

Nov. 20, 2005
Rhythm, Part 8
By Matt Chandler

We are in our eighth week of a series that we just call Rhythm. The ideal was that if Jesus says come follow then let's watch how he lived and try to follow Him. Novel idea right? So when Jesus says "hey come follow me" it's an invitation to "walk like I walk, live as I live." And so that's the invitation not just to follow the teachings of Christ but also to live like Christ lived. So we started out the first week and we talked about really the fact that Jesus has a lot of admirers but very few followers. That there's a lot of people who ascribe to Jesus wisdom but don't really want to follow Him. And we talked about the difference between, we use the language Lord and Rabbi, that there's a lot of people who know Jesus as Rabbi, philosophy teacher, but there are few that know Him as Lord. And the text that we came out of, there was kind of the big text for that weekend, was looking at the last supper. And some of you know the Last Supper through that great historic painting and titled the same as the Last Supper, you know with all the Italian guys in it. And at the Last Supper, Jesus goes, "Somebody here's going to betray me." And to the man around the circles the disciples go, "Not I, Lord. Not I, Lord. Not me, Lord. I'll never betray you, Lord. Not I, Lord. Not me, Lord. I won't betray you, Lord." And then Judas Iscariot said, "Not I..." what? "...,Rabbi." "Not I, Lord. Not me, Lord. I will never betray you, Lord. Not me, Lord. I will never betray you, Lord. I would never betray you, Lord. Not me, Rabbi." There's a difference between Jesus as the teacher, philosopher, philosophy, and following Jesus as Lord. And then we looked at just random stuff in Jesus' life. Like the fact that He has this 120 that he runs with but inside that 120 there's the 70 that he runs even closer with and inside that 70 there's this 12 that he runs even closer with and then inside that 12 there's this 3 that he's super close with. And so we said that the way of Jesus is that you go deeper and deeper with fewer and fewer, versus our culture that would have us going shallower and shallower with more and more. For the record, I know "shallower" is not proper English there. But it sounds better, alright? Which is more important. So if we're not careful, our way would have us know everyone and no one. And if we're not careful we wake up lonely in a crowd. And we talked about the fact that Jesus is the only alpha male in the history of the universe that didn't have a Messiah complex. Despite the irony that he was the Messiah, right. So Jesus was walking through Samaria and He sits down and he says, "I'm tired, you go." Not "I'm the Messiah. I've got this." But he sat down and He said "I'm tired." And I know that's hard for us because we like Jesus God and few of us want to acknowledge Jesus man despite the fact that 200 years ago that would have been heresy, you would've been burned alive, and all that. But he is both 100% God and 100% man. And we talked about prayer. And I think for me that was kind of the catalyst for this whole series, how Jesus prayed. It wasn't this discipline locked into a morning time of prayer. But really it's what He was always doing. Early in the morning He was praying. Late at night he was praying. At His baptism praying. At His transfiguration he was praying. The night before he picks the twelve He spends all night praying. Before the cross He's praying. On the cross He's praying. It seems that although Jesus is walking

around, he's not off His knees. Then we talked about the Sabbath, the reality of the universe that if you're going to know the deep things of life and God, you're going to have to slow down. Now, let me tell you what I want to do tonight. I want to wrap up this Rhythm series. I want to wrap it up and we're going to do that by talking about the kingdom of God. You cannot talk Jesus and not talk about the kingdom of God and you'll see why here shortly. And then next week we'll start advent, we'll get ready for Christmas. Christmas is here. And here's how I know because I was in the car with my wife this week and Christmas carols were playing on the radio and at some point this week despite my own desires I will end up on a ladder. I mean it is here. It is upon us. Despite all the things I will come up with that must be done I will end up on a ladder this week. So Christmas is upon us. We'll start getting ready next week and then the first weekend in January we will launch out on our series on the book of Hebrews that will take us into the summer and we will basically line by line and verse by verse working through the book of Hebrews starting January. It'll end, I think Paul Matthis is going to wrap it up, I'll be out for most of June, he'll wrap it up for me in June or I'll wrap it up in July. So that gets us through August. Any questions? ...ok, good.

Matthew chapter 4. Let's get going. Matthew chapter 4. So, Jesus is baptized, He comes up out of the water. Immediately He heads into the wilderness. There in the wilderness He fasts and prays. He is tempted, 40 days He is out there. He comes out of the wilderness and that's the verse we're going to read. He comes out of the wilderness in verse 17. I have to warn you, you will be flipping around a lot tonight, mainly in Matthew and Luke. In fact, I think exclusively in Matthew and Luke. But I believe in you. Verse 17: "From that time on..." So from the time Jesus comes out of the wilderness on, alright? "From that time on Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent for the kingdom of Heaven...'" Or the kingdom of God, the two words are interchangeable. You're going to see that both are used. They are interchangeable. If I say "Heaven help us" what am I saying? "God help me." If I say "Heaven help us" I am saying "May God help us." This is an interchangeable idea they're not two separate ideas. And you see Him saying "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Now let me tell you why this is so important: Because the writer of Matthew, the gospel of Matthew, just said that from the moment Jesus came out of the wilderness, from the beginning of His ministry on, for the next three years, Jesus had one message, one thing He preached and here's what it was: repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Now let me show you this get even bigger. Flip over to Luke chapter 4. Luke chapter 4, Jesus is casting out demons, healing the sick, he heads up onto the mountain to be by himself. While he's there a crowd hunts Him down and finds Him and says, "There's more of us who are sick, more of us who need your help. Heal us. Help us." Jesus goes, "No I can't do that. I've got to go to other cities." But it's in His reason for going to those cities that's of our interest tonight. Verse 43: "But He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also for I was sent for this purpose.'" So this kingdom of God idea just got huge for us because you've got a writer of the gospel saying that the message of Jesus was to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand and now you've got Jesus himself, you've got red letter, saying, "The very reason I'm here, the purpose that I am among you to fulfill is that the kingdom of God would be preached unto you." Now, not only do we have the gospel writers saying that this is both the reason Jesus is here and the message of Jesus

while He's here but even the verbal recorded teachings of Jesus have tons to do with the kingdom of Heaven specifically the parables. Almost every story Jesus told starts out with this phrase: "The kingdom of God is like... The kingdom of Heaven is like... a mustard seed... The kingdom of God is like a... woman who lost a coin... the kingdom of God is like... a sheep... the kingdom of God is like... leaven... the kingdom of God is like..." So the teachings and the illustrations of Jesus were all given so that we might understand this concept of the kingdom of God that was the purpose of Jesus here on Earth and the message of Jesus while He was here. Not only did this thing revolve around Jesus but Jesus wanted His disciples also to teach and preach this kingdom of God. Let me show you what I mean.

Luke 10. Now, remember I just said that He had the 70 that he ran with. He's going to send out the 70. He's going to send them out and he's going to give them the kind of power that He had to cast out demons and to heal the sick and to do all those things. But I want you to look in verse, we're going to look at verse 8 and 9, but specifically verse 9 is of interest to us. Now He's sending them out and listen to what He says. "Whatever city you enter and will receive you, eat what is set before you. And heal those in it who are sick and say to them, 'the kingdom of God has come near to you.'" So, now you've got the gospel writers saying that not only was this the purpose and the message of Jesus, the teachings Jesus that draws all attention to it, but now He's unpacking this idea onto the disciples and saying, "Go. Go tell. Go say 'the kingdom of God is near.'" So this tiny little phrase is huge in what this whole thing's about. But what in the world is it. I mean before we race off and put this on a bracelet, right... before we slap this on a t-shirt, let's chat. I mean, this thing is pretty huge and I'm wondering if any of us have any idea what He's talking about. "The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is here. The kingdom of God is like... Go tell people the kingdom of God is here." So what is the kingdom of God? Let's answer this first: *when* is the kingdom of God?

Luke 17. There is a lot of talk about the kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of God. You can't ignore it because there's so much of it in scripture. There are a lot of people who when they refer to the kingdom of God, what they're referring to is the apocalyptic ending of all things. Think of the more scary parts of the Left Behind series, are you tracking with me? Moon turned to blood, everybody dies, except good people, Christ reigns on Earth. And when some people talk about the kingdom of God, kingdom of Heaven, they're talking about this future apocalyptic happening where the moon turns to blood and God's kingdom is established on Earth and all of the unrighteous are judged and we've got peace and harmony and life forever. The problem with that is Jesus isn't one of them. There are a lot of people who teach that but when it comes to the kingdom of God, Jesus is not one of them. Now, I'm not saying that that apocalyptic end does not happen. I'm saying that's not what Jesus is teaching when he talks about the kingdom of God. Now, look with me and this will explain what I mean. Luke 17. Now, this text is just filled with irony. God love the Pharisees, you know? God love them. God love them because we're them; and if tonight you're going "not me" you just proved my point. So here we go. Luke 17. That's all the vente talking. Verse 20: "Now, having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming..." I want

to stop. What the Pharisees are looking for and what first century Hebrews were looking for was this kind of Davidic King David military overthrow of the Roman occupation and power on their lands. And so when they refer to the kingdom of God coming, what they're talking about is "when is this Davidic Messiah going to show up, pull out His sword, conquer Rome and establish His kingdom on Earth?" That's the question they're asking. "When are the unjust and unrighteous going to be judged." Now do you see why that's a little ironic? That the Pharisees are asking this question. It's kind of like the murderer going, "When will we get justice." You know, you're like, "Are you sure you want that?" So you've got these Pharisees who Jesus was like, "You brood of vipers, you white-washed tunes, you dirty dishes." They're going, "When will judgement get here?" Maybe you don't see the humor in that, I do. I'm officially a pastor geek. Here we go; so Jesus is going to respond to this question of when the kingdom of God is coming by answering it this way. "The kingdom of God is not coming..." Now I want to stop there. We're going to keep reading but I want to stop there because there's something big happening here in the Greek language. Whenever Jesus refers to the kingdom of God in the New Testament, He is always going to use present tense. He's always going to use present tense. When he talks about the apocalyptic end of all things He uses the word "coming". "For the son of man will come like a thief in the night." He uses this "coming" language. And so He just said "the kingdom of God is not..." and He uses that same word "...coming." Now let's finish reading this. "...coming with signs to be observed. Nor will they say look here it is or there it is." So the kingdom of God is not coming, you're not going to be able to see it by the moon turning to blood and the stars falling on the Earth and killing a bunch of people or the water turning to blood. That's not how the kingdom of God is going to be seen. Now look what He says, "For behold the kingdom of God is in your midst." So basically, the Pharisees go, "When will the kingdom of God get here?" And Jesus goes, "Your standing in it. It's here now." Ok, so look right at me. So the kingdom of God, this thing Jesus came to preach and teach, His message, His message, who He was, what He was about, the kingdom of God is not some future happening but rather a present reality. So what is it? I mean we keep coming back to that. What is, then, the kingdom of God? When Jesus teaches on the kingdom of God, he's speaking on one of three things if not all three things at the same time. He is speaking of a person; He is speaking of a power; or, He is speaking of a people. Now, I know that's three points that all start with the letter "p" and yes, I hate myself before it. But I couldn't figure out a better way to do it. I have become all that I hate. So, three points – there is a poem later, dangit – so when He talks about the kingdom of God He's talking about a person, or He's talking about a power, or He's talking about a people, or He's talking about a combination of those three things. So when Jesus teaches on the kingdom or teaches about the kingdom He's teaching about Himself. The kingdom of God is here, it is now. That who God is, His nature, what He is like, has now arrived in the flesh. Scripture would say it like this in Colossians, that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, that everything you could ever know about the character and the mind of God can be seen in the person of Jesus. And the book of Hebrews would say that there are those who longed for this day and did not get to see it. When he speaks about the kingdom of God He talks about God in the flesh. Jesus. Here among us. Emmanuel. God in the flesh. Walking among us. The power, might, and glory of God seen like

never before dwelling among people. And that person Jesus brought with Him power. Power. Huge power. What kind of power?

Go over to Luke 11. Go over to Luke 11. In Luke 11, Jesus is casting out demons and the Pharisees go, “Oh, he can cast out demons because he’s a devil.” And so Jesus in probably one of the more famous quotes of Jesus says, “A house divided against itself will not stand” or fall, however you memorized it. So that was Jesus, not Oprah, Jesus. I like Oprah but that wasn’t hers. It belongs to Christ. And then He’s going to about “hey, there’s no way I’m the devil” and then He’s going to say something that on the surface it doesn’t look like much but if we’ll put on the Hebrew hat it’ll be huge. So look in verse 20. Verse 20: “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Now when He says, when He uses, the terminology that He just used, when He uses specifically this phrase “finger of God” every Hebrew in an earshot immediately goes back to the Torah because this same phrase is used at two gigantic crossroads in the history of Israel. The first place this phrase “finger of God” is used is when – I don’t know if you read your bible and if you haven’t read your bible maybe you saw the Charlton Heston movie and if you didn’t see that then maybe you took your kids to see the cartoon. But Moses walks into Pharaoh’s throne room and throws his staff to the ground it becomes a snake. It becomes a serpent. And Pharaoh’s magicians go, “Oh, that’s easy” and throw their sticks down and their sticks become serpents also. So everybody’s just kind of “ewing” and “awing” and Moses’ staff slash serpent devours the other two. Then the plagues begin, Pharaoh consults his magicians and says, “What’s going on here? Can we counteract this? Can we stop this?” and the magicians go, “This man Moses is operating with the finger of God.” Jesus just pointed back to Israel’s redemption from slavery. The other place this phrase “finger of God” is used – ok, let’s, I’ll let you guess it, there’s some tablets, up on a mountain... It only happens once, man. The Ten Commandments. So Moses heads up and the law was given, the Ten Commandments were written on stone, by the finger of God. So what Jesus just said here, now on the surface it doesn’t look like much, but what Jesus just said, what the Hebrews would have heard was this, “If I am casting out demons by the same power that rescued you from slavery and gave you depth and meaning of life, then surely you have to that the kingdom of God is here. It’s here.” So Jesus is saying the power to be set free from slavery, to be forgiven, to be made whole, it’s here now. Now I want to talk about this power because what happens so often is we put a lot of great testimonies in front of but the problem is they’re all just so dang miraculous. You know what I’m saying? We love this testimony, we love “I’ve been smoking for forty years I got saved last Wednesday and I have not desired a cigarette since at all.” And then we automatically, sitting out there, feel guilty smelling all smoky and we start getting nervous thinking God’s not working for us. We have to go outside and smoke real quick and come back in, you know. It’s just we put this miraculous, instantaneous, transformational stories up here on stage so then everybody else in the crowd is going, “It hasn’t worked that way in me. Maybe I’m broken.” Anybody been there? Yea, you bunch of liars, yea you have, alright. Where this guy’s up here with such passion about what God did with His life and you’re drowning going “what is wrong with me?” Here’s the thing about the power of the kingdom of God, every – I’m not saying the instantaneous doesn’t happen, because it does and it is unbelievable when it happens, it is spectacular, we should be asking for

instantaneous – but any time in scripture that Jesus references the power of the kingdom of God he teaches it in terms of process. Let me show you what I mean.

Go to Matthew 13. I told you I was going to be flipping you around a bunch. Matthew 13. We'll look at verse 31 and 32. Here's what it says, "And He presented another parable to them saying, 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. And this is smaller than all other seeds. But when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree. So that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'" Let me tell you why that's so significant. He didn't just say "The kingdom of God is like a giant tree in a garden where birds perch on it." He said that the kingdom of God starts like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, it goes into the ground and there is watered and nurtured. From there it begins to grow and it's a plant and then from a plant it grows larger and larger and over a period of time it grows so large that it's beyond all the other plants in the garden. In fact, it's so large that birds build nests in it. When He talks about the power, the transforming power, of the kingdom of God He is always going to teach it in terms of process. And surely this is, I mean is this not everyone's testimony in here? I mean everyone in here has really tried to follow Jesus has been invited by Jesus to take a step and then we take that one step; and then we're like, "Yea, I did it. I am there, I am holy, I am right." and God's like, "Ssshhh. Ssshhh." "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." Now let me stop there. Get you head out of the apocalyptic. Get your head out of the apocalyptic, out of the end times because He didn't just say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit because when they die it'll get better." That's not what He just said. He didn't say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit because eventually they get Heaven." He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven, theirs is the kingdom of God." Or a better translation would be "...thus is the kingdom of God." So blessed are the poor in spirit because this is what the kingdom of God is made up of. So blessed are the poor in spirit or those who mourn, or those who are gentle, or those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, or the merciful or the pure in heart, or the peace makers. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness for thus is the kingdom of Heaven. So this power through the person Jesus slams into our hearts and starts the process to take us to Matthew 5. To create in us pure hearts, desperate spirits, to make us merciful, gracious, meek, to make us peacemakers. And thank God it's a process because I look at this list and I am terribly lacking. Like I read blessed is the peacemaker and I'm still kind of you know the "egger-onner". I'm just more of the guy that's like, "oooo, I wouldn't let him say to me." You know, I'm that guy. I mean this is where He's taking us one step at a time, one day at a time, one step of obedience at a time, leading us here. So here's the million dollar question: are we citizens of this kingdom? Who is then citizens of this kingdom. Matthew 7. Almost done guys. Matthew 7. Verse 21. So you've got the person Jesus who brings the power to heal, forgive, restore, reconcile, make right, bring purpose, and this power normally works itself out through process, creating the people of God. So who are citizens of this kingdom of God? Verse 21: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord'." Now I want to stop there. Notice that the verbal confession is correct. Did you notice that? He didn't just say "Not everyone who says to me 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'" That was the mistake of Judas. He is speaking to people whose verbal confession of who Jesus is is correct. "Not everyone who says to me

“Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of Heaven. But he who does the will of my Father, who is in Heaven, he will enter the kingdom.” So we’ve got to talk here lest we ere on the side of works because we want to ere, we want to ere on the side of grace, not on the side of checklist Christianity. But here’s what He just said, that this power, this power that brings about healing and depth and purpose and wholeness and all those things we talk about all the time, that power is not tapped into by correct verbal confession. You don’t get to walk in the power of the kingdom of God by knowing the right answers alone. Knowing the right answers but not applying them is like having a car without gas. I mean I don’t care if it’s a Ferrari, it’s only going as fast as you can push it, right? And what happens when we memorize the correct answers whether they be doctrinal answers or cultural answers, when we memorize the correct affirmation of who Christ is, what He does, and how He interacts, but none of it is applied then basically we memorized the instructions but haven’t built anything. I mean you know how to put something together but have the pieces all over the floor, you’re no better off. And I’m wondering once again how many of us have the right answers but the soul’s a wreck. I mean come on, have you ever found yourself giving other people advice you don’t follow. You know what I should do but don’t. It’s so true. So true. Not everyone who’s got the correct verbal affirmation taps into the power of the kingdom. You know who does? Those who walk, those who step. Why? Because this healing, deepening, purposeful process of the power of the kingdom of God takes place one step at a time. So if you refuse to take the steps, then all you have left to do is memorize the rules. And what a life-sucking experience that is. “Not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord” will know the power of the kingdom of God. But only those who follow me.” So what’s your next step, you know? I don’t know what your step is. But I’m banking that if you prayed and sought God he’d let you know. One step at a time. One day at a time. Following Him without getting disheartened by the process. Anybody had a dark week before? Month? Anybody been walking around for a couple of years going “What in the world is going on? Something is wrong with me.” And that’s why it’s so important for you to be in the Word and read our brother Jeremiah, “You have subdued, you have tricked me.” Read our boy John the Baptist go, “Are you the one or am I off here?” That’s why it’s so important for you to know that there was this time that King David weeped his eyes out at the foot of his bed and prayed “how long oh Lord will you forsake me?” It was the chisal, the chiseling away of the things that are not of Him. I will never stand up here and tell you that it’s pleasant, just that it’s a part of it. So what’s your next step? I guess some of you got out of the process a long time ago, you know? Now you’re just doing this church thing. You’re not taking any of the steps, you’re just memorizing the correct answers. And if your not careful you’ll become the religious police, the most hated of all creatures. I was just thinking of me personally. So what’s your next step? You know all we’ve talked about tonight is the gospel. This is the way of Jesus. That Christ brought the power to heal, to restore, to make alive, to give purpose. All who will walk can tap in.

Let’s pray.

I pray Father that as we do communion tonight here at the end, that you’d make us grateful. And I pray specifically, I know this is one of our younger crowds, I know we’ve got a lot of college students in here, I know we’ve got a lot of college students that are

going to be around family this week, family that doesn't know you maybe, and I know there's a lot of stress that comes with that. I know they don't understand commitment to you. So I just pray a special grace for them and I pray that they might be really beautiful reflections of your perfection. How good you are and beautiful you are and right you are. And I pray that they wouldn't be combative but rather would reflect your mercy and grace. I pray that as we end tonight and those of us who know you and grab this piece of bread and dip into this cup of wine that we might be so grateful for all that you are and all that you've given. And I pray tonight as we walk up here and we grab that that there might be some real thought given to whether or not we know you and whether you're Lord. Are we one of those whose got the correct language down but a long time ago we couldn't follow it? Would you help us in a real clear way reveal to us what that step is where you're taking us where that next placement of the foot goes. So we want to be people of the kingdom, Father, we do. We want to live out Matthew 5. We want to be poor in spirit. We want to know that we need you and we want to mourn, and I know what you mean by that is just that we would feel and hurt and long for others. God we don't want to be the center of our own universe. We want to see the world around us and care for it. And we want to be peacemakers in our families, in our places of work, in our homes. And we want to walk in mercy, the same mercy that you've shown us. And Father we want to be gentle and we want to hunger and thirst for the things of you. We want our hearts to be pure. Lead us there. Lead us there and give us the courage to follow you there. And it's for your beautiful name that I ask all these things tonight. Amen. I love you. Have a good Thanksgiving.