

January 30

Scriptures: Read Matthew 3 & 4

Key Verse: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)

Overview

After successfully dealing with Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, Jesus began his ministry. His message was very straight-forward, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

I think we need to be clear about this subject of repentance. Confession of sin is not repentance from sin. Confession demands honesty – in many cases, brutal honesty. And hope lies in that honesty. But the fact is that one can be honest about one’s sinfulness again and again and again and again. This is a problem that many of us face.

We’re constantly confessing our sin but not repenting. Repentance mean turning around and going in the opposite direction. Whereas confession demands honesty, repentance is very difficult and in some cases with those of us who have some kind of weakness, we may find ourselves repenting every day. The truth is, if we actively turn around from a sin before we commit it, then we find ourselves less and less in need of confession. That’s not to suggest we become perfect, but nevertheless it is to suggest that we’ll start growing. Something that’s encouraging about repentance is that as we turn around and go in the opposite direction, the kingdom of heaven comes to meet us.

God is committed to the active reenter, and so we should be encouraged to make that choice, however difficult. By an act of our will, we choose to turn around from our sin. Obviously, from Jesus’ point of view, repentance was and is absolutely vital. There is a relationship between repentance and the coming of the kingdom. A little later on, Jesus will be teaching His disciples to pray and He’ll say, “Thy kingdom come.” Now, a lot of us would rather pray, “thy kingdom go.” When the kingdom comes especially near to us, there is a sense of the holy that will not tolerate sin. So “repent,” Jesus says. If you want the kingdom of heaven to be near, turn around and go in the opposite direction of your sin, and as you do so, be assured the kingdom of heaven will not only be near, it will, in fact, come to meet you.

Prayer

Help us to not only confess out sins to you, Lord, but to also REPENT, turning around and going the opposite direction as an act of our will.