



Prelude – Kingdom of God by Jon Guerra

Welcome/Announcements

- October 29th Silent Retreat & Picnic
- Series & Resources |

There is, as we are all well aware, something churning underneath the surface of our lives, individually and collectively, which is having a withering effect on our daily lives. Whether experienced as “Burnout,” apathy, or over-reactivity, it “has less to do with workload [the tasks and circumstances of daily living] and more to do with internal and external...*anxiety*.”¹

Becoming aware, walking through the gate of awareness, of this unease and unsettledness (ours and others) so that we can recognize and participate in the kind of living that brings deeper freedom for us and those we [share life with]² is the aim of our dive into Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount. Words that reveal and empower, but not just or even primarily here on Sundays.

- Weekly Practices & Resources: In the App & On the Website
- Monday Psalms, Pastoral Notes, & Collective Prayers: In the App

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 118:19-24

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

¹ Steve Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety: yours and thiers*, 6.

² Cuss, xiv.

Song #1 – You Have Made Me Glad by Harvest

Song #2 – Abide by Dwell Music

Dismiss Kids

PRE-SERMON READING | Matthew 5:17-20

And Jesus continued, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; to prove them untrue, I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them; to establish them as the truth of truth, reality itself. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, truth at its most granular component, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished; until its truth is fully seen. Therefore, whoever subverts the bond of the very smallest part of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called a very small part of the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them, meets their demands, and teaches them will be called great, distinguished in nature, in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness, your proper relating, exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter, experience, the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON |

“Before the hidden anxiety of this life kills you, figure out what’s going on. We won’t make it too far or too much of an end in life if we are merely reacting (to situations or spouses, events or employees/ers, opportunities or obstacles, family or friends), and even less if we are unaware of what spurs our reactions in daily life.”

That’s the premise of our current series, that life is a collection of interactions and collisions with the stimuli of any given day. The problem is not the run-in per se, but rather, in our cultural moment, and often in our heads, hearts, and bodies, our reactions to the stimuli leave us anything but settled. We are, it feels, and all the evidence confirms, perpetually anxious and restless and, worse, unsure why.

We observed last sermon; one aspect that perpetuates unease and unrest is the imaginative gridlock that we experience when our navigational processes don’t match with the world as it truly is. When our maps and models, whether of the physical world and universe or the kingdom of God, are off, it’s no surprise that we run into dead ends over and over again.

The necessity to settledness of a proper orientation to where you are for where you are going is why Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount by re-orienting his apprentices’ world, providing them a new map and model to aid them in their adventures. **By reframing the question from: *What do I need to live a blessed (happy, good, and purposeful) life?*, to *How is my already blessed-ness (happiness, goodness, and purpose) being diluted or covered?***, Jesus breaks our imaginative gridlock, allowing us to step off the treadmill of trying harder but getting nowhere so that we can set our energy efforts and affections in right order (in the proper place and to their true end).

Life is a pilgrimage of sorts, but one not typically imagined. We are going deeper or maturing in our existence rather than progressing elsewhere. The people and situations of our daily living are not obstacles to a whole and holy, a happy, good & purposeful, life; that’s what Jesus’ map and model tell us. So then, what keeps me from experiencing what is already ours in Jesus? What keeps us from flourishing?

Anxiousness and unrest stem not just from our navigational processes but also from our relational processes. Not just the grand destination (the life we are after) to which we navigate our daily living but the granular interactions in which our desired destination is made manifest.

So, this week, we move from the widening gaze of first-century maps and models of Ptolemy, Corpenecius, and Galileo and leap into the minuscule world of quantum mechanics!

Now, before you dismiss the thought with a laugh or prepare for a nap, remember how we discussed those simple [Ten Words in Exodus over the summer](#).

Didn’t we say the Ten Words were “Law” in a natural sense? The Ten Words were like the constant principle that describes why life remains free or not. Certainly, from these foundational principles, the fledgling nation of Israel created a set of regulations with consequences of civil law, and the Pharisees constructed a labyrinth of daily protocols. But the “Law” itself was something more fundamental, like gravity. What keeps life grounded and orbiting the sun so that life can flourish on planet earth? Gravity, and living within the bonds of gravity. What keeps life free from enslavement and oppression so that it can flourish? The Ten Words, and residing within the bonds of life enmeshed in God’s person and rhythm with others.

A flourishing and expansive life is possible within the bonds of such forces—gravity and the Ten Words. Still, the laws themselves describe and account for the world we experience, but not wholly so. Even Newton knew there was more than the force of gravity that kept the world spinning around the sun. More, but not less. And so we add Faraday’s discovery of the electromagnetic fields and then Einstein’s particles and protons, and then Bohr and Dirac’s quantum physics. All were inclusive and built on Newton’s gravity, which gives weight to existence, but were so by providing a more *granular* imagination of life’s operations and, thus, a plethora of ways to live more fully (flourishing) within those operations.

Just as Jesus didn’t come to abolish the Law, as _____ read for us moments ago, but to demonstrate its validity and universality, not by trying to see a bigger picture, but, ironically enough, by getting more granular with it (the iota and dot), so too does quantum mechanics. Here is how theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli explains it,

“Quantum mechanics...describes how things ‘occur,’ [how they become evident] and how they ‘interact with each other’ [relate]...The world of existent things is...a realm of possible interactions. Reality is...interaction. Reality is...relation...In the world described by quantum mechanics, there is no reality except in the relations between physical systems...it is a world of events...and events are junction points between processes...the passage from one interaction to another. The properties of ‘things’ [the nature and disposition] manifest themselves in a granular manner only in the moment of interaction—that is to say, at the edges of the processes...”³

QUANTUM CONSTANTS

- Existence is granular (finite, operates within real, knowable limits)
- Life is indeterminate (the future, within limited probabilities, is not unequivocally determined by the past; i.e., change/maturation is possible)
- Reality is relational (the life of experience is a product of interactions with others, who are interacting with others)

The nature and characteristics of existence manifest in the minute interactions and collisions that make up our daily lives, says quantum mechanics. And here is a crucial concept: at this level, things do not change in time; they change only in relation to one another.⁴ So, where will we enter, experience the kingdom of heaven, the already whole and holiness, happiness, good and purposeful? In the small, granular interactions and collisions of daily existence.

Freedom, flourishing, and the kingdom of God manifest (their nature is experienced) in granular interactions (in the right relating at the smallest part). Or, as Jesus would say down the road to the same apprentices and the ones whose understanding of the world needed to be both expanded and deeper:

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you...within you...within your grasp.” (Luke 17:20-21)

³ Carlo Rovelli, *Reality Is Now What It Seems*, 134-137.

⁴ Rovelli, 182.

Okay, so what does that have to do with our anxiousness and unrest? Good question.

Remember, awareness is just the gate, but it is not the goal. The goal of becoming aware of our unease and unrest, noticing when our heart speeds up, our mind races, and our stomach tightens, **is a deeper, fuller life for ourselves and those with whom we share life**—a maturity, change that occurs, manifests only in relationship, in the interactions and collisions with others who are interacting and colliding with others too.

When we experience the disconnection of reality (those disquieted feelings that help us to become aware that something is off, less than “bless-ed”), it is fundamentally a relational matter at the granular (everyday, specific interaction) level. Or anxieties exist fundamentally in the actual conversations and interactions we have with others each day, not in the situation or the differences but in the real encounters.

Steve Cuss says that “a powerful way to deescalate anxiety [in ourselves and others] is to diagnose a source,”⁵ to, in our conversation, become aware of the characteristics/nature of our relating. Jesus takes us from the widening map of what the kingdom is (whole and holy life with God and others) into the churning contours of real life (to where we enter this kingdom) to help us diagnose the nature of our collisions and exhort us in the truth that change/maturation occurs/manifests in those same collisions.

Let me paraphrase how Jesus moves us in this direction. **If you want to know why you are so unsettled, look at the moments of interaction those little collisions throughout the day.** Assuming that we think we are good and grounded in our daily relations, Jesus has us look a little deeper into things, getting to the very small, granular interactions that make up a life. See if you have ever felt or behaved in these ways before:

You’ve heard the old truth: ‘As long as you don’t take a life, you’re all good.’...but I say having a settled opposition against another...showing contempt for another..., and visualizing them as godless puts you in an unfavorable position.

You’ve heard the old saying, ‘As long as you’re not breaking covenant, everything should work out.’...but I say it's your shallow appetites and affections that cost you more than you’re willing to pay.

It’s also said, ‘There are ways to get out of your bonds’...but I say that assuming you’re the exception to the rule never ends well and only expands the mess.

Again, you’ve heard it said the more exaggerated, hyperbolic, exasperated pronouncements and claims, the more weight they carry...but I say best keep it simple to avoid what (who) is really behind that hot air.

You’ve heard it said: ‘Take back what’s taken from you, or at least don’t let it be taken in the first place, is the name of the game.’...but I say being indebted to, having debtors, is how the game keeps going.

You’ve heard it said: ‘Love those with you/like you and hate your enemies.’...but I say, love (seek the good) of your enemies and pray for those that make your life difficult...after all, that’s the maturation (telios) our heavenly Father models and makes possible.

⁵ Cuss, 42.

The source of our discontent (as well as our neighbors', spouses', and coworkers') is not (fundamentally) the people and problems we encounter, but the unsettledness we (and others) bring into our encounters.

- Our stubbornness, contemptuousness, and ease of dehumanizing which erupt when things aren't as they should be.
- The fact that what motivates our actions is often my personal (and often shallow) appetites and affections rather than a shared (and deeper) longing.
- The culturally universal assumption that I am the exception to the rule, and so I am not responsible. The prevalent form of communication, exaggeration, and hyperbole which keep me from seeing, much less admitting, the truth of my limits.
- The standard operating procedure of most Americans (myself included) of self-protection & judgmental justification, which keeps me closed off from others who I'll eventually/truly need.
- And perhaps, the algorithmically conditioned and condoned loving those like me and hating those who are different, which, in truth, stunts our maturity and perpetuates our inexperience of the already blessed life with God and others.

These relational processes, granular interaction upon interaction—yours and others'—are the source of much of our ever-present unease. So, what are we to do? Awareness is the start, but only that, so how do we relate differently? **How are we changed/matured in our relations?**

Quickly,

RELATING MATURES WHEN:

- We move towards the collision...
- We pray in the presence...
- We examine the map & model retrospectively...

1) **We move toward the collision** | (Matthew 5:44) "But I say to you: Love your enemies..." Love presumes interaction, a colliding with, not avoiding. So, we cannot avoid even the most difficult of relations, perhaps especially those.

2) **We pray in the presence** | Not present, but that is true too. Jesus doesn't just tell us to love our enemies but to pray for those interactions where anxiety manifests; why? Because God's already there providing the nutrients for growth/maturity, for flourishing: "For he makes the sun rise on the evil...sends rain to the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

If wholeness and holiness are not something we get a hold of, but mature in (having been born again and resurrected), then the same thing is true about how we experience wholeness and holiness as something already there. Steven Cuss says, "...a chronic problem of many" of us is, "we think God is only with us, not ahead of us, and not so we think we're bringing God into a situation rather than remembering that God is already ahead of us" in these interactions. Instead of praying prayers for avoidance (Lord, keep me from this suffering) or even for me to bring the peace of Christ into the situations, "I could become aware that the

peace of Christ is not something I bring with me, it is already present in the work before I arrive.”⁶ ([Julian of Norwich](#)) I look to God, I look to you, I look to God in you and us, and from there, I engage.

3) **We follow the map and model retrospectively.** We look back a day, or week, or conversation/interaction, we can see not only the anxiety we (and others bring) into the encounter, but also where the kingdom is making an entrance/maturing in us.

The Beatitudes are not our guide through the day, the general principles guiding daily living (like the Ten Words); they are the disposition or nature made manifest in our colliding—a disposition we share because we are already in the kingdom/kingdom is in us, and thus can be “perfect” relate perfectly/properly as our Father is relating to us and to others (even those who make our world less than ideal)....The map and model help us see the manifestation of the kingdom within our midst, in our grasp, within us!!!!

The Kingdom’s Entrance:

- evidently dependent upon the Lord (poor in spirit)
- feeling the loss and less within the relationship (mournful)
- emotional but soberly, conscientiously so (meek)
- driven for right relating, after the thing we all need (craving righteousness)
- prone to forgiveness (merciful)
- open, not hidden, non-manipulated or manipulating (pure)
- operating out of our god-given-likeness (peacemaking)
- not overreactive when it goes sideways, when the collision doesn’t go like we hope (distinctly with Jesus)

REFLECTION & COMMUNION INVITE |

We do not mature through time; we mature (flourish, stay salty, and uncover our blessedness in Christ) through interaction. So, **ask the Spirit to**

- 1) bring to mind an interaction/collision you had this week. Consider, how you moved towards one another or what propelled you apart—asking the Spirit to
- 2 help you see your emotions/anxiety in the process and
- 3) where the nature of life with God and others (beatitudes) manifested.

I’ll give you a few minutes to listen to the Spirit’s examination and leading. **When the music begins to play, that is your cue to make your way to the table and receive the elements of communion. Hold on to them as you return to your seat and remain standing as we sing together.**

⁶ Cuss, 44.

Song #3 – Behold Him by Paul Baloche, Mission House

COMMUNION with CORPORATE CONFESSION |

Our Father in heaven, hallowed is your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

We receive from you all we need for life today, knowing there is plenty more for tomorrow.

We're forgiven, and so we forgive. Led not into the conflicts within and quarrels between, but delivered from all that thievers life.

Yours is the only and forever Kingdom and power and glory;

all of which you graciously share with us through Your Son.

In His life, we live. Amen.

Song #4 – Simple Kingdom by Bryan, Katie Torwalt

BENEDICTION | Luke 17:20-21

As we conclude the day made for us, we enter into the work for which we are made [**LIGHT THE CANDLE**], remembering:

The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you...within you...within your grasp.