in your friends, and in the nation, but if you want to be a *part* of it, you must repent, turn from your sin, believe the gospel, and embrace Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

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Matt. 4:18-22 says, “*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.*”

When Jesus called these four men, they *immediately* left their nets, vocations, families, possessions, comforts, and their future as they knew it. It cost them *everything* to follow Jesus! They didn’t ask where they were going, and when they were coming back. They didn’t ask what they would do, and who would support them. They just left *it all* and ran after Jesus!

We usually *don’t* know where walking with Jesus will lead us. But we drop everything and run after Him just like these men did!

You have most of your lives ahead of you, and you may be wondering what God will do with your life if you give it to Him. Will He call you to be single? To be a missionary? I can tell you from walking with Jesus for over 55 years that His plans are *better* than ours. God has never failed me, and He will not fail you! You can trust Him with your life.

Matt. 4:23-25 says that Jesus went throughout the Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. Thousands of people followed Him from all over the area. They heard His teachings and saw healings and miracles, and yet most of them never became His disciples. They observed His Kingdom being expressed, but they did not embrace it for themselves. They followed Him for what He could do for them.

Our churches are full of people like that today. Many believe in Jesus, but they follow Him only for His blessings. They want to hear good teachings and great music. They want peace and joy, to be free from guilt and shame. They want to live eternally with Jesus, but they don’t really want to live life with Him every day on *earth*!

They want the gifts of God’s Kingdom (like: joy, peace, and forgiveness) without kneeling before the King. They may have prayed a prayer to receive God’s salvation, but never prayed a prayer of surrender to make Jesus Master of their lives. It’s as if they said, “*Jesus, come into my life and bless me. Don’t mind all the stuff I have around; just climb over it and walk around it. I want to go to heaven, but I want my junk, too. So, come on in – my way.*”

But then, some people want more! They want a close relationship with the Lord where they have intimate fellowship with Him every day. They love Jesus fervently! Their hearts *burn* as they read God’s Word and perceive His heart. They willingly give their lives to Him! Their prayer is: “*Anything, anytime, anywhere. Lord, I’ll go anywhere and do anything at any time. Here am I; send me.*”

When we surrender our lives to Jesus, then ALL we have and ALL that we are belongs to Him! We live to do *His* will! Our goal is to know Him and make Him known, regardless of the cost or consequence. We *want* to live every minute of every day for Jesus! We don’t think, “How much sin can I get away with and

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still go to Heaven?” We think, “How can I give up *everything* so that God has *all* of me?! How best can I live my life for *His* honor and glory?”

There is a pastor in **Peru** who lost most of his church members to martyrdom. One day, a reporter went to interview him. The pastor was showing him the many graves behind the church where his members were buried. The man said to him, “How can you continue to serve a God Who would allow this to happen?” The pastor replied with surprise, “*We don’t serve God for what we can get! We serve Him for what we can give! We give everything to Him!*”

Matt. 5:1-2 says, “*And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them...*” As Jesus saw the needs and hunger of the multitude, He began to make disciples. He taught the men what the culture of His Kingdom looks like.

First, He gave them the heart attitudes they were to have. We, as the Lord’s disciples today, are to have these same attitudes. Who and what we *ARE* is the foundation for what we *DO* in God’s Kingdom.

He began with **Matt. 5:3**: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” Being poor in spirit is how our life begins in God’s kingdom. We acknowledge that we are spiritually destitute without Jesus. We have no righteousness of our own! We were born in sin, and it is *natural* for us to sin. Before a holy God, we are spiritually bankrupt!

The poor in spirit confess and repent of their self-righteousness and independence. They turn to God, knowing they *desperately* need Him. Everyone needs the Lord, but only those who *admit* their need get His attention. That leads us to... **Matt 5:4**: “*Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.*”

We mourn our sin and needy position before God. We don’t casually ask God to forgive us; we *grieve* offending Him! We don’t just *confess* our sins; we *repent* of them! We turn to God and from away from sin! When we confess our sin, God does forgive us. The blood of Jesus is enough for *all* sin! But we mustn’t keep sinning! We need to *beg* God to deliver us!

There is a big difference between being forgiven and being delivered. Ask the Lord to show you what makes you susceptible to particular sins, and then plead with Him to uproot them from your life! Do business with God concerning your sin! As we confess and repent, broken before God, we will grow in humility.

Matt. 5:5: “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*” A meek person is humble. He doesn’t resist God’s will or the people God puts in his life. He repents of pride and arrogance, and of demanding to be in control.

Isaiah 57:15 says, “*For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*”

To be contrite is to be broken. It is to be crushed (like powder) of all rebellion and resistance to God's rule. God chooses to dwell with those who have a humble, contrite spirit, who don't fight with Him about who is lord and in control. He wants to bring revival to the hearts of those who are broken. We want revival, so we need to repent of pride so that He *will* come and revive us!

Jesus said in **Matt. 5:6**: "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.*" A hunger for righteousness reveals a desperation for God. The more we know God, the more we *want* to know Him! We take time to cultivate our relationship with Him.

We are hungry for God's Word; it is *life* to us! In a world of confusion and deception, we cling to the truth of God's words. We stake our lives on the Scriptures!

When we hunger for righteousness, our desires change from wanting worldly things to wanting heavenly things! Jesus satisfies our souls; nothing else does!

Many of you have been crying out for more of God, especially this last month. You are hungry for Him! You don't want to waste your life on mundane things that have no eternal value! You recognize that the best thing you can do with your life is to surrender it to Jesus Christ! You long for more of Him and for Him to have more of you!

Some of us need to repent of our lack of passion for Jesus and our distraction with worldly things. As we draw closer to God, we see our sin in the light of His presence. We are appalled at how we have offended Him, how we have grieved His Holy Spirit. We plead with God for mercy! We are grateful for His mercy toward *us* so we show mercy to others!

Matt. 5:7: "*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*" We confess our *lack* of mercy – our unforgiveness, bitterness, and judgmental attitudes. We don't just confess these sins; we repent of them and refuse to live there any longer! We choose to forgive and release those who have sinned against us. We need God's mercy, so we *must* forgive others!

Jesus said in **Matt. 6:14-15**, "*If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"

We cancel their debt like Jesus cancelled ours. His blood is enough for *their* sin just as it is enough for *our* sin. Once we forgive, we're free! We're not enslaved to the bitterness and pain any longer! We forgive friends who hurt us, former boyfriends or girlfriends, church members, parents, and authority figures.

Psalm 27:10 says, "*When my father and mother have forsaken me, then the Lord will take care of me.*" God's parental love for us can penetrate our souls so deeply that it heals our inner wounds! It is more powerful than our pain. We find identity, security, and value in His love.

As we give and receive forgiveness and are secured in the love of God, our hearts are purified, which leads us to **Matt. 5:8**: "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*" Being pure in heart is being pure at the core of our being! We repent of allowing the world and selfishness to define us. We repent of all forms of idolatry, all forms of immorality, and all unbelief.

Repentance is our *lifestyle* as disciples of Jesus. We don't want *anything* to separate us from the Lord. For the rest of our lives, we will confess sin and turn away from it as the Holy Spirit convicts us. God is committed to transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and we work with Him by repenting and applying God's Word to our lives.

There are many who follow Jesus for what they can get, but only a few surrender to Him. It will cost us *everything* to belong to Jesus, but it will *gain* us *everything that really matters*. Why wouldn't we give up what is temporal to gain what is eternal? Why would we cling to the temporal and forfeit the eternal?

In **Luke 9:24**, Jesus said, "...*whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*"

Maybe as I've been speaking, the Holy Spirit has been tugging on your heart. (1) You realize you've never repented of your sin, and taken Jesus as your Savior and Lord. And you want to do that now.

(2) Some of you are ready to surrender fully to Jesus now. You're ready to say, "*Anything, anytime, anywhere. Jesus, take my life, and use it for Your glory.*"

(3) Many of you need to forgive someone significant to you, and to receive the healing love of God the Father. You're ready to receive the grace of Jesus to forgive. You want His love to fill the wounds and potholes in your soul.

(4) Some of you feel the Lord calling you to the mission field, and you are ready to say YES to that call.

If you could relate to any of these four options, please stand. I want to pray for you.

*The chorus of the hymn mentioned in the first paragraph was composed by Mary Brown, 1856-1918. Copyright: public domain.