

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

The Kingdom Breaks Forth

Matthew 11:7-13

—by Nate King

Every day for weeks, my kids would use our garage access door. They would push and pull on the handle as they went in and out. They had perfectly good reasons—innocent reasons even—for wanting through the door. Sometimes for a chore. Or to load up in the van for another family adventure. So Jamie and I chalked up their handling of the door to the impatience of children. And then one day, the door wouldn't open. The wood had splintered, and the knob couldn't turn anymore.

As they used it, nothing about their persistent clamoring could make the door work any better, yet they persisted. Eventually, the door just stopped opening. Why? Because fifty-year-old doors struggle under the repeated force of impatient kids.

You and I have experienced what it's like trying to force our way. There could be a goal we want to accomplish, and so we push for it with all the impatience and bluster we can muster. Far too often, I personally wear my impatience like a badge of honor that screams, "Look at everything I'm accomplishing with my life!"

The problem with forcing our way through life is that eventually, something will break. Our relationships struggle under the strain, and someone walks out of our life. Our health can't keep pace, so we wake up in a hospital bed. Or worse, we look back one day on a lifetime of opportunities impatience caused us to miss.

I don't want to live my life this way. I'm convinced you don't either. I also know I don't want it for my kids, which is another glowing indication for why I'm convinced God doesn't want you or me to live a life dragging behind the clamoring force of blustering impatience.

I wonder if the people who clung to Jesus in droves weren't just like us in this respect. Brilliant historians and thinkers continue to piece together what ancient life was like in the historical setting where Jesus walked and worked. I'm pretty sure their problems were vastly different in the details but incredibly relatable in nature.

In one conversation with a crowd, Jesus makes a statement about people who sound pretty similar to how so many of us live our lives. Pastor Eugene Peterson captured the sentiment well in his paraphrase we can read in *The Message Bible*.

“For a long time now people have tried to force themselves into God’s kingdom.”—*Matthew 11:12 The Message*

Jesus inherently knew what many often learn too late. You can't force what's already open to you. It's hard to swallow pride. Admitting we need help makes us feel weak. Realizing our way isn't working seems like an impossibility sometimes. Accepting a free invitation? We're far too often left asking, “what's the catch?”

Jesus wanted the folks gathered around to know the same thing he wants you and me to understand today. You can't force your way into God's kingdom. The best part is—you don't have to. The way is already made. You can't force what's already open to you.

Often, I find myself talking to someone who is still trying to force their way into God's kingdom. They'll say things like, “I'll get right with God after I clean up my life.” Or, “I'll get back in church after I kick this bad habit.” Maybe you've heard or said that yourself before. The tragedy of this kind of approach is the assumption that something we do changes something God did. It doesn't. We can't use moralism, the right daily habits, or staying clear of easily identifiable sin to “force” our way into the Kingdom of God. It sounds silly to us when we even acknowledge that we could have been thinking that way, doesn't it? But what about when we live this out? What are our kids learning about God when we approach him this way?

Jesus reminded the crowd of this all too important truth. You can't force it. You can't break in. You can't bust in. You can't be good enough, noble enough, or high-minded enough. You can't be bad enough, guilty enough, or broken enough to force your way out. And you didn't do anything to open your invitation. Jesus did.

Do you know how Jamie and I realized the door to our garage was well and truly busted? When we couldn't open it anymore. There we stood on one side, and our kids were on the other. My kids were stuck in the garage. In the dark. Guess what I did? I kicked the door down! Not really. But it didn't take long to fix the problem once I had the right tools. Now my kids can get through the door any time they need to.

You can't force what's already open to you. Your invitation to the Kingdom was made. The trail was blazed by the cross of Christ, and the hold of sin, shame, and condemnation has no authority over you. Your old nature is gone. A new creation has taken up residence. And you don't have to force any of it. You just accept it.

When God's kingdom breaks forth in your life, nothing will be the same. Like the friends of Jesus who walked and worked with him as they followed, everything about everything will be different for each of us. When will this happen? When we embrace the transforming power of God's kingdom breaking forth in your life.

You don't have to force anything. You can't. Just accept what Jesus did, and see God's kingdom moving through your life. It really will change so much. Rather than waking up one day to realize you blew through your life across decades of activity and impatience, you'll one day see the horizon of a long journey with a Good Father as you step into an eternal kingdom. One that is open to you today, right now, and forever.

Questions What are your visions today? What are you dreaming about with God? Most importantly, who is Jesus for you?

Family Chat Is Jesus your best friend? How do you know?

Take Action Take one step in pursuit of the vision God has given you. Don't worry about it being a small step or what you might think is an insignificant action. Your obedience to Him has a ripple effect in His Kingdom, causing a wave of transformation, regardless of whether or not you ever see the results of it.