

“Called: Called Within”

Luke 17:20-21

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Once upon a time, there were two brothers, eight and ten years old, who were exceedingly mischievous. Whatever went wrong in the neighborhood, it turned out they had had a hand in it. Their parents were at their wits' end trying to control them. Hearing about a pastor nearby who worked with delinquent boys, the mother suggested to the father that they ask the pastor to talk with the boys. The father replied, "Sure, do that before I kill them!"

The mother went to the pastor and made her request. He agreed, but said he wanted to see the younger boy first and alone. So, the mother sent him to the pastor. The pastor sat the boy down across a huge, impressive desk he sat behind. For about five minutes they just sat and stared at each other. Finally, the pastor pointed his forefinger at the boy and asked, "Where is God?"

The boy looked under the desk, in the corners of the room, all around, but said nothing. Again, louder, the pastor pointed at the boy and asked, "Where is God?" Again, the boy looked all around but said nothing. A third time, in a louder, firmer voice, the pastor leaned far across the desk and put his forefinger almost to the boy's nose, and asked, "WHERE IS GOD?" The boy panicked and ran all the way home.

Finding his older brother, he dragged him upstairs to their room and into the closet, where they usually plotted their mischief. He finally said, "We are in BIG trouble." The older boy asked, "What do you mean, BIG trouble?" His brother replied, "God is missing, and they think we did it." (story has been around for years, from the internet)

So, I ask you, “Where is God?” Or as scripture indicates, “Where is the Kingdom of God?”

In our scripture Jesus is standing with the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, and they ask Him this. Jesus’ answer no doubt surprises them. He says, “the Kingdom of God is in your midst.” Another translation says, “The Kingdom of God is already among you.” (New Living Translation) While other translations say, “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

What? The Kingdom of God is within me? How can that be?

Over the past 12 months we have had 3 sets of sermon series of 3 dealing with Calling. Today is the last of that series. Also, this week we begin a book study I want to encourage you to attend on Calling. You will find information about classes and times in the bulletin. Be sure to take your bulletin home with you.

I believe all of us are called. In fact, many deal with many callings at the same time. I hope we will live into the fact that we all have callings. A culture of calling.

One of the greatest callings we have is when we are called by God “within.” Yes, the kingdom of God “within.”

I want to remind you that at the Welcome Center there are daily scripture verses that coincide and relate to today's sermon. Those are available each week and deal specifically with the sermon for each Sunday. Please pick one up and read the scripture verse each day as we focus on the message for the week.

So, Jesus tells the people that the Kingdom of God is within you. Let's look at the Biblical build up to this important statement by Jesus that the kingdom of God dwells within you. We will look at Old Testament, New Testament, and then what that means for us today.

Psalm 84: ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty!

Psalm 90: ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

Ezekiel 37:27 New International Version (NIV): ²⁷ My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

In the Old Testament that Tabernacle was where God dwelt. It was also called the Tent of the Congregation or the Tent of Meetings. It was, in a sense, a portable dwelling place for the presence of God.

Once built, the Temple became the dwelling place of God.

A new insight for me: The Hebrew word for Tabernacle is Mishkan which literally means "dwelling place."

With that in mind we go to the New Testament. Jesus is born and we find this in John 1. **John 1:14 New International Version (NIV) ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

Jesus, the human tabernacle, dwelling place. But now we reflect back on scripture that was read this morning and realize the Kingdom of God, Jesus in in their midst...or as some translations say within you.

There was Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and they didn't recognize it. This week at church I was working on something in my office, had been in meetings, my mind was preoccupied and I it jumped in my mind that I needed to see Rev. Cathy and tell her something. I left my office headed to her office and literally went past her and somebody else standing talking by the copier machine as I headed towards her office. I put my brake shoes on, turned and went back to her. It was like, "Who were you looking for?" "You." "I'm right here."

And yet we wonder how the Pharisees could miss that Jesus, the Kingdom of God was in their midst. Since some translations say, "The Kingdom of God is within you," let's explore that.

We have many callings without, but we need to focus on the calling within. From the world we have callings. Callings from without.

Our culture tells us we are called to be successful.
 We are called to do it our way.
 We are called to have a lot of money.
 We have called to have the best.
 We are called to have more stuff.
 We are called to look out for #1 (self).
 We are called to apply rules to everyone else but our self.
 We are called to not care about others feelings.
 We are called to engage in anything that brings us pleasure, addicting or not.
 We are called take our eyes off Jesus.

Yes, those are some of the callings from without.

And yet there is there is this calling by the God within. A calling from within that says “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.” A calling from Jesus that says “follow me.” A calling from within where God wants all of you, not just part of you. A calling to have Christ abide within you.

Jesus was speaking to His disciples prior to His death and said:

John 15:4-5 New American Standard Bible (NASB) ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Does He abide in you and you in Him? Does He dwell within you? His dwelling place your life? He has a calling from within to be #1 in your life.

For years I have seen this license plate or sign: **(image) God is my copilot.**

That sound nice and Christian comforty. But I like this image better. **(image) If God is your copilot...switch seats.**

I want God to be the pilot not the copilot!!! I want Him to be in charge. I want Him to dwell within me, abide in me and to know that I am His and He is mine. I want Him to be King of my heart.

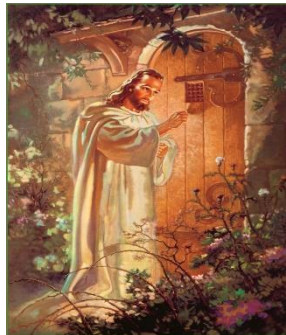
I love this saying: **(image) Live in such a way that those who know you but don't know God will come to know God because they know you.**

The kingdom of God is within you. Jesus in you. When people see you do they see a glimpse of Jesus? Do they see the hands and feet of Jesus? Do they experience the attitude and mind of Jesus?

God came to dwell among us, Jesus to abide within us, and God calls each of us to abide within Him.

As pastors we often talk about having Christ come in your heart. What we are talking about is an eternal relationship with Jesus. A calling for Jesus to come within your life. To forgive you of your sins. Without Him, beloved we are nothing.

There's a very old picture I want to share. To those of some generations this painting may be familiar to you, to others not so much. It was made even before my time, but I remember seeing it as a child. It was painted in the 1940's by Warner Sallmon. It is entitled Christ at Heart Door.



To be honest even though I had seen this for years, and even thought the title of the artwork should have given it away I had not noticed the shape of the doorframe is in a heart. Duhhh, Christ at Heart Door. The call of the world is there...the thorns and thistles that Jesus has to make His way through. But He finally knocks on the door. Now look carefully and you will notice something else unusual. There is no doorknob. There is no doorknob because the door must be opened from the inside.

Oh, friends Jesus in the Book of Revelation says: Revelation 3:20 New International Version (NIV) 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in (and eat with that person, and they with me.)

But friends I think even though many have received the call we put up a **(image) “Do Not Disturb” sign**. If we allow Christ within, He may start rearranging things. Reprioritizing things.

And then I found this sign:



All the more reason I need to respond to the call of Christ within my heart. Are you willing to have Jesus wreck you for His Kingdom's sake? Let Him In! Let Him in!

Without Him...I am nothing. Without Him...the Kingdom of God is lacking. Without Him my life does not have meaning.

<https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/74844/let-him-in>

It boils down to just you and Him. Let Him in! Let Him in! Jump! Leap! Trust! Believe! The calling of Jesus, the Son of God to live within you.