

The Kingdom and the Crowd

Matthew 4:17—5:1

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-kingdom-and-the-crowd/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

[Offertory song: "Heaven" by Gungor]

Prayer

Lord God, we pray that you would give us eyes to see that truth—that heaven is truly all around us. And Lord, we also pray now that you would help us to preach.

Message

Video clip: *Earth to Orion to New Jerusalem + Second Coming*
Presentation by Robert Gentry at his ASI 2013 booth, Orlando, FL

Description of the clip on YouTube:

Using the Hipparcos-Yale-Gliese star database of over 1 million star positions and magnitudes, I take you on a FLT (faster than light) trip from Earth to the Orion Nebula and a short tour of the Trapezium cluster whose stellar wind is carving a bowl-shaped open space in the Orion Molecular Cloud. Then I get all religious on you and take you on a fanciful journey BEHIND the nebula to where one theological premise says the biblical 'New Jerusalem' and throne of God is located. In this section I've modeled an imaginative concept of what everything does NOT look like. And if that isn't enough, let's return back to Earth with Christ via his second coming... again, what it WON'T look like. But, hey, an artist's imagination is just that.

Dr. Robert Gentry Suppose indeed we want to go through the Orion Nebula and go to the throne of God.

Dr. David Gentry As we are leaving the earth here, and of course we'll pass the earth. We see the Sun there to our right. Now approaching the Sun, and you can see the Orion Nebula there pass the Sun. As we pass the Sun, we're probably going over a hundred times the speed of light. And approaching Orion, the individual stars will be passing at different times because they're at different distances from the earth. But it's actually in the sword of Orion, the middle star of the sword of Orion is the Orion Nebula. We're approaching it here—coming closer, coming closer—the Orion Nebula is 1500 light years from the earth that cavern is actually a hundred light years wide; you go into the center of that cavern. We're circling around the trapezium cluster here. This is actually something

you can see with a home telescope if you're interested in looking at it. You won't see the nebulosity, but you will see the trapezium. Going through the trapezium, continuing past the trapezium as we come to heaven, to the city of New Jerusalem with the foundations of precious stones—the gates of pearl.

Robert Gentry Approaching now to the temple in the New Jerusalem—

David Gentry The sanctuary. And as we go in the sanctuary, what are we going to end up with? There is indeed right before us, Christ the great High Priest. And the Ten Commandments. (applause) It's right before the throne of God. Jesus Christ, the author of them all, ministering before the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat. David, and after we're there, what's going to happen in return.

Matthew 4:17

17 From that time (The time of Jesus temptation, that we preached on last week)
From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

“Repent” (*metanoia*) literally “means change your mind.” Repent; stop it; the Kingdom of Heaven is not 1500 light years away in the Orion Nebula—At first, I thought that video was a joke, but it's not. It's the work of two “scholars” in California that have this theory that the center of the universe is in the Orion Nebula, and since the throne of God must be at the center of the universe, the throne of God is in the Orion Nebulae.

Next in the video that narrator narrates Jesus' return to earth and the clapping increases (love the clapping!) But Jesus says:

*Stop it; Repent; the Kingdom of Heaven is not 1500 light years away.
And, The Kingdom of Heaven is not 2000 years away after the publication of the Left Behind Series.
And, The Kingdom of Heaven is not 5000 miles away in the Middle East.*

Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (*eggidzo*), which means “at hand”.ⁱⁱ
So, if the Kingdom of heaven comes, it's not coming from 1500 light years away, but somewhere much, much, closer.

Heaven is the Greek word, *ouranos*, also translated “atmosphere” or “air.” So the “birds of the air, *ouranos*” in Acts 10:12 are literally, “birds of heaven.” Folks knew that stuff could come down from the heavens like a bird... and yet, in the heavens we live and move and have our being.

Just as in God we “live and move and have our being.”ⁱⁱⁱ
Just as we're surrounded by Spirit, *pneuma*, also translated wind.

Well, the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the Kingdom of God who is Spirit, is “at hand.”^{iv} It's very near. Hopefully you remember that the last temptation of the Devil was the offer of all the kingdoms of this world. But Jesus knew:

- the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.
- And all the kingdoms of this world are not the Kingdom of God.
- A kingdom that comes like the kingdoms of this world, with guns and tanks and rules and laws, is not the Kingdom of God.
- Those kingdoms are not *the* Kingdom; they're more like a crowd.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And 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, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

These are great crowds of Jews and Gentiles. This is basically what the Devil offered him in the Wilderness. And this is basically what we call a “smashing success”. And it’s all happened at the start of his ministry. (This sets the all-time record for church growth!) I think we’d all say, “Yahoo Jesus! Don’t stop. Keep going!”

Next verse:

5 1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, [and sat down] and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Crowds attract crowds... but his disciples came to *him*. Jesus had a rather ambivalent relationship with the crowd.

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [literally translated: “of them is the kingdom of heaven”--(That’s pretty “at hand.”)]

Well, Jesus knew that the Kingdom is not the crowd. Jesus had a rather ambivalent relationship with the crowd.

You may remember, in the Gospel of John, the crowd tries to make him king; they try to make him in their own image, and he runs away.^v Then the crowd finds him, surrounds him, and he teaches them away. He says, “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.”^{vi} Everyone leaves and he turns to Peter and the twelve and asks, *Are you going to leave too?*^{vii}

At the end of the Gospels, the crowds chant: “Hosanna to the King of Kings.” And then six days later, in the first recorded democratic election, the crowd votes for Barabbas; and for Jesus, they chant: “Crucify. Crucify. Crucify.”

That was after Jesus refused to give a sign. And crowds seek signs.^{viii} Jesus had already said, “*An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign.*” But you see a faithful disciple seeks what the sign points to. “Jesus sat down,” writes Matthew, “*and his disciples came to him.*”

Crowds seek signs, and crowds think a crowd is a sign, when in fact it points to nothing.

Soren Kierkegaard wrote: “The crowd is like an envelope. One receives a large package, thinks it is something important, but look it is a package of envelopes.”^{ix} An envelope of envelopes: we think it’s so important because it’s so large and there are so many, but each envelope contains nothing.

You know evil is ultimately nothing; it’s an absence of Truth. And perhaps that’s why crowds can be so dangerous. They can so easily be governed by evil. And they have the power to make everyone just the same.

You may have noticed my beautiful tie.

In 1973, everyone knew that this was a beautiful tie, and everyone wore ties that looked like this:



This was my father’s tie.

I remember it seemed so obviously true to me at the time: This tie is righteous. This tie is beautiful and good and true. It’s right. But you see, it was fashion; it was nothing but the opinion of the crowd.

Be careful when people say the Democrats are right, the Republicans are right, the Arabs are right, the Israelis are right, the Americans are right, the Baptists are right, or the Presbyterians are right. According to Jesus only One is right. Crowds are enticing because they can make you feel so right,

even if you're entirely wrong. They make you feel like you belong, but one day you realize you are no longer you; you don't belong, because you have ceased to exist. Crowds are enticing, but ultimately dehumanizing, deadening, and debilitating because they turn you into one more envelope.

We choose crowds, and crowds make us incapable of choosing. (If you don't get my drift, just watch our partisan politics and you'll understand). In a crowd, everyone looks the same and is devoid of content. Crowds make you in their own image: One more envelope full of nothing.

God also makes you in his image, but not one more envelope, and definitely *not* full of nothing, but full of an incredible something. God wants to make us in his image, but definitely *not* make us all the same. And I think that's why Jesus sat down. And his disciples came to *him*... because he called... them. He called them with his Word, and it found a place in them.^x

Now that's a little esoteric, but I think Jesus just showed us what it means. He didn't just call more of them, like you'd add one more envelope to a package of envelopes—he called them individually, by name.

Before we read about the crowds, we read about four men, named Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They didn't choose Jesus until Jesus had chosen them. He even tells his disciples, "*You didn't choose me, but I chose you.*"^{xi}

That's the point of the doctrine of election: God chose! It's not that God chose you, and God didn't choose someone else. But that God chose you, long before you were able to choose God. God chose you to choose Him in freedom. So, if you choose to follow him, it's because God chose you to choose before time even began. He chose *you*.

And by "*you*" I don't mean one more envelope in a package of envelopes, one more vote, one more giving unit, one more butt to fill one more seat. But *you* the person—the individual psyche, the soul.

You, with a name like Peter, Andrew, James, or John.

You with a unique story—a history, like that of Peter, Mathew, Paul or even Judas.

You with your unique gifts and limitations, disappointments and dreams.

See? I think it's hugely significant that Jesus says to Peter, for instance:

Follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men.

He doesn't say, "Follow me and I'll make you an administrator of men," or "Follow me and I'll give you a doctorate and make you the Pope, because fishing is stupid," or even, "Follow me and I'll make you a carpenter of God's house, like me."

He sees him fishing and says, "Follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men."

I would imagine that Peter grew up around fishing, and even as a boy, dreamed of being a fisherman, and certainly dreamed of catching fish. At the end of the Gospel of John, when his world falls apart, he goes fishing.

When I was a kid, I dreamed of being Zorro. I remember putting a towel on my back, grabbing a stick, swinging it like a sword, and making the sign of a "Z" on everything.

And then... I stopped, other kids thought Zorro wasn't cool; John Wayne and James Bond were cool. Zorro was pathetic.

Later I dreamed of adventure, discovery, and boldly going where no man had gone before. Every day after school I'd watch Star Trek and dream of being Captain Kirk. But at school, I'd have to hide those dreams from the crowd... they seemed pathetic. At school, the crowd demanded that everyone dressed just the same, spoke just the same, and excelled at being just the same. Anything else was pathetic, and that person was just a pretender.

Ever been to a Star Trek convention? Middle-age men with pot bellies, dressed like Captain Kirk or Spock, dreaming that they could boldly go where no man had gone before...dreaming that they could save the galaxy from evil.

Video Clip: <i>Galaxy Quest</i> DreamWorks Pictures(1999)	
<i>Scene begins in men's restroom at Galaxy Quest convention. Galaxy Quest actor, Jason Nesmith (Tim Allen) is walking into stall as he hears mocking young people talking.</i>	
Mockers	What a freak show, man. This is hilarious! Bunch of losers! Begging for autographs at fifteen bucks a pop? These guys haven't had a real acting job for twenty years. This is all they've got.
<i>Nesmith peeks over stall at his tormentors, then immediately retreats back into hiding, eavesdropping.</i>	
Mockers	Dude, did you check out Nesmith? He actually gets off on those retards...thinking he's a space commander.
<i>(Nesmith looks down at costume)</i>	
Mockers	And his friends— I know! They can't stand him. Did you hear them ragging on him in there? Dude, he has no idea he's a laughing stock—even to his buddies. He's pathetic. Come on! Come on! The Galaxy Quest dancers are almost on. Oooh—full speed ahead lieutenant.
<i>Scene changes to Nesmith sitting depressed at table flicking autographed photos at fans.</i>	
Group of enthusiastic fans	Hey Commander, so...as I was saying, in the "Quasar Dilemma," remember you used the auxillary Deck B (to fan with camera--can you get this?) –Deck B for gamma override. The thing is that online blueprints clearly indicate that Deck B is independent of the guidance matrix. So we were wondering just where the error lies in that?
Nesmith	It's just a television show. That's all OK?
Enthusiastic fan	Right...but...'cause we were wondering if the quantum flux, now just listen...
Nesmith	There is no quantum flux. There's no auxillary. There's no g-dmn ship! You got it?

Do you remember that scene? It's from one of my family's favorite movies: *Galaxy Quest*. That was Jason Nesmith who had played Commander Peter Taggart on the cancelled TV show *Galaxy Quest*. He had always been an actor, but now he only acted at conventions where he, and other pathetic losers, could create their own little crowd.

Sometimes church can feel like a Galaxy Quest Convention: Not a personal conviction, but our own little crowd to protect us from other crowds. Sometimes church can feel like a Galaxy Quest Convention:

We talk about battling the ancient dragon and saving the world by swinging the sword of Truth.

We dream about being the Bride of Christ...

And I'm sure that to most, and even to ourselves, that sometimes sounds pathetic.

...And that's what I love about the movie *Galaxy Quest*.

It turns out that an alien civilization, perhaps 150 thousand light years away in the Orion Nebulae... I don't know... this alien civilization, the Thermians, have been receiving transmissions of *Galaxy Quest* TV shows in outer space. And, mistaking them for historical documents, they've built an entire civilization around the *Galaxy Quest* TV show. Now threatened by the Evil Emperor Sarris—who looks like an ancient dragon—they send an emissary to earth to find the brave Commander Peter Taggart and his courageous, resourceful, and ingenious crew to come save them from destruction. Drunk, delirious, and thinking it's all an act, Jason follows the Thermians, who then beam him up to their ship.

It's a great comedy, for when Jason realizes what has happened, he tries to convince the Thermians that he is so much less than his own dreams—he's not brave, courageous, and resourceful; he's just one more pretender in the crowd. But the Thermians are convinced that he is so much more than he knows. And not just Jason, but every one of the actors in his crew.

The whole crew gets beamed into space, thinking that they're following Jason to another gig, but soon realize it's no longer pretend, and they're actually under attack from the evil emperor Sarris. To save the kingdom of Thermia and the kingdoms of this earth, they have to no longer pretend to be the brave commander Peter Taggart, the ingenious Chief Science Officer Dr. Lazarus, the resourceful Tech Sergeant Chen, and the beautiful Communications Officer Tawny Madison.

They can no longer pretend to be these things for their own selfish reasons. They now have to *be* these things in order to save each other and the Universe. In other words, Love calls them, and they must lose their lives to find them.

They each confess that they're not what they pretended to be...and then they become what they had always hoped to be. And then, this happens:

Video clip: *Galaxy Quest*
DreamWorks Pictures (1999)

Scene shows the spaceship barreling into the city. Enthusiastic fan from previous clip waves his arm to signal the ship to land. Ship comes crashing over cars on freeway, blasting through.

*Scene shifts to the *Galaxy Quest* convention, where the spaceship comes crashing through the walls, stopping fans in their tracks, who then stand in awe. The enthusiastic young fans from previous clip enter room. Crew exits the space ship.*

Spaceship crew member Great driving, Tommy.

(Enthusiastic fans go wild, cheering)

The evil alien emerges from the spaceship.

Nesmith Quick, quick! Go! Go! Move! Move!

Nesmith springs to action, fires his gun at the alien who disintegrates in a burst of flame. The crowd goes wild with excitement.

Convention announcer Once again! Commander Peter Quincy Taggart!

Nesmith smiles, beaming as scene fades.

They return to the crowds but in an entirely new way, not pretending to be what they had hoped to be, but as the heroes they truly are.

In the movie *Galaxy Quest*, the Kingdom of Heaven—the kingdom of space—is the result of Thermians building their society around the dreams of people on earth. And then, that kingdom causes those people to become what they had hoped to be. But according to Scripture, the dreams of people on Earth have always been the result of the Kingdom of Heaven—the kingdom in space—building people. But that kingdom is not 15 hundred light years away in space or 2 thousand years away in time; it's at hand right now.

It's at hand, and it's always been at hand. In other words, it's not your dreams that create the Kingdom. It's the King and his Kingdom that create your dreams.

In other words, it wasn't an accident that Peter grew up in a fishing village on the side of the sea, dreaming of fish, trying to catch fish, and hoping to be a fisherman. The King and his Kingdom were shaping Peter's dreams, desires, and longings, so he would choose to be what he truly is.

And yet at the right time, Peter had to sacrifice his dreams to become those dreams.

Peter had to lose his psyche to find it.

Peter had to follow the king, to live in the kingdom.

Well, I hope you see that there's this fascinating correlation between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven:

When John sees a new heaven and a new earth, he calls it heaven and earth.

And when he sees the new Jerusalem, it looks like the old Jerusalem--old and yet entirely new.

It comes down out of heaven, out of the atmosphere...

And yet, in some amazing way, it had been there all along.

A city, or a kingdom, is more than a crowd, although evil constantly tempts every kingdom to be just a crowd—millions of people thinking the same thoughts, doing the same things, and existing in the same houses.

Evil tempts every kingdom to be just a crowd. But a real kingdom is not an envelope containing more envelopes; it's not a million copies of just the same thing. A city is made up of fishermen, shepherds, carpenters, bakers, and candlestick makers. And each of them is made up of individual and unique hopes and dreams, successes and failures.^{xii}

There's this fascinating correlation between the kingdoms of earth and the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes the relation is direct and sometimes inverted.

- It's not an accident that Peter caught fish before he caught men.

- It's not an accident that Moses and David heard sheep before they heard people.
- It's not an accident that James and John mend their fishing nets before they mend their churches.

There's a direct relationship and an inverse relationship.^{xiii}

- It's not an accident that Paul was a Pharisee before he became the apostle of Grace. It's the absence of grace that becomes a fountain of grace.
- It's not an accident that Jesus called John "Son of Thunder" before he turned him into the apostle of Love. It's his lack of mercy that becomes mercy.
- It's not an accident that Simon was a coward, before Jesus informed him that he was Petros, Peter, "The Rock". Jesus knew his name... and even when Peter had cowered in fear, the Lord was telling him who he truly was.

There's an inverse and an obverse, and sometimes both at once:

Luke records that when Jesus called Peter that day, he was catching no fish. He wanted to be a fisherman, but he was failing at fishing, and maybe wanted to quit, when Jesus said, "*Throw the net on the other side.*" If you know Peter's story, you know that happened more than once, both in Peter's effort to catch fish and in his effort to catch men.

So maybe you have dreams, and you're tempted to quit, but Jesus is calling... he keeps calling: "*Come follow.*" He's not mocking you; He's creating within you the ability to be, the freedom to be, the desire to be what you most deeply long to be: yourself.

Remember how Sarah dreamed of having a child?

One day, she overheard, God's Word spoken to old Abraham. "*I will surely return to you... and Sarah your wife shall have a son.*" Sarah laughed and said, "*After I'm worn out and [Abraham] is old, shall I again have pleasure.*"^{xiv} Literally translated from the Hebrew she said, "*Shall I again have Eden.*"

In the Revelation, Eden has turned into a Kingdom constructed with millions of unique and individual people, united in a symphony of praise. But you see, like Sarah (and Peter), we're all tempted to lose hope in Eden.

We mustn't lose hope in Eden, or even, our own particular brand of Eden.
We mustn't lose hope—God has nurtured that hope.
We mustn't lose hope—but we do have to lose ourselves... to find our hope.

We will return to Eden, but receive it, in an entirely new way.

Peter mustn't lose hope in fishing, but he must stop fishing, to become a fisher of men.
Sarah mustn't lose hope in Eden, but she must stop pimping her maidens and start surrendering herself to her groom, to experience Eden in a new way.
Paul mustn't lose hope in the Righteousness of God, but he must surrender the Pharisee, to become the Righteousness that he hopes for... and actually a much greater righteousness than he had every imagined.

Jesus said, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."^{xv}

It's an unfortunate translation, for in Greek there are two words translated "life":

- One is the word "*zoe*", and Jesus is the *Zoe*; Jesus is the Life. And there is One Life.
- The other word is "*psyche*", and we each have a different psyche. It is your particular life—how Life expresses himself in the particular vessel that is you.

Your *psyche* is that thing that came into existence when God breathed his Spirit, his Breath, his Life into the dust. There is one Life, and at least 7.7 billion *psyches*, and 7.7 billion vessels of dust. Your *psyche* is utterly unique and individual; your *psyche* is yourself: your story, your dreams and disappointments, your strengths and weaknesses, your thoughts and feelings.

Whoever would lose his *psyche* for the sake of Life (“I am the Life,” said Jesus)
“Whoever would lose his *psyche* for my sake will find it.” Said the Life.

One day it struck me as an utterly revolutionary idea: It’s my *psyche* that I lose, and my *psyche*—not some other *psyche*— that I find. It’s my *self* that I lose, and *myself* that I find.

I think we’re each terrified to surrender our psyches, ourselves, our lives to Jesus for fear he’ll turn us into something else—like one more saint, on one more cloud, playing one more harp in the heavenly crowd. We’re terrified that he’ll turn us into something else, or someone else. But He longs to turn us into *ourselves*.

He knows exactly who you are. And He’s been telling you who you are since the day we were born. But you can’t become who you long to be until you lose yourself and find yourself in him, and him in you; the King of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We’re each tempted to hide ourselves from the King, for fear he’ll turn us into something other than ourselves—just one more saint in his crowd. We’re tempted to hide from the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Life.^{xvi}

“Instinctively ‘man’ has a tactic he uses against ‘spirit’: let us form a crowd,” wrote Soren Kierkegaard.

We’re all tempted to guard our psyches from the King by joining a crowd, getting the approval of the crowd, but then we become a product of the crowd; we gain this world and forfeit our psyches. We become one more envelope full of envelopes, full of nothing.

I think that’s why Jesus always finds a way to call us away from the crowd and didn’t give into the temptation of the crowd.^{xvii} He calls us to follow him, to lose our selves for his sake, and then find ourselves for his sake and the sake of everyone trapped in the crowd. He calls us away from the crowd, and then sends us back to the crowd in order that the crowd might become a kingdom.

In the Sermon on the Mount, he’s going to teach us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. They will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” *As it is in heaven*: That’s the Kingdom of Heaven that is at hand.

In other words, the kingdom comes when his will is done in the things that are at hand all around you. In Matt. 12, Jesus casts a demon out of a man and says, “If [I did this] by the Spirit of God... then the kingdom has come upon you.”^{xviii}

“If it is by the Spirit of God...” God is love and his Spirit is Life.
If it is by the Life of Love “...the kingdom has come upon you.”

But you see, the Kingdom doesn’t come from some other place 1500 light years away, or 2000 earth years in the future. The Kingdom isn’t imposed on your *psyche* from someplace outside your *psyche*.

In Luke 17, Jesus says, “[It’s] not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you...” it is within you.^{xix} (like a law written on your heart.) The Kingdom is not you, and not of you, but it does become you. The Kingdom is all that freely submits to the dominion of the King.

You see, your soul really is like an envelope. But no two envelopes are just the same. And none of the envelopes are empty. Every envelope contains a throne. I honestly don’t know how people miss this, but the throne of God is not in the Orion Nebulae or somewhere in the Middle East—that’s not the center of the universe. The Throne of God is in your soul, your unique and individual Soul.^{xx} And until you surrender that throne to the King of Love, you won’t be able to live your life, or become who you truly are. And no one can tell you who you are, or what you are to do... until you do.

Fishermen fish, shepherds shepherd, managers manage, and poets write songs... and I don’t know which one you are. People always want me to tell them what to do, which means they want me to give them some laws, which means they want to join a crowd in which everyone is just the same.^{xxi}

In a weird way we actually compete at being the same. You cannot compete at being yourself. But you can compete at running the hundred-yard dash... which means you could become the very best at something that really means nothing, while God is calling you to be the best at being you, which really means everything.

I can’t tell you what to do, except to be the best at being who you truly are. And you can only become who you truly are by surrendering the throne in the depths of your soul, for then you and Jesus will live the life that is you.

The Truth will live the Life that is you;
Love will live the life that is you;
Faith will live his Live in you;
Love will live his life in you—even become incarnate through you.

God wants to live your life in communion with you—together on the throne, the two of you. Then you will become who you truly are; and you will enjoy who everyone else truly is. You will feel no pain, and yet, experience everyone’s pleasure.

A crowd is a cancer. But the Kingdom is a body, and you are a member of that body. Every member is free, for all the members surrenders to the direction of the head. And each member lives for it chooses to love; it chooses to bleed. And each and every member is different.

Not only can you be different from every other member of the body, you must be different from every other member of the body or you injure the entire body. We all need you to be you and never another.^{xxii} So, don’t give up on your dreams, but surrender your dreams and become who you truly are. God wants you to freely love who you truly are. He wants you to love his dream. You are his dream.

Several years ago, I was kicked out of my denomination because I believed that Jesus had spoken to me and asked me to follow. Soon after that, some friends bought me this sword and said, “God told us to buy it for you.” It now hangs on the back of the cross, and I think I know what it means. It means that even though I often want to quit, I’m to swing the sword, preach the truth, slay the ancient dragon, and maybe even go where no man has gone before. I know that sounds pathetic; maybe it is...or maybe I’m Zorro.

And maybe you are not less than you know. Maybe you are far more; in fact you've only begun to imagine. Whatever the case, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent.

Communion

So the King took the bread and he broke it, saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat. And in the same way he took the cup, saying this is the Covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

So we invite you to come forward, tear off a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, and surrender the throne. Then ask Jesus: Jesus, where are we going?

Truth will tell you. The Life will tell you. Love will tell you. The Way will tell you, when you need to know. (I always want to know in advance, but in this way I try to turn him into a law or a map.) The Way, Truth and Life will tell you when you need to know.

He may take you over the sea and to the moon. Or he may take you back to the place you've been working for the last 30 years... doing the thing you've always done. But, if he's on the throne, you'll do it in an entirely new way.

The Kingdom will come, his will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Benediction

He makes all things new^{xxiii} including you—the individual you.

So, there's no way you'll arrive in the consummated Kingdom of heaven, look around, then look at Jesus and be disappointed.

And there's no way you'll see yourself—you'll see yourself reflected in the pupil of his eye—there's no way you'll be disappointed, or want to be anything other than who you are.

He's good. And you must know that, because he's calling to you all the time.

Truth calls to you...

You'll be in a conversation in the crowd and it will be tempting at times to speak a lie, but Truth calls to you. If you know He's good and you trust him, immediately, you'll follow.

Love calls to you...

You may find yourself apart of the crowd and see someone on the edge, and love will call to you. If you know he's good, immediately you will follow.

It's important to follow for there is a place of outer darkness... you see, it's for those who refuse to be who God has made them to be.

It can't last forever. You will eventually follow.

It can't last forever, but why would you want to let it last at all.

You were made to enjoy the good and be the good.

Believe the gospel.

Endnotes

ⁱⁱ That verb (eggidzo) in Greek comes from a Greek noun for hand or the crook of the arm. It means, something that you can reach and put in a head lock... "at hand."

ⁱⁱⁱ Acts 17:28

^{iv} John 4:24 "God is Spirit." Literally "God is wind." That's very much at hand. In fact, the only way you could keep it from being in you, would be to hold your breath. It seems that all humanity has held its breath—the very breath that God breathed into dust, making the soul (*psyche*) in the first place. We each have a psyche that holds its breath, which is holding onto God, which is taking the life and killing the life. [Technically it's in us, but it's dead; it's like taking part of a living body (body broken and blood shed) and consuming it—it would be Life in you, Life that you had killed in you.]

Jesus is the first recorded Adam to surrender his breath, and he did it for all. You must exhale to inhale; you must expire to inspire. In a living body the breath circulates in the blood. Life in a body is literally exhaling and inhaling the Spirit; it is literally the circulation of blood and the respiration of Spirit.

At communion we ingest Christ's Life (Body Broken and Blood Shed), we ingest the life that we killed, and it rises as praise on our breath and returns to the throne. We are the body of the Adam (the *Eschatos* Adam).

^v John 6:15

^{vi} John 6:54

^{vii} John 6:67

^{viii} When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." – Luke 11:29

^{ix} Kierkegaard, *Provocations*), p. 242

^x John 8:37

^{xi} John 15:16

^{xii} This signature on each soul may be a product of heredity and environment, but that only means that heredity and environment are among the instruments whereby God creates a soul. I am considering not how, but why, He makes each soul unique. If He had no use for all these differences, I do not see why He should have created more soul than one. Be sure that the ins and outs of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you-you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. . . . Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others—fresh and ever fresh news of the "My God" whom each finds in Him whom all praise as "Our God." - C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

^{xiii} This signature on each soul may be a product of heredity and environment, but that only means that heredity and environment are among the instruments whereby God creates a soul. I am considering not how, but why, He makes each soul unique. If He had no use for all these differences, I do not see why He should have created more soul than one. Be sure that the ins and outs of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you-you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. . . . "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity

remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others—fresh and ever fresh news of the "My God" whom each finds in Him whom all praise as "Our God."

- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

xiv Genesis 18:9-15

xv Matthew 16:25

xvi Instinctively "man" has a tactic he uses against "spirit": Let us form a crowd! This is our tactic, our mode of defense. It is done cunningly this way: Let us join together in order to strive toward the ideals. But to form a crowd is precisely the way to get rid of the ideals. Just as the ostrich sticks its head into the ground and thinks it is invisible, so we form a crowd and think no one can see us. We speak of not being able to see the woods for the trees, and by this tactic we hope that one cannot see the trees for the woods. Just like the person who says he is not at home to visitors, we are not a home whenever we lose ourselves in the crowd - instead of being an *I*. - Kierkegaard, *Provocations*, p. 243

xvii The crowd is indeed untruth. Christ was crucified because he would have nothing to do with the crowd (even though he addressed himself to all). He did not want to form a party, an interest group, a mass movement, but wanted to be what he was, the truth, which is related to the single individual. Therefore everyone who will genuinely serve the truth is by that very fact a martyr. To win a crowd is no art; for that only untruth is needed, nonsense, and a little knowledge of human passions. But no witness to the truth dares to get involved with the crowd. His work is to be involved with all people, if possible, but always individually, speaking with each and every person on the sidewalk and on the streets - in order to split apart. - Kierkegaard, *Provocations* p. 23-24

xviii Matthew 12:27

xix Luke 17:20 ESV "withing you" is NKJV, KJV and the ESV footnote

xx And I was still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul in the middle of my heart. I saw my soul as large as if it were a kingdom; and from the properties that I saw in it, it seemed to me to be a glorious city. In the centre of that city sits our Lord Jesus, true God and true man, glorious, highest Lord; and I saw him dressed imposingly in glory. He sits in the soul, in the very centre, in peace and rest, and he rules and protects heaven and earth and all that is. -Julian of Norwich

xxi In a weird way we actually compete at being the same. You can't compete at being yourself. But you can compete at running the hundred-yard dash... which means you could become the best at something that really means nothing, while God is calling you to be the best at being you.

xxii In the world to come I shall not be asked, "Why were you not Moses?" I should be asked, "Why were you not Zusya?" - Rabbi Zusya

President Calvin Coolidge once invited friends from his hometown to dine at the White House. Worried about their table manners, the guests decided to do everything that Coolidge did. This strategy succeeded, until coffee was served. The President poured his coffee into the saucer. The guests did the same. Coolidge added sugar and cream. His guests did, too. Then Coolidge bent over and put his saucer on the floor for the cat. -Eric Oleson

xxiii Do you like fishing? Did you know that Isaiah prophesies that in the day fisherman will fish in the Dead Sea for it will be full of fish and the water won't be dead, but living—that is, fresh. I don't know exactly how it all works, but heaven isn't forever sitting on one more cloud, playing one more harp forever without end. It's not the absence of time, but, I think, the presence of all time... so if you liked fishing here, you'll love it there. I don't know how that works for the fish, but I'm sure it will be better—not worse—than you could ever imagine.