

CGGC eNews: Recalibrating to a Kingdom Focus—Part 5

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Misconceptions about the kingdom of God – Church activity does not equal kingdom activity.

“Lord, bless our time here this evening as we seek to do the work and business of your kingdom, Amen.”

How many times have you heard a prayer like this at the beginning of a church council meeting? How many times have you prayed a prayer like this before? I know I've prayed this prayer more times than I care to remember.



I believe this prayer illustrates one of the common misconceptions we hold about the kingdom of God. We often believe and act as if the church is the ultimate goal of the kingdom. If the local church builds a new building, it's viewed as growing the kingdom of God or expanding the work of the kingdom. We see church activity as the ultimate measure of kingdom activity, but I'm convinced this misses the mark of what Jesus meant when He spoke of His mission and His kingdom.

Do you remember Jesus' words in Luke 4:14-21?

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus, reading from Isaiah 61, announces the far-reaching nature of the mission of His kingdom. He wasn't just reorganizing the synagogue, it was bigger than synagogue renewal. Wherever Jesus went, people's lives were often dramatically transformed and as a result, the communities were changed because of the in-breaking of God's kingdom. The sick were made well, the oppressed were freed, the poor and marginalized were welcomed by Jesus, and sinners found forgiveness and new access to their heavenly Father.

There are communities throughout the United States where the church is thriving: constructing new buildings, adding staff, additional campuses, new programs and other such measurements of success. Too often, these same communities, despite the thriving church activity, are witnessing continued decline: increasing poverty rates, increasing domestic violence and crime, increasing illiteracy and other measurements demonstrating societal decline. The kingdom of God is bigger than just church activity.

The kingdom of God reaches into our communities and societies in a way that brings transformation. Fewer kids go hungry, fewer marriages ending in divorce, less injustice, less racism, and fewer people lost without the hope that only Jesus can bring. The picture of God's design for humanity is found in Genesis 1-2 and it's a picture of flourishing. The kingdom that Jesus came proclaiming is "near" and "at hand" is a picture of that original design reclaimed or restored. The kingdom of God is setting right everything that was set wrong by sin and the fall.



The kingdom of God should be the goal for our local church. This means we will give ourselves to and measure ourselves by kingdom activity: are the blind receiving sight, are the poor and marginalized being welcomed, are the oppressed being set free and is this place beginning to look more like what God intended for His creation? This is far bigger than buildings and programs and a 'new and improved church'.

How do you see the kingdom of God breaking-out or advancing in the community where you live, work and worship?