

STUDENT SERMON ON THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY CONTINUED

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1. Opening Prayer

Heavenly father, we gather before you today after what has been a full week. A week full of stress, traffic, school, work, family stress and so on. We ask that you can bring us in close tonight, that whatever we are walking into this room tonight with on our minds or carrying on our shoulders that you help us leave it at the door, and focus our hearts and minds on worship you and hearing from you tonight.

We pray an affirmation that you will keep the world spinning while we are here during this time, that You Lord will take care of the worry and all the stresses and problems in our lives, no matter how big or small they are, for this evening as we engage you for this moment of praise. We pray that you will enable us to leave all of our baggage at the door, to engage in a prayerful dialogue with you tonight.

Amen

2. Opening Illustration

Let's all just take a moment and let the Holy Spirit rest us. Let's just take a moment to sit and empty out to God.

I want to tell a story of a series of Kingdoms. In these Kingdoms there are many values and virtues that are chief amongst the culture and the leaders. A high value is put on money and material success. Sexuality is disturbingly idolized, unsustainable standards and desires are promoted when it comes to sexual lifestyles and deviancy. Pride, honor, and status within the society is undeniably out of balance, to the point where power is abused as to bring a leader more status and honor at the expense of the greater community.

There is a prevailing mindset of scarcity, and because of this scarceness view people fight for the power and control over others, they compete for the scarcity of food, jobs, occupations, and practically everything is scarce causing incredible cut throat competition amongst the people of this Kingdom.

Much is wrong in this Kingdom, but this is not a story without hope. There is a movement afoot, an underground conspiracy. A grouping of people getting together to change this world for the better. To make this Kingdom the good Kingdom we all know it ought to be. This story may give you reminiscent images of Hollywood films such as V for Vendetta, or Wanted with Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman. Now this is a truly good revolution and conspiracy. These

people do not overthrow the current society with force and violence. Instead they do it through living the good life by accessing deep vital and natural truths.

Now I ask you to imagine, what do these people of the conspiracy look like to you?

a. Transition

Now that flawed Kingdom I described to you was a quick summary of some of the characteristics to our fallen world and society we live in today. That we live amongst a flawed kingdom, yet there is hope a King has come and pronounced His Kingdom all we need to do is join in the conspiracy to grow our kingdom into that which will eventually dethrone the current system and reign in Glory.

Tonight I am going to talk to you about Kingdom living as we know it through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and how we can use that good news to help us answer "What is my calling in this life?"

I will be speaking based a lot on the outline and foundation of the book The Divine Conspiracy Continued by Dallas Willard and Gary Black.

3. Introduction: What is the Issue?

If we have a complete understanding of the Gospel, then how does that affect us in or lives?

And how does that clear out our calling?

a. Explain the Issue

The Gathering has just transitioned from a series that included a study in Ephesians, about how God has created you for good works. A study on the attributes of God, thus why we need to get to know God, the trinity, and so on. All followed by a week of prayer. Then His story, the atoning sacrifice and what His story, that of Jesus Christ, means to us.

And if we understand that Story of Jesus Christ, the Gospel, how does that clear our calling?

i. Transition

How do we understand the Kingdom announcement in the Gospel that Jesus has ushered in the Kingdom 2000 years ago, when all these other Kingdoms, like those of vice, greed, pride still exist...

4. What is the problem?

There are many Kingdoms still present after Christ Kingdom was ushered in.

a. Explain the Problem

We are trying to live in God's Kingdom. But we have a hard time because all the other Kingdoms get more promotion and attention in our society.

Do we see this promoted in our culture today?

Do we see on TV a constantly changing fashion of what is needed to fulfill us? To make us feel better. To give our lives meaning.

A cool apartment in a cool city. A beautiful home, with a perfect wife, perfect husband, a couple kids. Certain brands of cars and clothing. The problem is not these things per se, but that the chasing of them is constant, as they are constantly changing. By the time you are able to make the sacrifices and work necessary to follow a fashion, such as a car, or clothing, it is already on its way out of style or is already out of fashion.

i. Transition

The question to ask yourself next is:

Am I serving a Kingdom that is of this world? Am I a subject in the Kingdom of consumerism? Is this Kingdom I want to serve in? Is this the Kingdom that Christ announced, and called me to serve in?

What are the true attributes I want in a Kingdom I serve?

5. Point 1

God's Kingdom values: *Shalom* (Peace) and contentment

a. Explain

If you all could please open your Bibles to Psalm 23.

God's Kingdom differs from the Kingdom humanity has established currently. We can see in Psalm 23 God's Kingdom calls us to *Shalom*.

b. Illustrate

Let's please read it aloud together. I have the NKJV on the screen let's please read from that.

The LORD is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

² He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

³ He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

⁴ *Yea*[More than all that even], though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;

For You *are* with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell^[a] in the house of the LORD

Forever.

c. Discussion

i. Question 1 of 3.

So how do we find shalom? Peace? Or contentment?

(Finding shalom – pg 37 q 4)–

Let me open us up to a discussion question.

One of the best places for us to begin developing a better understanding of the Kingdom of God in our cotemporary contexts is found in the concept of shalom, or peace, defined in Psalm 23. So my question for you guys, and I invite us now into a discussion on this,

Do you believe a Psalm 23 kind of life is preferable?

Do you believe it is possible?

How is it possible?

ii. Question 2 of 3.

(Finding shalom – pg 37 q5) –

Finding Shalom

We read in Proverbs 29:25 read text

Fear of man will prove to be a snare,
but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

I would like to propose to you that Fear is the absence of shalom. Proverbs 29:25 states: "the fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in the Lord is secure." How does fear separate us from the peace of God?

How does our fear separate us from others?

How does fear make us compare ourselves with others or seek dominance over them?

In what ways does fear distort what is true?

iii. Question 3 of 3.

(Pg198-199 q 3) – Shalom is marked by a life without either fear or want. History is full of examples that demonstrate how various civilizations formed political and economic systems to achieve general welfare and common flourishing.

What are some examples of failures?

What are some examples of successes?

How can contemporary societies seek higher levels of flourishing without creating an environment dominated by either fear or discontentment?

d. Application

Let's read Psalm 23 together again now.

I encourage each of you this week to memorize Psalm 23. Memorize it and repeating it to yourselves daily.

I prefer to do it in King James, for the Shakespearean, old English, romantic tone of the words, and also because it is the way we culturally (in movies, books, tv) here scripture read. It may not be the best for present life study and application but I believe it is the best for resonance, soul edification, and memory work.

i. Transition

Our greatest application we can make in consciously choosing Kingdom living will first be done by making a spiritual discipline this week to memorize psalm 23. And that will best enable us to understand that the Kingdom of God is here for you now! And the kind of God that we serve!

6. Point 2

The Kingdom of God is here for you now.

a. Explain

We do not have to wait until we die and go to heaven to participate in the Kingdom of God. We do not have to wait until the end times to participate in the Kingdom of God. It is true

in the end that the Kingdom will be completed, glory will be paramount, and suffering will be no more.

We still live with the consequence of sin here on earth, but we are no longer beholden to it. Christ defeated death through His atoning work on the Cross, and pronounced His Kingdom had arrived 2000 years ago.

b. Illustrate

The Kingdom of God is a citizenship of privilege. Look at all of us living as citizens of the United States and the privilege that this gains you globally. Now magnify this about 1 million times and see yourself in the Kingdom of God, and the great privilege that comes with that citizenry.

We can rest in the freedom that we are not to going to be judged for our sins by God. That God loves us so much, that He gave His only Son to conquer death for us, to have eternal life.

That God has promised to provide for us, think back to the provision in Psalm 23 that we shall not be in want.

c. Discussion

Now for some class discussion.

i. Question 1 of 2

(Pg 36 q 2) – When was the first time you heard a teaching about the Kingdom of God? Did that teaching include that God’s kingdom is presently available and accessible, or was it assumed that the Kingdom of God is only a future reality?

How can these dissimilar teachings on the Kingdom of God affect our thinking, behaviors, and vocational responsibilities?

What is God’s overarching mission or goal for our world?

ii. Question 2 of 2

(Pg 37 q 3)– There are significant problems such as inaccurate views of the end times and of the purpose of the Gospel in Christianity, other Churches, and in Christian institutions of higher learning that have hindered us from experiencing God’s rule through his Son, Jesus the King.

Do you agree?

What is the “good news” according to Jesus Christ?

Are there some inaccuracies in certain end times views?

What other problems may be unintentionally created in our Christian doctrines and beliefs that have hindered both individuals and organizations from more fully living in the reality of God's Kingdom?

7. Sub point 2

By not experiencing God's rule through His Son Jesus the King, Christianity has lost much of our influence in society, culture, and the education system.

i. Discussion Question

Where did Christianity lose its influence, in matters of culture, government, law making, and education?

Take a moment to empathize with those people who have spent their lives and careers over the generations ushering the Christians out of those establishments. The people who fought to make a separation between the church and state, and the philosophies and worldview of Christianity.

What was the reason those people had in doing so?

ii. Transition

Has anybody ever heard someone say I don't go to church anymore because all those Christians are ??/ hypocrites....

A) Explanation

Over the generations did this people live out the charges and instructions in 1 peter 2-3? Where Peter writes to the Church that they are to be blameless in the eyes of those who persecute them. Where Peter tells them that if they are going to suffer persecution, let it be for those things that are good and holy, and not suffer for those things that are wrong.

Are we being conscious of living as the city on the hill?

Matthew 5:14 being a city on a hill.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Jesus called us to play this role in His Kingdom. To be the light that shines before all people, so that they would see our good, and all of this would glorify God the Father in Heaven.

Back to the point we just discussed. You see there has been a chronic problem in Christianity for some time. Losing influence in those fields of our society and culture is the proof of it. The problem lies where:

1. The person separates their faith from work. Where someone may be a "good Christian" they fulfill all of the requirements of church membership and attend weekly services. Yet they are not living as Jesus would, they are not engaged in being a disciple.

2. The Christian gives up hope. They write the world off as lost, and that there is no hope in defeating the enemy. They see evil in the world and ungodliness in leadership and culture, and they turn to praying for the end to come, not necessarily for restoring God's glory, but instead they pray for the end because they believe there is no hope for Kingdom living now. That God is not powerful enough to overcome the consequences of greed, ego, and the pride of people seeking reputation in this world.

i. Discussion Question

(Pg 158 q4 –) Holding to inaccurate traditions and dogmas has caused Christianity to lose much of its authority as a reliable source of knowledge within our secular society.

How has this shift in authority affected secular institutions?

and Christian education institutions?

Do you agree or disagree with the notion that there is a specific body of Christian knowledge?

b. Illustration

Now that we have discussed the interworking and History behind what has happened to our society and our unfortunate transition away from Kingdom of living. Now we can better see the illustration of the divine conspiracy. We can better understand the point of a counter cultural underground movement that is set on improving the social welfare of society. That is intent on righting wrongs and putting the mission of this movement above self.

i. Transition

How do we navigate then how we are supposed to live, what is our discernment process for Kingdom living? How do we measure right from wrong?

The authors to this book provide a list of traits in a good person, while this wouldn't be all the traits, they're proposal is that all of these things would be present in a good leader.

(pg 95-96,99_ – the authors define what a good person is with some helpful traits, these aren't comprehensive but they're proposal is that all of these things would be present in a good leader.

1. A morally good person is one who is committed to preserving and enhancing – in an appropriate order of importance – all the various “goods” (individual aspects of “the good”) over which he or she has influence. This includes pursuing one’s own moral goodness as well as the well-being of others.
2. A morally good person is one who cultivates understanding of the various: goods of life (by education) and the capacity to reason clearly about those “goods” and about the conditions necessary for their preservation and enhancement.
3. The good person is a thoughtful person who seeks to be informed and who is, though not in an overly sentimental sense, a person animated by love. Thus, being a good person is always first a personal choice and achievement.
4. A good person is one who arranges life in such a way as to become morally upright and who seeks out and implements the means for remaining so. Becoming and remaining a good person does not just “happen.”
5. A good person is one who effectively cares for him-or herself and those who are close. This is the principle of proximity.
6. A good person is someone who can be trusted.

Jesus tells us that a good person is a person who is appropriately concerned about and committed to the well-being of others. (mark 12:31, john 13:34-35).

³¹ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:31

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

The right act is the kind of act that is characteristic of the person who is committed to the well-being of others. Like in Luke 10, Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan.

And

Jesus tells us the bad person is one who intentionally destructive or indifferent to the well-being of others. (Matt. 15:18-20; John 3:30; 7:7)

¹⁸ But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, ^[a]fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.²⁰ These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.” Matt. 15:18-20

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. John 3:30

ii. Discussion Question

(Pg 129 q 5) – The scriptures advocate that “the good person is the person who is appropriately concerned about and committed to the well-being of others.” In contrast, “a bad person is one who is intentionally destructive of or indifferent to the well-being of others.” Think about the events and people discussed in the news.

Can you list two or three people who might fit into these definitions?

How did these individuals become either a good person or a bad one?

Do we know how?

In what ways were truth and morality or deceit and immorality connected or disconnected in each event?

8. Point 3p

On account of the Kingdom and the good news of the Gospel, there is a good life for us to live.

i. Transition

I have some discussion questions to illustrate to us the good life we can live now.

b. Discussion Question 1 of 3

(Pg 222 q1) – In Business. Some believe that when the Kingdom of God is full realized there will be no reason for commercial enterprise. In other words, the business world will not exist. But what if commercial enterprise will exist in eternity.

What would they be like?

How would the leaders serve in their role?

How would it be different from our current system?

How would it be “good” for customers, owners, and workers?

c. Discussion Question 2 of 3

(Pg 222 q5) – How might a Christ like perspective affect one’s view of issues such as profit motives, consumer confidence, regulation, downsizing, budgets, and personnel? Should

Christians (in the now) maintain a unique outlook on these matters different from that of non-Christian or non-religious businesspeople?

If so in what ways?

If not why?

d. Discussion Question 3 of 3

(Pg 130 q7) – The authors argue that the power to transform individual lives and social structure must be accomplished through a good God acting through the Spirit of His risen Son in and through His people. Do you agree?

Which Christian endeavors to transform both the individual and social structures have failed?

Why do you think they failed?

Which Christian endeavors have been successful in transformation?

What makes the difference?

e. Application via Discussion Question 1 of 1

Servant leadership is leading others to a good, peaceful, and just life. That is the mark of a servant leader. Think about those around you who are less powerful, less advantaged, or less capable than you. (pg 55 q6)

What two or three tangible acts of service could you engage in to better their lives emotionally, physically, or spiritually?

9. Challenge Proposition

Will you join in the Cultural Revolution? Will you think outside of Christian Church membership and join the cultural shifting work that is being a part of the Divine conspiracy?

a. Explain

Are you willing as a leader, a whistle blower, a Disciple of Christ, a member of this Divine conspiracy? Are you willing to sacrifice your reputation, your financial wellbeing, your job, your position or title, for what is good for your fellow man? For what is right? For what your King wants in His Kingdom?

What about during the Valdez oil spill? Where were the disciples? I am sure there where Christians there, but where was the disciple who was so intent on serving His King and building up His Kingdom that he, without any fear of the consequence, said we can't drill here. We can't use these machines, the chief engineer here is wrong, or incompetent, or hey we just violated the rules or standards on how to do this. Where was the person who had no fear to go to the

executives and tell them what was about to happen? Are you going to be caught up by the fear in losing your high paying job on that oil rig to say anything? Are you going to be afraid of losing your reputation if you are wrong about predicting a disaster?

What if you work at McDonalds, or Starbucks??

What if you work at a carwash and you see a piece of machinery that is in disrepair and liable to hurt somebody or possibly take their life. Are you going to be admit and insist that it be fixed? Can you put aside the fear and aggravation and let the Lord's staff comfort you? – psalm 23. Can you trust the Sheppard enough to do the work that He asks of us, without fear of losing the promise of the provision he has given us? – he lays me down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters. – Food and provision!

10. Conclusion – Inspire the Audience

Are you trying to find your calling? In light of this enlightening view of God's Kingdom here today. And these examples tonight of living the good life Christ imagined, pray and meditate on the question, what do you want your legacy to be?

In light of the many things we have discussed tonight. What do you want your legacy to be?

What do you really hope to accomplish in this life?

What do you want to be in your obituary?

What do you want your legacy to be?

Let me close in prayer

11. Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, I am thankful for this time tonight to flesh out and discuss ways of approaching living the way you have called us to. Remind us Lord, that it is your Kingdom that we are to live as citizens of. That if we do this, the good life you have for us in mind will surely follow. I lift this group of men and women here today up to you. And in Jesus name I pray.

Amen

a. Close in Prayer and Dismiss

Thank you guys for engaging in this discussion with me. Pastor Jeremy said to dismiss you guys at the end. So you have the room for the rest of the evening. Good night to you all, and God Bless you!