

Stop Trying So Hard: Finding Peace, Purpose, and Rest in Jesus

Part 5: Jesus' Shocking Secret to Changing the World

Mark 1:15 and Matthew 13:31-33

Summary: We can stop trying so hard. We can plant small seeds of trust, love, and peace and let God grow them in unexpected ways.

Main Ideas:

We're exhausted.

The pressure to keep up and be more is ruining and ending our lives.

We find the life we are looking for in the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God: God's revolution breaking into our world.

The Kingdom of God is not about trying harder... but purposely planting.

The Kingdom of God starts small but grows exponentially.

Every small seed has the potential to be a huge forest.

When we plant seeds for the Kingdom of God, growth is inevitable.

The most important growth is often unmeasurable.

We can stop trying so hard b/c Jesus is enough.

Invitation:

Read Galatians 6:9

Pray: What and where can I plant today? Help me trust you with the growth.

Remind yourself: "God grows what I plant."

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some areas of your life where you feel pressure to "try harder" or "be more?"
2. Jon said, "The most important growth is often unmeasurable." Have you ever seen this play out in your life?
3. Read Galatians 6:9. What often makes you "tired of doing good?" How could the idea of *planting* rather than *trying harder* make a difference in your life?
4. What is ONE small, intentional seed you can plant this week in your family, workplace, or community? How can you trust God with its growth?

Transcript:

WE: Is anyone tired? Exhausted?

We're all trying to balance so much... family, work, relationships, school, sports, friendships, self-care.

And it feels like if we stop for even a second, things will start to slip and soon everything could come crashing down.

- If we aren't keeping our mental list of to-do's open and active we'll miss something.

We're exhausted.

We don't want to just go through the motions of surviving life either...

- We want our lives to mean something.

We care about the people around us.

- We care about the brokenness in our communities, our country, the world.

But just keeping up with the issues—let alone trying to actually do something about them—takes up so much time, energy, mental space.

Oh but wait, there's more...

If you care about spiritual things or even call yourself a JF it feels like there's always more to do.

- Learn more. Serve more. Be more.

And when we struggle or feel worn out, the message we hear, both out in the world and even from the Church, is...

- "Oh, you're tired? What's wrong with you?"
- "Everyone else is doing it... so just try harder, be better, do more."

"Maybe if you just read this book, followed the right person, listened to the right podcast, prayed more, read your bible more, listened to more sermons... then you'd finally get it together."

And if you can't keep up? Well... maybe there's something wrong with you.

But deep down, we know... this isn't how life is supposed to be.

The pressure to keep up and be more is ruining and ending our lives.

- Studies show that most Americans feel overwhelmed, stressed, and disconnected.
- And religion just adds another level of do more, be better

But there's a better way...

- We can slow down and still make a difference
- We can truly rest and change the world at the same time
- We can actually enjoy our life, enjoy the people in our lives, and live a life that matters

It's exactly what Jesus invites us into.

GOD: In fact, it's a central theme of his ministry... look at his first teaching...

Mark 1:15 *"The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"*

We find the life we are looking for in the Kingdom of God.

So if you're tired of pushing so hard and wondering if it even makes a difference... we need to figure out what this KoG is and how it works.

You might feel like you have some idea, but what if I asked you to define it in one-sentence?

- Heaven? Godly society? People choosing to be really good?
- Sounds kind of boring to me.
- For the ancient Jews listening to Jesus- National Kingdom

The KoG was the central theme of Jesus' teaching... talks like it's something we should want.

What is the Kingdom of God, then?

- Not a place or state of mind.
- Invisible but more real than anything we've ever seen or touched.
- It's here now, but also not yet here...

Not even a thing (noun)... more of an action (verb)... Action of God...

- Best way to describe it... Revolution of God.

The Kingdom of God: God's revolution breaking into our world.

The world tells us that power, control, and fighting to be first is what life is all about.

- What every empire, king, class bully, guy down the street holds up as what we should be living for.

But Jesus turns all of that on its head... He said in the KoG the last will be first, love is the most powerful way, people are what truly matters.

- In the KoG God reigns in the hearts, minds, and lives of his people.

And when Jesus says... "Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"...

- He's recruiting people to join his revolution...

Repent? Ugh!

- Street preachers/holding signs
- Not what Jesus is talking about.

Jesus is inviting us to join a complete Revolution of how we see and interact with the world, people, and with God.

Changing allegiance from self-rule/reliance to allegiance to God's kingship.

- It transforms hearts, motives, actions, and ultimately entire being and life.

But joining a revolution kinda sounds like a big deal... and who has the time, energy, and brain space for all of that?

- I can barely make time to show up at church regularly.

That's the beauty of the KoG... it's completely different from how anything else operates

It's the opposite of what we're told to do to make a difference in the world and be more...

The Kingdom of God is not about trying harder... but purposely planting.

What I'm about to tell you is rarely tried... b/c not what anyone expected or still expects

- Knee jerk is... that's stupid it'll never work
- But for the people who have tried it... who have actually believed Jesus with their actions and choices... it's changed everything.... For them and the world.

Here's how Jesus described it...

Matthew 13:31-32

Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."

Isn't that dumb?

- Why would something as important and world-changing as The KoH... start small?
- If you're going to do something important go big or go home, right?

Put yourself in the shoes of the people who first heard Jesus say this...

- The Jews were hoping this kingdom he was promising was going to come in with overwhelming power, conquer the Roman army, and rule the world.

Instead, a small insignificant group of peasants with no power/authority/influence, practiced loving each other, loving their neighbors, and loving their enemies... and trusted God to take care of the rest.

And guess what? The Roman Empire is literally in ruins while the KoH has transformed the world.

- Whether you're a JF or not... the KoH has changed your life...
- Have you ever been to a hospital? Do you think each human should have equal rights and justice?
- Do you think power should be used to help those in need?
- That came from the small seed of the KoH being planted in 1st cent middle east.

The Kingdom of God starts small but grows exponentially.

But for some reason, we still think if something's not big and bold it's not worth it.

We think to do anything important we have to have a big platform, big resources, a big goal/vision!

- We have to push and fight and self-promote
- Most of us don't have the time, resources, and opportunity to do something big
- So we end up doing nothing... while still feeling exhausted from regular life.

Jesus says the KoG grows differently than anything else in the world.

- It doesn't need a grand launch plan.
- It doesn't start with millions of followers.
- It doesn't need you to fight and push and yell and dominate

- It starts with simple, small, faithful actions that God multiplies over time.

Jesus says, "In my revolution, I'm not looking for big... what's the small seed you can plant?"

Every small seed has the potential to be a huge forest.

To participate in his revolution we don't need to exhaust ourselves, figure out what grand plan God has for us, or stress about if we're doing enough or not....

We just need to embrace the same methods as the King.

- What daily act of kindness can you do?
- What small step of trust can you take?
- What little bit can you share?

One thing I like about this illustration is what it leaves (get it? leaves) out.

- Jesus doesn't describe how the seed grows
- Doesn't talk about the watering, the fertilizer, the pruning, the photosynthesis, etc.
- Doesn't talk about the gardener stressing out if this plant will grow or not.
- He just says the seed is planted and it grows.
- It's inevitable.

When we plant seeds for the KoG, growth is inevitable.

We can stop trying so hard when all we have to do is plant and let God grow what he wants to grow.

But when we plant how do we know anything is happening?

- It can feel like we're just wasting our time
- Spinning our wheels
- Everyone else is getting big results by doing it the world's way and we're just sitting here looking at a little mound of dirt

Growth is inevitable but it rarely looks like we expect.

V. 33 Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

This seems almost dumber than the mustard seed... yeast is so tiny... almost invisible.

But all you non-sourdough bakers know... just a little yeast can change the whole thing.

- But when you first mix it in the dough nothing happens.
- What was the point of that? Did that do any good?

And that's how many of us feel when we try to plant seeds in the KoG.

- We go out of our way and purposely plant seeds of love and peace... but is it doing anything?
- We expect immediate results but sometimes it feels like nothing is happening.

- Is my effort to love my neighbor, co-worker making any difference?
- I'm loving these people but they still suck.

You hear stories of amazing things happening in other people's lives, but you're stuck looking at a lump of dough.

And often we're tempted to quit when we don't see the results we want in the timeframe we want.

I used to think that success for our church meant big numbers, instant results, and visible growth.

- But Jesus' kingdom doesn't work like that.

The most important growth often happens quietly, over time.

- This is the growth I've seen in my life, my family's lives, your lives.

And that's the kind of growth that lasts forever.

The most important growth is often unmeasurable.

Where have you been investing... Waiting to see something happen?

- Training those kids... over and over and over again?
- Planting seeds of peace/kindness at work even though those co-workers are grumpy gossips?
- Keep taking the loving path in a difficult relationship?

Our job is to plant and let God take care of the invisible growth.

As the Apostle Paul said,

- **Galatians 6:9** *So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.*

Our small acts of love, trust, and self-control are making a difference whether we see it or not.

YOU: So this week... instead of trying harder... let's trust more.

We don't have to exhaust ourselves trying to do something big to make a difference.

All we have to do is faithfully plant seeds and practice trusting God to take care of the growth.

Invitation: **Read Gal. 6:9**

Pray: What and where can I plant today? Help me trust you with the growth.

Throughout your day... **Remind yourself: "God grows what I plant."**

Maybe it'll be something big... but most likely it'll be something that seems small and insignificant.

- Something that God can take and make into something that has a big impact for his revolution.

WE: Jesus isn't asking us to wear ourselves out trying to change the world by controlling everything.

- We plant. We trust. We love. We serve... but he's the one who brings the growth.

And that's freeing isn't it?

It means we can join God in what he is doing, even work hard at it without the stress of having to carry the burden of making it happen our way.

That's true rest.

So as we wrap up this series...

Remember... Jesus isn't asking for more effort.

He's inviting us to trust and enjoy him more.

When we accept that invitation we stop striving and start flourishing.

We stop chasing perfection and embrace the peace he offers.

We stop exhausting ourselves and start truly living.

This is the life Jesus offers... not just individually, but together.

We can be a community that...

- Trusts together. Rest together. Grows together. Loves the world together.

Not because we're trying harder... But because we're trusting and enjoying Jesus.

So let's stop trying so hard. Let's enjoy the peace, purpose, and rest of Jesus.

And let's watch him transform our lives in ways we never could on our own.

We can stop trying so hard b/c Jesus is enough.