

Road Work (Part 2)

Earth Movers...

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.³ He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’⁵ Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.⁶ And all people will see God’s salvation.” Luke 3:1-6

“Your kingdom come and your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10

In the first chapter we talked about how the Kingdom of God was relinquished by Adam, recovered by Jesus when he came the first time, restored to his followers in foretaste form when he ascended back to heaven, and will be realized in its final form at his return. It’s that “foretaste form” that we’re elaborating on now. Before he left, Jesus said, **“I confer on you a Kingdom, just as My Father conferred one on Me.” (Luke 22:29)**

Remember, Jesus is already King, but sort of a *King in waiting*. He is not waiting to be crowned King, he’s waiting to be recognized as King. He’s already the King, but most of the world doesn’t know it yet. His coronation by God has been relatively private; the recognition of it will ultimately be public for all the earth to see. He’s just as much a king when he is *waiting* as when he is *winning* - at his *ascent* as he will be at his *descent*.

For now, he is willing for his subjects to act as agents (fallible as we are) in charge of the advance of his rule here on earth. He wants to “come” (as in *“thy kingdom come”*), to increase the awareness and influence of his kingship. But he needs a road on which to travel, and we’re his road crew preparing the way for him to make his way into our culture.

In Part 1 of **“Roadwork”** we talked about overcoming some of the obstacles to the paving of his way. For his journey to be actuated, there are *valleys* to be filled, *mountains* to be leveled, *crooked places* to straighten, and *rough areas* to be smoothed.

I’ve never done any road construction personally, but from my observation I can see that it’s pretty hard and dusty work which requires lots of heavy equipment. (I guess these are the kind of vehicles from which you are banned when under the influence of certain prescription medications. The labels say, “When taking this medication don’t operate heavy equipment.”) If we’re going to fill valleys, cut down mountains, straighten crooked places and smooth out rough places in our culture; we’re going to have to use the biggest and the best of what God supplies. Spiritually speaking we have access to graders, bulldozers, backhoes, excavators, pavers, etc. If we want to be *world changers*, we’ll have to use some big **“earth movers!”** While there are other important tools involved in road

building, I'd like to talk about four essential pieces of earth moving equipment that any self-respecting road crew simply has to possess.

“The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it.” Matthew 11

As God's road crew, commissioned to pave the way before him, it seems to me that our most indispensable earth moving equipment are to...

- ***Practice a lifestyle pleasing to the King***
- ***Praise the King for his kingship***
- ***Pray to the King for his Kingdom to come***
- ***Proclaim the King's Kingdom to those in another kingdom***

Practice a lifestyle pleasing to the King...

In High School there was a cute girl that loved Jesus, and liked me. I liked her too (a lot), but more than that, by the way she lived her life in front of me, I was attracted to her Jesus. She definitely had something that I didn't, and I began to want it. As I watched the way she treated people, and the choices she made for the sake of the Lord; I felt the sway of her Benevolent King in my own heart. Her lifestyle paved the way for her King to deal with me, and forced me to deal with him!

Remember, we're filling valleys, taking down mountains, and such. It's a big job; and we're going to have to use some big *earthmovers* to get the job done. Of all the equipment at our disposal, as subjects of King Jesus, the way we live our lives has got to be the most important. What *moves earth* most effectively is the way we conduct ourselves as subjects of our King. Without this, the other pieces of equipment are ineffective. If we don't live *kingdom lives* (obedient to the King) all the *prayer, praising, and proclaiming* in the world will do no good in the world!

Before Jesus reigns over the earth and over the powers of darkness, I've got to let him reign over my heart, my mind, my mouth, and my whole way of living. When we live a kingdom-inspired and King-empowered lifestyle, there's a *power* in it that moves mountains. When Jesus promised us the "*keys of the kingdom*" (Matthew 16), he didn't specify exactly what the keys were. I think that's because the "keys" are everything we do as kingdom subjects. It's the way we think and talk and conduct ourselves in every aspect of our lives here on earth. When we live as obedient subjects of King Jesus we're using these keys that lock up the purposes of the kingdom of Satan, and unlock the possibilities of the kingdom of God!

Of all the books of the Bible, Matthew's Gospel is the most replete with Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God (though for the sake of his Jewish readers he usually calls it the "Kingdom of Heaven"). He includes in his book Jesus' most comprehensive lesson on the lifestyle of the King's subject in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). *Be humble, love your enemies, don't worry about stuff, stay with your spouse, keep your promises, give to the poor, don't act religious...* Not only are these the right things to do, but there's a *power* in the doing of them. When you forgive someone who doesn't deserve it, or you're merciful in your dealings with messed up people; you're filling a valley or straightening a crooked place in the road for Jesus to come and reign. By living in a King-pleasing way, you're

preparing the path for him to bring more and more of his kingdom to earth – your lifestyle is praying: *Thy kingdom come...*

It might help if you think of your quest for Christ-like living as filling a gaping hole (a valley) in your world. People who try to act as their own king leave a valley-sized gap in society. It's up to us to fill the breach, and model the blessedness of lives happily submitted to benevolent King Jesus.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything...” (Matthew 5)

“You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5)

- *How does your life demonstrate a love for your King?*
- *What will you do to improve it?*

What *moves earth* most effectively is the way we conduct ourselves as subjects of the King.

Praise the King for his great kingship...

Over the years, I've done quite a bit of street ministry. Wherever we're doing it, and whatever our method, I've found that when we worship God publicly out there in public, there's a power that attracts people to us - and more importantly, to Jesus. I'm not talking about simply singing songs that we like, with people we like, about a God we like... I'm referring to a kind of worship that rises from our hearts to the heart of the King – the sincere offering of gratitude to God. This is the kind of worship to which God responds with his personal presence. I've seen people who pass by other street musicians with much greater musical skill than ours, and stand there watching and wondering at our “public display of affection” to Jesus. Their hearts seem to be softened by the King who is present in our praise. I'm convinced that it has very little to do with us, the way we play our music, or the skill with which we sing our songs. We're creating a road for the King to come and entice people into his kingdom.

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. (Psalm 8)

Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off. The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all

here!” The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. (Acts 16)

When we worship the King, it’s not just pleasant for us - it accomplishes something. Our heartfelt praises align us with his kingly power, which consequently decimates mountainous obstacles. It creates a flow of the King’s authority to take down things that are in the way of the advance of his rule. True worship puts us in sync with the way things are, with the voice of the universe, which cries out for God to get the glory that he deserves. When we give him his praise, his kingly authority is exerted to fill valleys, blast mountains, and create a straight, smooth road on which the King can travel.

There’s a cosmic battle going on all the time. It’s not a battle between equals. The King has already won, but in order to involve us in the victory, he lets the enemy live a while longer. Like an incarcerated drug cartel kingpin who carries on his nefarious business from his cell, Satan is free to do his dirty deeds unless he’s opposed by the King’s praisers. Our worship of God exudes his beauty and asserts his authority over these enemies of the kingdom. Though I love worshipping in a church gathering with friends; my favorite place to praise him with abandon is out in public. Not only does it cut to the heart of my vanity, it decapitates spiritual powers who oppose the King’s advance. When we speak and sing his praises we come against what’s distorted in our world and invite his kingdom power to set it straight.

They stand there watching and wondering at our “public display of affection” to Jesus....

Our familiar and model prayer for the “kingdom to come” is preceded by a praiseful, “Hallowed be your name!” His name being “hallowed” by those who love him leads to the boundaries of his kingdom being extended. Our heartfelt praises fill chasms, destroy obstructions, and straighten crookedness in the path of the King. When we worship, we’re doing what we were made to do, what we love to do, and what makes a difference when we do it!

“You are enthroned on the praises of Israel...” (Psalm 22)

“God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid the sounding of the trumpets.” (Psalm 47)

- *How is your worship life? (Notice I didn’t say, “What church songs do you like?” I’m talking about a worship lifestyle.)*
- *What will you do to improve it?*

Pray to the King for his kingdom to come...

A friend of mine makes a weekly trip to strip clubs, along with few of her friends, to pray for the dancers, the patrons, and the employees. They've been doing this for a couple of years now, and they've begun to see some amazing things happen - some evidences that the King is on the move. They have been able to forge relationships with bouncers and even a club owner or two. They're now getting invited into the dancers' dressing rooms to pray for them in person! I suppose they could go downtown with signs of protest, march in front of these establishments, and demand that they close their doors. Instead they've chosen to invite the King to do his thing. And he appears to be "on the move" into the hearts of people he loves. They're praying for the King to come; and he's coming. They're asking for his will to be done; and it's being done!

The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it. Matthew 11:12

When you understand that your kingdom assignment is to bring Christ's kingship to his world, prayer becomes much more than reciting rote requests for protection, provision, and blessing over meals. When we pray, we're acting as kingdom agents bridging the gorge between God and the people he loves. We're asking him to fill that chasm and to assert his tender influence to build a road that reaches their hearts. We're filling valleys, chipping away at mountains, straightening and smoothing the road on which he will make his journey into the hearts of lost people.

When we pray with faith and authority we say to the mountains, "Be cast into the sea!" and it will be done as we requested. The heavy earth-moving equipment we use is not of earthly origin, but is "*mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds*" (2 Corinthians 10). When we pray, we insist on the King's rule to be respected by the principalities that pervert the minds of men.

"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:18-19

The King has a loving agenda; and to advance that agenda he needs cooperative agents. There are some doors he wants to open and others he wants to lock. To his agents he distributes "keys" for opening up some things and locking others. One of the "key-keys" is prayer - the kind of praying that prevents hell's purposes and releases God's purposes on the earth.

Sometimes when we practice intercession we're praying for something to *begin*, and other times we're asking for something to *stop*. We are praying for some things and against others. We're hoping he'll add something to the valleys, and the remove something from the mountains.

When we pray, we're acting as kingdom agents bridging the gorge between God and the people he loves.

Someone said that, *“True prayer begins in the heart of God, is communicated to the hearts of praying people, is prayed back to God, God answers, and then we praise him.”* In keeping with the road construction metaphor – the King gets word to us that he wants to visit a certain locale, and asks us to pave the way for him. We realize that we’re not capable of such an undertaking. There are valleys to be filled, mountains in the way, and so on. So we get back to the King with the message that we’re excited about getting the road ready, but we’re going to need his help. So we pray, ***“Your kingdom come and your will be done!”***

Sometimes the obstacles are so large that we have to use dynamite to level them. It often takes a kind of patient praying to bore a hole into the adamant mountainside rock so that God can insert his explosives into the opening and, in his own time, flatten the obstructing mountain. I know that over the years I’ve prayed arduously over a long period of time with no apparent results, until such time as God deems best to detonate the charge, and blow the obstacle up, sending it back to hell!

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

(Matthew 6)

“You have not because you ask not...” (James 4)

- *How would you rate your prayer life? Is it repetitive and rote, or dynamic and potentially world changing?*
- *What will you do to see that it becomes more of an earth-mover?*

Proclaim the King’s Kingdom to those in another kingdom

One of the first people to tell me about Jesus was a hippy named, Michael Kavasos. I’d never seen him before, and never saw him again after this one encounter. It’s like he appeared that day on the grass below the tree that my friend and I had climbed. Tom and I were sitting on adjacent branches smoking pot. Michael saw us and shamelessly stood there and told us his story. He’d been living in Hawaii, had taken a bunch of LSD, and went on what we used to call, “a bum trip” (that’s where the word, “bummer” came from). He pretty much freaked out with hallucinations of everything from Mickey Mouse to Gandhi. After a frantic run through the jungle he found himself on the doorstep of a church, and there Jesus revealed himself. He told us how much his life had changed since then and what the Lord had done to fix his brokenness. I remember pretty much rolling my eyes at his audacity, and couldn’t wait for him to leave so that we could continue getting high. I didn’t receive Jesus for quite some time after that, but I never forgot the impression he made that day. In this one seemingly uneventful encounter, Michael Kavasos helped pave the way for the King to make his journey into my heart. His humble, yet bold testimony began to fill a cavernous valley and knock down an imposing mountain in my heart. *Thank you, Michael – wherever you are!*

Though at times we may feel almost embarrassed at the simplicity of the Gospel, when we declare it to our generation, we have to remember that it has the power in itself to straighten the road on which the King can come and exert his good kingdom reign.

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation...” (Romans 1)

“They preached boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.” (Acts 14)

The “one crying in the wilderness,” is God. His announcement is something like, “I’m a good King. Really I am. Become my subjects, and you’ll see. The kingdom which you currently serve is destined to self-destruct. Join yourself to me and become part of my eternal reign!” That’s his cry, but he needs “criers.” When we tell people from the other kingdom about his kingdom, we’re filling valleys and straightening the pathway for him to have a more direct route to their hearts.

“We try to persuade men... he gave us the ministry of reconciliation...he committed to us the message of reconciliation... we are Christ’s ambassadors... God is making his appeal through us... we implore (people), “Be reconciled to God!” (2 Corinthians 5)

The gospel has the power in itself to straighten the road on which the King can come and exert his good kingdom reign.

- You might consider taking a few minutes to write down at least 10 people within your sphere of influence that you can tell about Jesus.
- Now ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share his love with those individuals?

Praising, praying, proclaiming, and living a lifestyle pleasing to the King – these are our fundamental “earth-moving” pieces of equipment. As agents of King Jesus, we have the thrilling opportunity to do something while we’re here. We can build a road for the King to come and establish his sublime reign in this world. We can’t just go through the motions when we do these spiritual activities. Remember that when we pray, when we worship, when we tell other people about Jesus, and even when we simply choose live his way - we’re advancing the eternal kingdom of God on this earth. So, let’s climb up on our earth moving tractors and bulldozers and make a road!