



ROSE  
HILL  
CHURCH

Luke 4:38-44  
The Church Is...

“...Sent for the King and His Kingdom”

Rev. Brian North  
June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Before we dive in, I want to let you know that next Sunday we will start a new series that will last for the summer, titled, “Life is too short to...” and will look at a theme from a different passage each Sunday that finishes off that phrase. I know our current series has a similar “formula” for each Sunday’s sermon title/theme...So, if you’re new to Rose Hill, I promise that not every sermon series is a phrase that we finish each Sunday with a different theme! It’s just how it all got laid out this time.

But before we get there, today we continue in our series on the nature of the church, and draw it to a close. We started with a message focused on the “sent” nature of the church. We disciples of Jesus are called to follow him and trust him...but our own discipleship and salvation really is not the end. If we stop there, we are simply consumers of what God offers; but God calls us to be so much more. **We are on mission with and for God, and Jesus sends us on that mission.** So, the next three weeks incorporated that “sent” theme as we looked at different aspects of the church: The church is sent with the cross; the church is sent in community; and last week Paul preached a message about how the church is sent to every culture...and today we see that the church is “sent for the King and His Kingdom.” And let’s remember – the church is each of us who follow Jesus. So, this is for each of us who follow Jesus, not “the Church” in some kind of philosophical, or hypothetical kind of way, as if it’s talking about “other people.”

And: **Being “on mission for the King” is one of the most difficult aspects of the faith for us to put into practice.** I had a great example of this on the plane home from New York City this last Wednesday (went to visit my daughter for an extended Father’s Day Weekend), an hour or so before I started writing this sermon on the flight. Before we took off, there was a lady sitting next to me who seemed a bit upset or agitated or something. I was on the window seat, she was in the middle seat, and her husband was on the aisle seat. I thought maybe the problem was she wanted to sit by the window (she was in that seat, or leaning over it peering out, when I showed up), so I offered to change so that she would sit there, her husband in the middle, and

me on the aisle. She told me that the problem was the family sitting in the row behind us: there was a little girl there – two years old we found out a few minutes later – and this lady didn't want to hear this girl jabbering and making noise, and so forth, "for the whole flight." She asked a flight attendant if there were any open seats that she and her husband could move to, and the flight attend let her know that while there were a couple individual seats open, there weren't two next to each other. So, she chose to stay.

Well, about 15 minutes later or so, just a bit after taking off, this little girl started making some noise – not really loud, but above what might be called an inside voice. These were happy noises, not crying or anything like that. I could see the lady next to me out of the corner of my eye, and she immediately stiffened up. She then kind of semi-turned around and asked the mom and dad in a rather stern voice, to please quiet their daughter down. I was fairly stunned. The parents were incredulous, responding that the girl is only two and that two-year-olds make noise. The lady insisted they tell her to keep quiet and that she needed to behave, insinuating that they weren't good parents if they couldn't get her to be quiet. The husband then asked if she'd ever raised a two-year-old (not helpful, but I don't blame him one bit for asking)...and asked "how they're doing". It was getting very personal! there were suggestions (that were more like threats) that a flight attendant should be called to intervene...it was kind of tense. I had visions of the airplane staff having to turn around and kick off an unruly passenger, something I'd just read an article about like two days before, and how it's a growing problem. I thought we were going to be another airplane in the news for this kind of behavior, and maybe I should start videoing what was going on so it would be my video the world would see! 😊

Now, I don't know this lady at all. Maybe she was under the weather, maybe she has some auditory sensory issues, maybe she lost a grandbaby recently who was that age...I don't know. But she came across as selfish. She wanted the flight to go her way, with everyone around her to bow to her wishes – especially a two-year-old girl. For the length of the flight I was careful to keep my phone and computer charging cords in my space, my elbow off of the armrest between us, for fear she'd lash out at me.

And so, as I started to work on this message a half hour or so later, it dawned on me that this lady really wanted to be Queen. Now, I didn't ask her permission to include her in my sermon...and fortunately she slept most of the way – though I did make the font really small and dimmed the screen so she hopefully wouldn't be able to see what I was writing...and then kept this opening part of the sermon off my screen once it was written. But she wanted to run the show, have people bow to her wishes, and really was not gracious or kind about it at all. After spending 5 days in NYC, which is known for rude behavior, this was definitely the rudest behavior I encountered. The problem, however, is that we all can have these tendencies. She's not the only one. Burger King doesn't intend their name to be interpreted this way, but when they say you can "have it your way" they are giving you permission to sit in the king's throne, as if *you* are the burger king. And we love to be King or Queen. But Jesus models something different, and his followers are called to something different. So, let's take a look at **Luke 4:38-44** this morning and see what Jesus has to say about this.

So, prior to this, Jesus had taught in his hometown, Nazareth, where he wasn't very readily accepted. He then went on to another town, Capernaum, where his teaching was received much more readily. Verse 32 tells us that he taught with authority, which is what they seemed to gravitate toward. And Capernaum remains the setting for the passage we just read.

He went to Simon's house – Simon is also called Peter, the name by which most of us probably know him – and Jesus heals his mother-in-law from an illness that seems to have had her bed-ridden. Luke specifically points out that she immediately got up and then began to wait on them, a stark contrast to how she'd been until Jesus healed her.

Jesus then heals more people who are brought to him. **In healing these people, Jesus is demonstrating his authority.** Luke tells us he taught with authority, but anyone can muster up the right words to at least *sound* authoritative. Healing people of their illnesses and demons is *demonstrating* authority.

**Jesus then tries to go get some rest.** He goes to a solitary place. When I was in New York this last week, finding solitary time was very difficult – no surprise, right? Central Park was jam packed; Washington Square was constantly filled with people; sidewalks and streets had constant traffic. And Jesus finds it difficult to get rest either, as people come looking for him, and try to prevent him from leaving the area. Sometimes life is this way. We try and get some down time – whether it’s to pray, to do a devotional, take a nap, watch a movie, converse with our spouse for the first time in a couple days...whatever it may be. And a kid starts crying, the phone rings, text messages come in, work is always looming in the background because it’s never truly finished...Busyness always seems to find us. But that doesn’t mean we should give up on the idea, because we need that down time. We need those times of centering, of resting, of just being in the presence of God without the needs of the world coming at us. It’s why God commands us to take a Sabbath day – to have a day of rest from our work. So, getting rest can be difficult to pull off, as we see with Jesus here.

But then Jesus lets them know that he has a task that necessitates he moves on. He can’t stay in spite of their wishes. **Jesus says, “I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (verse 43).** Jesus’ mission was the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God. This is what he was about. Jesus himself is at the center of that good news, which we see throughout his teaching, the rest of his life, his death, his resurrection. If you want to be in the kingdom of God, Jesus is the gate, the doorway, into it. But once we are in the kingdom through faith in Jesus, we don’t kick back and relax in the lap of eternal safety and protection; rather, we are also part of Jesus’ mission of proclamation. And the message we are called to proclaim is about the Kingdom of God, because that’s the Kingdom we are part of. As Paul puts it in Philippians 3:20 our “citizenship is in heaven.” That’s the place and king to which we belong, and so we live for this King and his Kingdom.

Now, there is a lot of teaching in Scripture about this topic. The Old Testament is filled with language about God as king, and God reigning over his people. We see it especially, perhaps, in the minor and major prophets, and in the Psalms (our call to worship, from Psalm 24, emphasized this

theme). Then: **In the Gospels, 53 times we see the phrase “The Kingdom of God,” almost always said by Jesus.** He taught about it frequently. For instance, he taught that the Kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15); that the coming of the kingdom is not something that can be observed ...you can't say “here it is” or “there it is” because it's “in our midst” (Luke 17:20-21); elsewhere he says it's like a mustard seed – that even though it's the smallest of seeds, it grows and grows (Mark 4:30-32). Later, as the Church is born and begins to grow, this theme continues. In Acts 19, for example, we see Paul persuasively teaching for three months in the synagogue about the kingdom of God; Acts 28 reiterates this same theme. In Colossians 4, Paul passes along words of greeting to the church from one of his “co-workers for the *kingdom of God.*” The Kingdom of God is a consistent theme of teaching in Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews, and more.

Returning to Jesus: **When Jesus teaches how to pray, he tells his disciples to pray** (in part), **‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’** So, we pray for God's kingdom to come – and given that Jesus says the kingdom is among us I think this prayer is perhaps most properly understood to mean it's a prayer that God's kingdom would be more evident and obvious among us than it already is. And...it's a prayer that God's will would be done. Why? Because it's *his* kingdom. *This* is the Kingdom to which we belong and *this* is the king whom we serve. We are not the kings or the queens – on a plane, in our church, in our homes, in our places of work or our community. **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unified together in the godhead: This is our king, and we are citizens of his kingdom.**

This means we bow down to this King, and nothing else; This means we adhere to and live out the values of God's kingdom; it means we set aside our own desires and do what's best for the Kingdom...what is best for the King. The president or our chosen political party is not our king; money is not our king; social media is not our king; exhilarating, instagrammable experiences are not our king; Kirkland (Redmond, Bothell, etc.), the state of Washington, the USA, the world, the universe...none of this is our kingdom. We can still be good citizens, vote, and be good stewards of the earth and the rest of creation...but we do that all to honor the King, because the Kingdom of God is even here among us and we want to lead people into *that* Kingdom.

Gordon Fee, who is one of the wisest of evangelical New Testament scholars our times (though he passed away last fall)...He once said in a lecture on Jesus: **“You cannot know anything about Jesus, anything, if you miss the kingdom of God . . . You are ‘zero’ on Jesus if you don’t understand this term. I’m sorry to say it that strongly, but this is the great failure of evangelical Christianity. We have had Jesus without the kingdom of God, and therefore have literally done Jesus in” (Gordon Fee).** In other words, if we really think we’re about Jesus, then we *have* to live with a Kingdom mindset. We have too often “claimed” Jesus, and then lived lives that more reflect the kingdoms and kingdom values of the world. We have to make sure we lay down our crowns that we’d like to wear, and live for the one true King, and his one mission to proclaim the good news.

So, hopefully God is on the throne in your life...but even if that’s true, there are always challengers to that spot. **So, what is seeking to be king in your life?** Maybe it’s you. That is arguably the easiest one to fall for. We’d love to believe that we’re all “masters of our domain” and desire that people around us would bow to our every whim – such as 2-year-olds who apparently ought to be quiet on a 5-hour flight across the country. Ironically, Jesus teaches that we *receive* the kingdom of God, and the way to do that is to receive it like a child – if we don’t, he says we’ll never enter it (Mark 10:15). So, we want to receive it like a child: open, receptive, filled with awe, and wonder, and trust. But maybe it’s something else that answers this question – money, power, a past event/relationship, a habit that you can’t let go of. There are probably multiple answers to this question for each of us.

There is only one true King and one kingdom to which we belong and that rises above anything else that may seek to claim our allegiance. It’s called the Kingdom of God. **It’s a kingdom we participate in here and now as well as eternally through faith in Jesus, and Jesus’ disciples are sent to proclaim his kingship and our citizenship.** The Church, like Jesus, is sent for the King and his Kingdom. It’s pretty cut-and-dried. If you trust in Jesus, *you* are a part of that Kingdom, and He’s your King. If you *aren’t* a part of that Kingdom, I invite you to consider changing your citizenship this morning. There’s no paperwork, no waiting in line, no transactional fees.

You simply tell God that you're ready to turn away from other things you've made king in your life, that you want him as king, and that you trust Jesus to bring you into that relationship. If you've already done that and you are already part of God's Kingdom, then let's make sure we remember that Jesus has sent us, and he's counting on us to live sent lives, so that the Kingdom of God would be made known and people would be drawn into it, and become citizens of his Kingdom. Let's pray...Amen.