

Series: YOUR MISSION...should you choose to accept it!

January 20, 2008

**LIVE LIKE JESUS
1 Corinthians 12:1-3, ff**

I. INTRO

- A. There's been a **lot** of focus recently south of the border on who will be the next President of the US. **I'm** interested in that stuff because I'm still a US citizen—but none of you are, right? It's just American politics!
1. Clinton, Obama, Edwards, McCain, Romney and Huckabee are all being compared to each other in terms of how they will work with the rest of the world, how they will treat the planet and whether or not people will be better off financially because of their leadership.
-And, of course, they're **all** in promise-making mode—on immigration, the war in Iraq, on poverty, on health coverage, on taxes...I mean, you name it, and someone has made a promise on it.
 2. Lori and I have theorized that it probably would take a combination of the skills and character of all of them to do a great job. We've even theorized on how this would show up in the names. Like McGuiliani, or Clintwards. Our favorite name, though, is either **Abama-Bee**—or maybe **Huck-abama**. It has a kind of ring to it, doesn't it?
 3. Truth is, the people in our world have searched **endlessly** for a good leader. The right leader. A **smart** leader. A leader who will be strong--stop the predators, fix the problems; but also help the helpless, hold the powerful accountable, and make life affordable.
-So—in November, a majority of the people will choose who they think can do that job—and keep all the promises they made. And when it's **all** done, everyone will say—whether it's in 2 years or 4 years, "We need **change!** We need a **new** leader!"

-It's predictable, because this is what happens in our world every single day!
- B. I have a question for you. How many of you would like to follow a **perfect** leader? Have someone running things who has limitless access to knowledge—and wisdom? Someone who anticipates everything that will happen—before it even happens? Someone who genuinely cares about both the wealthy and those who live in abject poverty?
1. Someone who has a plan—and actually has the power and authority to pull it off? Someone who knows how to not just crush enemies—but win them over!
-And, best of all, someone who knows the way to peace. Not just bloody peace, made and enforced by guns, hi-tech weapons and nuclear arsenals—but someone who actually can...and will...bring peace? I'd vote for someone like that! That would be **Good News**—the **best** news this old planet has ever seen.

2. When Jesus, Son of God, first started speaking to people, He announced something everyone was waiting for. He said, “There’s **Good News!** God’s kingdom, God’s leadership is here! And **His** leadership is filled, not just with power and incredible promise—but with love and compassion and goodness!” -And my question for you is—do **you** truly want a leader like this, and would you follow Him?

II. JESUS ASKS FOR ALL OF US

- A. How many of you love the political process and think it works **extremely** well—in fact—it’s the answer to most of the world’s problems? I’m actually quite cynical of the whole thing. When I hear promises, my gut response is, “Yeah! Whatever! **Show me the money!**”

1. Well, truth is, we have **no idea** how bad it can get. The world Jesus was born into had been crushed and stripped and humiliated by the super-power of the day. Rome. What Rome wanted, Rome got. Pay your tax, bow your knee—or die.
 - The local king, Herod, was a politician in the **worst** sense of that word because, see, he **loved** power, and would stop at nothing to get it and hang onto it. He was one of the greatest builders the world has ever seen—and he crushed his own people with taxes, basically doing impression management with Rome.
 - Not only was he political; he was vicious. He protected his power and authority by killing off anyone who crossed it, which would include one of his wives and three of his sons. See, he knew how the world worked—who counted; who didn’t. Much like those who lead our world, he knew how to out-maneuver, out-wait, outsmart, outfox, out-intimidate. He **knew**. He lived—filled with his own self-importance—and with **fear**. Fear—paranoia, really, that someone get close, kill him, and take his kingdom.
2. Right in the middle of all this twisted and perverted leadership, a teenage girl named Mary prophesied one day about the Son she carried—and the change He would bring.

He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. (Luke 1:50-53 NLT)

-In her world, those were **dangerous** words. Interesting. For centuries, it has been called **The Magnificat**—actually banned for a time in Guatemala It had revolutionary overtones!

Poor and oppressed people might read it—and get ideas. Ideas that are bad for greedy, power-hungry leaders.

3. Move ahead 30 years, and someone else comes along and says,

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven—or the kingdom of God has come near. (Matthew 4:17 TNIV) Anyone know who that was? It was Mary's Son. Jesus. God had had enough.

When people get selfish and violent; when rich people watch poor people go hungry or illiterate and they do nothing when they could do something, when the powerful push around those who are weak—just because they can get away with it; when folks who have stuff turn a blind eye and become apathetic to those who don't—it makes God mad! And God sent His Son to do something about it.

-Jesus came—and he started the **great reversal**. And this is the part people struggle to understand. He would not overthrow Herod or Caesar by using their methods. He would not teach people to out-Herod—Herod, or out-Caesar—Caesar. He would **out-love** the corrupt, greedy and oppressive leaders of His day. The Great News—God's Kingdom is coming **here!**

- B. Now, this may have sounded to you like I'm doing Christmas re-runs. I'm not. I just wanted to set the context for the **huge** amount of stuff Jesus said about this **new** Kingdom—which, by the way, sounds like something out of King Arthur, or **Shrek**—to us, doesn't it?

-What is a **kingdom**? It's the place where the **King** has the final say in everything—and where all the effects of his leadership either bless—or curse his people. Jesus was saying, "There's a **new Leader, a new King** here! And the realm of his leadership is near—coming—**right under your noses!**"

1. When Jesus laid out the plans for this new community, it became clear that it would be different than **anything** anyone had ever seen. The poor in spirit, the meek, the people who love right, the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure would be the heroes.

-The value system of the world would be flipped. Greed would be a disgrace; generosity and sacrifice would be honored. The weak would rule; the proud would be humbled. Love for God and others would be the most celebrated quality.

2. Problem is—there was only one way to be a part of it. Jesus said, "You need to **repent!**" Which basically means, "You need to change your mind about what matters and what doesn't. Mainly, though, it's a change of leaders. God leads—and **I** follow.

-Jesus called this the kingdom of **heaven**. What comes to mind when I mention **Heaven**. Good things, right? The **best!** Peace. No more pain or stress or politics. Or stories about Britney Spears. .

-Here's the learning. It's the presence and leadership of God that makes Heaven what it is! This Kingdom Jesus was talking about was fantastic news because He was saying, "You've had hundreds of years of bad leaders. Selfish; proud; sometimes downright evil. And now God is bringing His leadership—**here!**

-He's kind, compassionate—full of peace. A healer! But He **won't** crush the opposition to set up his kingdom. It will be a kingdom of hearts and wills--

People who will gladly submit their hearts to the leadership of God—and then do what He asks.

-There would be borders of countries or race or gender or socio-economics or political persuasions to stop it. Jesus said this Kingdom would be organic--like a small seed planted—that grows into a massive tree. That God, this King, would send His Spirit to work undercover, right at the core of people’s lives to win them over with his love and break down their resistance to his grace and forgiveness.

3. But there’s only one way to be a part of this Kingdom—and it’s not by earning your way into it. You have to humble yourself. You have to leave all your credits, awards, power and influence at the gate—and come under the leadership of God—like a little kid. It’s the same for everyone—whether you’re a President or a prostitute.

-And for people who have a lot when it comes to talent, money, prestige, political power—and the pride that goes with it—that’s **hard!**

- C. The implications of what this Kingdom is and what it means are huge—and it would take years to teach through it! Don’t worry, I’m not going to feed you with a firehose! Just know; this kingdom is here, it’s active, it’s extremely powerful—but it’s invisible. In a world like ours, it mostly flies under the radar. But **one** day it will encompass **everything** that exists.

- In the Roman Empire of that day, conquered people—**all** people were forced to say, **Caesar is Lord.** It meant, “Caesar reigns! Caesar deserves my full allegiance and obedience and whatever he wants from my possessions or my life.” Jesus’ earliest followers had a counter-phrase—subversive, really, to let people know where their allegiance was. Can anyone guess what it was? **Jesus is Lord.** Jesus is Lord—over Caesar, over Herod, over all heaven and earth.

1. That’s why Paul says these words:

You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:2-3 NLT)

-Now, let’s be honest; you could pull any drunk out of a bar and pay them to say, “Jesus is Lord.” To say, **Jesus is Lord** then was the equivalent of painting a target on your back.

That’s why it took the power of the Spirit of God. When Christ-followers were rounded up and threatened with death, the one escape hatch for them was to curse Jesus.

- a. It’s very easy in a culture like ours to just parrot those words off. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. But when that cry comes from the core of your life—and you **mean** it—what you’re saying is profound. You’re saying, “Jesus is in charge of my life. See, I want Him more than anything. He’s my hero—and He’s my leader, and the goal of my life is to do what **He** wants me to do.”
- b. So. Why would **anyone** do that? Imagine, for a minute, that you’re working in the campaign office for Barak Obama. Why would you work

there? Because—***you believe in him! You believe he’s the leader the US needs!*** And if Obama wins votes and primaries—and the presidency—***YOU*** won!

c. Jesus once said,

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!” (Matthew 13:44-46 NLT)

-Think about it. What is so important to you that you’d sell off everything, if you needed to, to get it?

The only time I’ve known people to do that is if they have a business they ***know*** is going to work—of if the life of a child or a spouse is on the line. Doing something like that is usually an act of love.

d. Do you get what Jesus is saying? Giving God full access to the inner part of your life, having His Spirit give you power and life and peace—and eternity--is worth ***everything!*** Of course, the question is—do you ***believe*** Him?

2. Right now, all the power of Heaven is ***here!*** God is powerfully at work restoring the hearts and lives of people—all over this world. And the Spirit of God is moving in this place—in your life--whispering, “Will you let me lead? Do you believe that I’m loving, fair, forgiving, kind—and absolutely powerful? Do you believe that I have ***your*** welfare, ***your*** mission in mind? That under My leadership, you will find peace; that you will find meaning; that you will find real, authentic life?”

a. Let me get ***very*** specific. If you and I are ever going to make the kind of difference in this world we are capable of making—and finish well—it will take us Jesus having full access to us—and His full leadership in our lives.

b. Anyone here ever been threatened with death, imprisonment, or loss of anything for saying, ***Jesus is Lord?*** I haven’t. Jesus prophesied about this. He said:

Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (Matthew 7:21 NLT)

-Lots of people say things they don’t mean to get what they want. Anyone here every done that?

Anyone here ***believe*** in something you don’t actually do. How many of you ***believe*** exercise is a ***good*** thing. What you say—and what you believe doesn’t count—unless you ***act*** on it! ***Doing...DOING*** the Father’s will—is what counts. And we can’t do that without choosing to let Him lead.

-A **kingdom**—remember, is where a king is actually **king**. Anyone remember the Lord's Prayer? Say the first few lines with me. Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your Name. **Your** Kingdom come, **Your** will be done—on earth, as it is in Heaven.” People rattle this off sometimes without ever realizing that they're praying, “God, your leadership is so amazing and life-giving—I want it to spread all over this planet, **including ME!** Lead me! Go ahead—I'll follow!”

3. How? Well, through a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ—just like it did when He walked here. He still speaks—and says, “Come and **follow** Me.” And we say, “I-I-I—uh-h-h—I-Immm—Okay. **Yes!** I'll give it a try.” In that transaction, we leave our sin and guilt and rebellion behind—and walk His way. Hang with Him. Interesting, isn't it—that Jesus never did an altar call. Never asked people to say a little prayer—and then go back to their normal lives. It was always, “Come! Follow me!” The only one who actually **couldn't** was the guy pinned to the cross next to him.
 - Jesus asked people to **follow**—which implies action; movement. If you look at Jesus' disciples, you see them being with him. Making mistakes. Sometimes arguing with him or with each other—but in companionship with him and others.
 - If you're like me, you probably have a **kingdom** of your own. The place where you're in charge; where what you say—goes. And this kingdom is made up of little **fiefdoms**. Money. Thought life. Mouth. Temper. How I handle my sexuality. How I treat my spouse/children/friends. Time. Work. Home. And there are probably others.
 - a. It may be different for you—but there had to be a defining moment for me where I literally asked Jesus to be Lord of my kingdom—and all the little fiefdoms that were a part of it. I wanted to **live** like Jesus—I wanted Him more than **anything**—more than my will. That was my defining moment. That was D-Day—when the final outcome if his leadership was insured.
 - b. Since then, there have been a number of struggles between me and Jesus—over who's going to run all the little kingdoms within my kingdom. Jesus and I occasionally have a tussle!
 - See, the way I look at it, Jesus isn't out to shame or crush us. Surrendering some areas to his leadership is easy. Others? Well, not so easy. Paul describes it as switching from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. I envision it as a mountain range with the sun coming up—one peak at a time getting light, getting Jesus' flag planted on top.
 - c. And the places I refuse to bring under his leadership? Like how I use my mouth? My money? My need to be safe—control everything and everyone around me? Impatience? It becomes a place where darkness hides and sabotages the good; the change I want and need.
4. I would **never** pretend this step is an easy one. It's not. But it is the **best** move you'll make. Ever. So—have you ever asked Jesus to be your leader? I mean,

really. Have you ever asked, “Why not?” I doubt if you would be arrogant enough to say, “Well, du-uh! It’s because I can do a better job!”

-What’s the sticking point? You’ve been under **bad** leaders who don’t keep their promises? Is that what you think of Him? Is your life going so doggone well you don’t need Him? I’d say—**Go for it!**

III. OUR MISSION WILL TAKE ALL OF US!

A. You may be thinking, at this point, “So, Ken—this talk was supposed to be about **living like Jesus.**” Well, Jesus once said that the reason he lived like He did was because He followed the Father’s direction—did the Father’s will. **All the time!**

1. Think about what that looked like for Jesus. For the first 30 or so years of his life, he apparently lived a very normal life at home with his mother, working as a carpenter—doing no miracles and giving no messages. I can guarantee you that He loved and served others; we just don’t have the details. And He was doing the Father’s will!

-For the last three years of his life, he was this astounding miracle worker, healer and teacher. He lived very simply, totally gave his life away to others, and ended up on a Roman cross.

-That, to me, means that if you live like Jesus—it might mean living, to some extent, in obscurity. Quietly bringing the influence and leadership of Jesus through your life to what seems like a very ordinary job and home.

Or it could mean leaving what’s familiar behind and serving the Jesus in a very new, active, obvious way.

2. I will say this. Living like Jesus will mean loving and serving others in some way. That’s what this passage in 1 Corinthians 12 goes on to say. **There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other...**

It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 NLT)

-I’m going to be getting into this teaching more in detail in the weeks to come. The point I want to make is that it is the act of placing yourself under the leadership of Jesus that gives you the gifts you need to make a difference in some unique way. It will very likely fit you in the unique place you’re in-- whether you’re a teen, in university, single, married, kids/no kids. It will fit the passion you have—probably the stuff that makes your heart beat fast! And it will fit who you work best with.

-Let me put it as **simply** as I can. God does His work, brings hope and life and goodness and justice and mercy to this planet through the power of **together.** All kinds of people with all kinds of experience, with all kinds of backgrounds, with all kinds of scars, with all kinds of talents, with all kinds of weird

personalities—all working **together** to bring the amazing leadership of Jesus to a world that **desperately** needs a good leader!

3. I've heard people say a **lot** of nasty stuff about being part of a church. Anyone here ever seen **junk** go on in churches? I have—and it hurts. A **church**—and Jesus coined the word—is not a building or a set of doctrines. It simple means a gathering—people who've been gathered out of the world system—who now follow Jesus. In our case, to love God, help each other, and serve the world in a stunning, unforgettable way. In this gathering, we call that covenant to serve together—**ministry partnership. We're in this together!**
 - a. We are called to bring the blessing, love and power of Jesus leadership wherever we go. That's what **living like Jesus** is. We follow **His** leadership in caring for our world and managing our resources; we follow **His** loving leadership in caring for the broken, poverty-stricken, homeless and diseased. By the way, it's kind of invisible—but there's not a week that goes by that this is not happening among the people of The Olive Branch. When we **live** like Jesus—then our message about loving and following Jesus makes sense.
-See, the deal is, we don't just **have** the message of Jesus. We **are** the message of Jesus!
 - b. Do bad things happen to people who follow Jesus? Yep! It's **extremely** tough for some people. There are some things that will never get sorted out this side of eternity. Our calling is to be faithful in following our leader—even when it's not giving you warm fuzzies. Expect that **it will not be easy to make a difference!** But the alternative, **NOT** making a difference, **NOT** engaging in Jesus mission, **NOT** bringing Jesus Kingdom, His leadership to a world that desperately needs it--is worse. Would you agree?
 - c. Jesus plan calls for **everyone** to engage. That means, you—you—you—oh, and **you!** Not 10%, 30%--or even 90%. 90% is 10% short. Why? Is Jesus out use us and lose us? **Absolutely not!** He's calling us to live out the reason we were called to Him in the first place. Everyone gets to have a part. Everyone has a gift to use and develop. Everybody grows up in the process. Everyone is called to be a priest, to offer life in Jesus' name, to bring hope to their world. Everyone has a calling on their lives. Everyone is important!
-Christ has chosen His people, His church—as motley, warty, weak and broken as we are—to do **His** work. Because, see, **His strength is made perfect in weakness!** He still takes little stale bag lunches and turns them into banquets. He still turns water into wine. He will turns whores and thieves into saints. Jesus' Church is the hope of the world. I can tell you this--there is not another leader who's going to straighten out this mess—except Jesus.
- B. I want you to think, for just a moment, about Jesus' people, Jesus' church. Right now there are somewhere between 2.6 and 2.8 billion people on a planet of 6.5 billion—who would call themselves followers of Jesus. Why isn't the Kingdom of Jesus, God's leadership on this planet, more obvious?

1. Right now there's a book out called **UN-CHRISTIANS**. A ton of research has gone into it—and a lot of people are reading it. and it's looking at how people outside the faith view people who call themselves Christians—people inside the church. It's a very sobering picture. One of those facts is that 84% of the people know someone who claims to be a Christian—but they say that in only 15% of those cases does it make a difference in that person's life. **15%**

2. If you looked into **why** that happens, I think I could give you some ideas. I think a lot of people—maybe some of you—are **more** led by, **more** invested in, **more** devoted to the American or Canadian dream than to Jesus. Jesus is simply another ingredient in life. "Jesus, fix my problems, forgive my sins, give me Heaven, make my children obey and my neighbors cooperate, help me feel better about life. But, man, don't come asking anything of me! I don't have the time or money or energy." You can do that—and Jesus will still love you. Always.
 - But you will lose out on what **might** have been. See, Jesus never asked to be an **ingredient** in life—like garlic or paprika. He didn't ask to be a problem-solver, a make-life-feel-better guru or help-me-get-more-money-and-stuff genie. No. He asks to be **Lord**—because, see, **that's His identity**. He **is** Lord. He invited people to **follow** Him. He asked people to be a part of **His** Kingdom—and a kingdom has a...**King**. And the King in Jesus' Kingdom is...Jesus.
 - The flip side of that book, **UN-CHRISTIANS** is a story that John Ortberg told about the church where he pastors. Apparently they were having a dessert time for his Church Board at his home. One of the Board members suggested a certain dessert caterer. When the staff person setting it all up called the dessert guy, and told him that he had been recommended by a board member—whom he named, the man said,
 - “You mean this guy goes to **your church** and he recommended me?” The staff person said, “Yeah, do you know him?” The caterer said, “Know him! I'll tell you what. Not only do I know him. He is such a good guy. He has been so kind to me and the people I work with that if you're his church, I will provide my part of the dessert for free. You're not paying me anything! I will give the dessert away to a church that produces a person like that!”
 - Of course, we **know** that churches don't produce people with that kind of character. Only Jesus does! And when people run into one of them—they are astounded. Drawn to the Kingdom—the beauty and the power of the **leadership** of Jesus. And God's reputation spreads!

3. The only way Jesus can transform our lives—so that we live like He lived, so that our lives have the power and impact and influence **He** had, so that others see Jesus in us—is when we will lay everything on the line and put Him in charge. No one can say, **Jesus is Lord** except by the power of the Spirit.
 - Think of our world's opinions of Jesus followers **would** change if we **all** brought our wills, our possessions, our character--**everything** under the leader of the Kingdom. Jesus.
 - I dream of being part of a community where Jesus travels, through our lives, to the farthest reaches of the GTA and beyond. Where our **love** and **respect** for

the Leadership of Jesus is crystal clear. Where compassion, sacrificial love, justice, mercy and grace travel **everywhere** because of us!

IV. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- A. Lori gave me a crazy book for Christmas. I'm not going to tell you the title—but it's filled with little known facts. Facts that would fit into the game, **Trivial Pursuit**—anyone remember that game, by the way? Anyway, the fact was that the tallest statue of Jesus in the US is in—**Arkansas!** Can you believe it? It's called **Jesus of the Ozarks**. It's 68 feet high. They would've built it even higher, except that, because of planes, they'd have had to put a flashing red light on top of Jesus' head. Not cool!
- B. I don't think the people of this world need another huge cement...or stone...or gold statue of Jesus. I think they need a real, flesh-and-blood follower of Jesus who's not perfect—but is **flat-out** devoted to living under Jesus' leadership. And not playing **Trivial Pursuit**—like everyone else. Will you be that person in **your** world? **Will** you?