

Message Four

Living the Kingdom Life by Living a Hidden Life

Scripture Reading: Isa. 45:15; 37:31; Matt. 6:2-4, 5-15, 16-18; 14:22-23; Psalms 42:7; S. S. 4:12

I. We need to learn from the pattern of the Lord living a hidden life in His going up to the mountain privately to pray—Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12:

- A. The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds (the miracle of feeding five thousand men, apart from women and children), but He went away from them privately to be with the Father on the mountain in prayer—Matt. 14:14-23:
 - 1. The Lord compelled the disciples to leave Him in order that He might have more time to pray privately to the Father—vv. 22-23.
 - 2. He needed to pray privately to His Father who was in the heavens so that He might be one with the Father and have the Father with Him in whatever He did on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens; He did this not in the deserted place but on the mountain, leaving all the people, even His disciples, so that He might be alone to contact the Father.
- B. We should treasure three phrases—*to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer*:
 - 1. To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves; when we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately.
 - 2. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray, we should shut our door privately and pray to the Father who sees in secret (6:6); then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him.
 - 3. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a “high mountain”; we have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level; we need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him.

II. The principle of the kingdom people is that they live a hidden life, not performing their righteous deeds before men—deeds such as giving (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18):

- A. Regarding each of the three illustrations, the Lord used the word *secret* (vv. 4, 6, 18); our Father is *in secret*, and He *sees in secret*; the kingdom people, as children of the heavenly Father, must live in and care for the Father’s secret and hidden presence.
- B. The kingdom people, who live in an emptied and humbled spirit and walk in a pure and single heart under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom, are not allowed to do anything in the flesh for the praise of men but must do all things in the spirit for the pleasing of their heavenly Father.
- C. The effect of doing our righteous deeds in secret is that the flesh and the self are killed; if people in society and even in degraded Christendom are not allowed to make a show of their good deeds, they will not do them; the self loves to be glorified, and the flesh loves to be gazed upon.
- D. The saints who grow openly do not grow in a healthy way; we all need some secret growth in life, some secret experiences of Christ; we need to pray to the Lord, worship the Lord, contact the Lord, and fellowship with the Lord in a secret way.
- E. We should pray much yet not let others know how much we pray; if we pray every day without telling others or letting them know about it, it means that we are healthy and that we are growing.

- F. The kingdom people must have some experience of prayer in their private room, contacting their heavenly Father in secret, experiencing some secret enjoyment of the Father, and receiving some secret answer from Him—v. 6.
- G. Any time we exhibit ourselves in our righteous deeds, we are not healthy; such an exhibition greatly frustrates our growth in life.
- H. Our human life loves to make a display, a public show, but God's life is always hidden; a hypocrite is one who has an outward manifestation without having anything within.
- I. We can never practice living a hidden life in secret in our natural life; it is possible only in the divine life, the life that does not enjoy making a show; if we are serious about being the kingdom people, we must learn to live by the hidden life of our Father.
- J. The universe indicates that God is hidden, that God is secret; if we love others by the love of God, this love will always remain hidden.

III. **"Surely You are a God who hides Himself, / O God of Israel, the Savior"—Isa. 45:15:**

- A. Believers may know God as the almighty One, as the righteous One, as the One full of grace and compassion, but as the One who hides Himself, He is unknown to them.
- B. God does countless things in the midst of His people and countless things in their personal lives, yet He conceals Himself:
 - 1. God likes concealment, but we like display; God does not crave outward manifestations, but we cannot be content without them.
 - 2. God was obviously with Elijah on Mount Carmel, but when God withheld His manifest presence, Elijah could not bear it—1 Kings 19:9-18:
 - a. God knew that Elijah wanted Him to be a God who would manifest Himself; he had not realized that God is a God who hides Himself.
 - b. God was not in the great and strong wind, He was not in the earthquake, and He was not in the fire; instead, God spoke to Elijah in a "gentle, quiet voice"—v. 12.
 - c. The fact that God spoke to Elijah in a gentle, quiet voice indicates that God was ushering Elijah into the New Testament age, in which God speaks to His people not by thundering but gently and quietly—cf. 1 John 2:27.
 - d. Elijah said to God that he was the only faithful one left, but God very gently answered Elijah by saying that He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal—1 Kings 19:18; cf. Rom. 11:2-5.
 - e. Elijah had reckoned the situation only with what he could see, but God is a God who hides Himself; He had secretly reserved for Himself seven thousand overcomers who had not bowed the knee to Baal; God's activity was so hidden that not even the prophet Elijah knew anything about it.
- C. We need to realize the hidden nature of God's working; we should not think that only mighty influences, great visions, and tremendous revelations are of God; God's surest work is done in the secret of our beings:
 - 1. The more we serve the Lord, and the more we abide in Him, the more we realize that God is a very quiet God, so quiet that His presence is often undetected.
 - 2. His most intimate way of guiding us is so natural that we scarcely perceive He is guiding us at all, yet somehow we have been led; it is often by this quiet inward activity of God that we receive our greatest guidances.
- D. When the only begotten Son came for the purpose of declaring God, He hid Him in a human life—a human life whose appearance was "marred," a human life that had "no attracting form nor majesty"—Isa. 52:14; 53:2:
 - 1. He came from Galilee, an insignificant province, and from the town of Nazareth, a small town of which it was said by the Jews that no prophet or person of repute ever came from there—John 1:46; 7:52.

2. Thus, when He appeared, people found it hard to believe that God was present in Him—they found it hard even to believe that He was a prophet of God, yet God was hidden within Jesus of Nazareth—cf. Col. 2:9.
 3. Also, Jesus of Nazareth belonged to a poor home and grew up to be a carpenter—a very ordinary carpenter, working in a very small way, until He was thirty; who would have ever thought that He was indwelt by the infinite God?
- E. If you study the Scriptures carefully, you will see that God has the kind of temperament that dislikes ostentation; He likes to work secretly rather than openly—Matt. 17:1-9; John 20:14-17; Luke 24:13-37; John 20:24-29; Isa. 39:2-8:
1. “Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory”; it is a wonder and a mystery that the believers love One whom they have not seen—1 Pet. 1:8.
 2. Since the resurrection of the Lord, the chief discipline for His followers has come along the line of knowing Him as a God who hides Himself.
 3. Everything of God’s economy with Christ as its centrality and universality is not in the seen realm but in the unseen atmosphere and realm of faith—2 Cor. 4:13, 16-18; 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Eph. 3:17a; 1 Tim. 1:4b.
- F. When we are most conscious of impotence, God is most powerfully present—2 Cor. 12:9-10:
1. The God who hides Himself is at work within our lives, and He is working mightily.
 2. Our responsibility is to cooperate with Him by responding to His voice within—that “gentle, quiet voice,” that voice that seems so much a part of our own feelings that we scarcely recognize it as a voice at all.
 3. To that voice, registered in the deepest depths of our being, we must say Amen, for there, secretly and ceaselessly, the God who hides Himself is working.

IV. Psalm 42:7 says, “Deep calls unto deep”:

- A. Others can respond deep within to only what issues from deep within us; anything that is not from the depths will never reach the depths of others.
- B. The kingdom life is a life in the depths, a life that can “take root downward and bear fruit upward”—Isa. 37:31; cf. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.
- C. On the one hand, we need to allow Christ as the seed of life to take root deep in the soil of our heart as the good earth (Matt. 13:23); on the other hand, we, as living plants in Christ, need to take root deep in the soil of the all-inclusive Christ as the reality of the good land (Col. 2:6-7):
 1. The good earth signifies the good heart that is not hardened by worldly traffic, that is without hidden sins, and that is without the anxiety of the age and the deceitfulness of riches; we need to daily allow the Lord to deal with these things in our heart so that we can grow with the growth of God—v. 19.
 2. Because we have been planted in Christ as the reality of the good land, we need to take time to absorb Him (especially in our times with Him in the morning).
- D. While the sower sowed, some seeds fell beside the way, some on the rocky places, some into the thorns, and some into the good earth; this shows us four different ways for man to receive the word—Matt. 13:4-8, 18-23:
 1. The Lord Jesus tells us that among these different conditions, one is the rocky places; there is a little earth on the surface, but underneath there are rocks; when the seed falls into this kind of ground, it springs up quickly, but as soon as the sun comes out, it withers because of the lack of root—vv. 5-6.
 2. What is a root? It is growth that occurs beneath the soil. What are the leaves? This is growth that occurs above the soil.

3. In other words, roots are the hidden life, whereas leaves are the manifest life; the trouble with many Christians is that, while there is much apparent life, there is very little secret life; in other words, there is the lack of a hidden life.
 4. If all your experiences are manifested, then all your growth is upward; there is no downward growth; if this is the case, you are a person who has only leaves without root, and you are on shallow ground.
 5. The Christian who parades all his virtues before men and who does not have anything in the depth of his being has no root; he will not be able to stand in the day of trial and temptation; may God work in us so that we can take root downward.
- E. We need deep experiences of Christ like that of the apostle Paul—2 Cor. 12:1-4:
1. Paul was caught away to the third heaven and caught away into Paradise, but he did not divulge this experience until fourteen years later; Paul's roots were deep beneath the soil.
 2. If we want to have Paul's work, then we need to have Paul's "root"; if we want to have Paul's outward conduct, then we need to have Paul's inner life; if we want to have Paul's manifest power, then we need to have Paul's secret experience.
 3. This does not mean that we should not testify, but we must realize that many experiences need to be hidden—cf. 4:5.
 4. To be without root is to be without any hidden treasure; it is to be without any hidden life or hidden experiences; it is essential that some of our experiences remain covered; to uncover everything is to lose everything—cf. Isa. 39:2-8.
- F. Whatever secrets we have with the Lord must be preserved; only if He moves within us to reveal something, dare we reveal it; if He wants us to share some experience with a brother, we dare not withhold it, for that would be violating a law of the members of the Body of Christ, which is the law of fellowship:
1. We need to learn what the Body of Christ is and what the flow of life among the members is; but we also need to learn the need for safeguarding the hidden part we have before the Lord, the experiences of Christ that are not known to others.
 2. If our life has no depth, our superficial work will only affect other lives superficially; only "deep calls unto deep."
- G. A pure and beautiful spiritual life is derived from inward, hidden, and uninterrupted fellowship with God; hence, "he will bud like the lily / And will send forth his roots like the trees of Lebanon" (Hosea 14:5); this kind of life is capable of bearing much fruit—vv. 5-7.
- H. In order to live a life in the depths, it is necessary to have direct and intimate fellowship with the Lord; Song of Songs 4:12 says, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride, / A spring shut up, a fountain sealed":
1. At this point in her spiritual progress, the Lord's loving seeker has become a garden for Christ's private satisfaction.
 2. She is not an open garden but an enclosed garden; all that she has is for her Beloved's delight and for no one else.
 3. If today's believers would close up a little more and seal up tighter, their work would become more prevailing.
 4. May the Lord grant us grace and do a deeper work in us through the cross so that we may strike deep roots and live a hidden life in the depths to fulfill God's requirements and satisfy His heart.