



US HWY 395 N  
Suite 102 #200  
Gardnerville, NV 89410  
E-mail: [bill@liferesource.org](mailto:bill@liferesource.org)  
Website: [liferesource.org](http://liferesource.org)

**Presentation Transcript**  
**Living Up**  
**By Bill Jacobs**  
**April 19, 2024**

Our title today is *Living Up*.

I watched a video clip of a speech given by Jordan Peterson recently. His title was *Welcoming the Possibilities*. He powerfully made the point: If humans would stop fighting and work together, there would be no limit to what we could accomplish. The language he used to describe what the world could accomplish reminded me of the prophecies of the world after Christ returns. I'm sure he knows those prophecies. He may have borrowed their language deliberately. He talked about turning deserts into paradises, for example. I think he used this example because it was not lost on the attendees that converting deserts to gardens will not only be accomplished when Christ returns, but has already been done in Israel. For many hundreds of years that land sat idle. But since 1949 when the land was ceded to the new Jewish nation, the Israelis got to work on it, and today it yields many kinds of crops and many beautiful verdant cities in rural areas. The desert doesn't look like a desert anymore.

Of course, for me, early on, I thought talk of humans creating a paradise on earth was a pipe dream. "Christ is the only one who could do that," I thought. And, in the literal sense, that is true. The Bible is clear that, until the Kingdom comes, we're going to have nothing but trouble here on earth.

On the other hand, look at this scripture with me. It's in Genesis 11:6:

**Genesis 11:6** – *And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them – because they could work together because they just spoke one language.*

Now, when God said this, it was in the context of a rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel. If we look at God's observation, it can add to what we are thinking about today. God has created humans with the ability to do astounding things when they work together – for bad so far, but for good also, in some cases. If we would be so minded, we could do those things in a great way. The way Peterson talked about human potential, it stirred my mind in a very positive way. I hope you'll look that up and listen to it.

When I think of the desert blossoming like a rose, I think of the recreation of paradise in the new world Christ will foster when He returns. Our orientation is about welcoming the possibilities promised in the future. Waiting for Christ's return and hoping for all the good things that will happen in the future is only one way to look at what God is doing with us. Also, I don't think it's a secret that I've been on a bit of a terror lately about what Jesus said: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And I think, perhaps, that Jordan Peterson was talking about, when he said, "welcoming the possibilities can be folded into our understanding of what we could do now, if we would only look up." And not only that, but also live up – if we live like the kingdom of heaven is at hand *now*, not a few years from now – or even fifty years from now, or even ten – but *now* in the present day. But I just quoted Jesus saying it *is* at hand, didn't I? He was starting a church – a group of people who could do great things, because He and the Father would live in them and "do the works."

Now, let's cross this first hurdle before we get started. We don't want to be confusing *at hand* with Christ's return. Let's be clear about that. Some believe the church is fulfill the prophecies about Christ's return, meaning He will *not* return literally. In no way are we saying that! Instead, we saying that before He literally returns, His church will have access to many of the blessings of that kingdom in advance. So, now that that's out of the way, let's move forward.

I was first a part of the church...I went to a church-sponsored religious college. The name was Ambassador College. And that name came from the understanding that Christians are representatives of another nation or kingdom. Jesus told His followers they were witnesses of what He taught them. And they were to take this good news, or gospel, out to the world as representatives of this kingdom. So, how could they do that unless they were first citizens?

Well, what does that entail? Look with me in 2 Corinthians 5:20. Paul said this:

**2 Corinthians 5:20** – *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. That's where the name Ambassador College came from. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* How can you be an ambassador for God if you're not reconciled to Him?

Now, when an ambassador moves to an embassy of the nation he's going to serve in, he or she, in most cases, is granted diplomatic immunity – that is, the ambassador is not liable to obey the law of the nation that he is in, but his own nation. So, the same thing is not true in our case, is it?

Jesus told us to obey the laws of His kingdom and then the laws of whatever nation we're living in.

In Luke 25, He said:

**Luke 20:25** – *He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.”* He's talking about taxes in that example.

Where there is conflict, we must first obey the laws of our own nation – the kingdom of heaven. And sometimes, God let's us suffer the consequences, and sometimes He protects us, depending on His plan, rather than our desires if God's laws and the laws of the nation we're in contradict.

So, can you think of any examples of current day laws contradicting our laws in the kingdom of heaven? Well, some people believe immunizations – all of them – are a wrong thing to do. Others don't. That would be an example for some people. That got sharply more intense over the Covid immunizations. Many athletes were dying, and many people dying, because of spike protein. So, another example would be time off of work or school to go to the festivals and the weekly Sabbath. Another one is taxes, as in Jesus' day. In spite of all that, we're citizens of another country. The kingdom of heaven is at hand and we all applied for citizenship and were accepted, and we took an oath of citizenship to the kingdom of heaven at baptism. Does that mean that we're no longer, biblically speaking, citizens of our own nation – our nation of birth? No! We could say we have dual citizenship with priority to the Kingdom of God.

So, how are we as ambassadors to represent the Kingdom of God? Let's think about that. Let's go back to the question we put forth earlier. They were to take this good news, or gospel, out to the world as representatives of His Kingdom. How could they do that unless they were first citizens of it?

So, what does an ambassador do? Well, Christ came to earth as an ambassador for His Kingdom. And He brought with Him His values, His love, the laws for the Kingdom. His values were the Kingdom values. And most important of all, He brings His loyalty to His father. And then He lives out all of those things right in front His disciples. He shows respect to them. He loves them. He set an example for them to follow – to be like He was in their lives and interactions and decisions. So, part of that example was to show them how He wanted to carry out their ambassadorship – how He was *them* to carry out ambassadorship to the world.

There's an amazing picture left to us through Paul that encapsulates, and at the same time delivers specifics about how to be an ambassador for Christ. It's in Titus 2:1 through 14 – a long quote here, but well worth it. He said to Titus:

**Titus 2:1-14** – *But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Represent your country faithfully. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love,*

*and in steadfastness – steadfastness in loyalty to God. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers – talking bad about other people – or slaves to much wine. That would be an alcoholic, wouldn't it? They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled – by people who would observe a bad marriage and think that they weren't really any different than anyone else. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent – that's somebody who is maybe an atheist. Not all atheists are opponents – may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. So, just because a slave, or bondservant, was in the church, didn't mean that they weren't to obey their masters. Back then, people went into slavery willingly to pay for debts – not necessarily willingly, but by agreement. So, they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering – not stealing from their masters – but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

So, that's a pretty straightforward picture, right? Our job, as an ambassador for Christ, is to live a Christ-like life – to set a good example for people. So, how are we to carry out this difficult task? Well, it's all well and good that we're supposed to be this way. The trouble is none of us are very good at it. When I was at Ambassador College, as a newbie in the faith, reading scriptures, like this one above, and hearing sermons like this, I found myself saying things like, "Well, that's easy for you to say." Or, "I only wish." Or, "Good luck with that." I didn't understand how to set that example. And I would hear that Christ does the works in us, which is true, but what part do we play in that? How, exactly, does He do that? And what do we have to do to join in on that effort?

Well, I'm going to tell you three very specific things today – very specific things – they're right out of the Bible – that you can do to start welcoming the possibilities of God's Kingdom being here now in *your* life. We know that the thing that keeps us from following God is what we call human nature. Paul said the things he wanted to do, according to God's will, he ended up not doing, and the things he didn't want to do, he would end up doing. Paul called this the consequences of following the flesh – that is, the set of beliefs in us that doesn't have anything to do with our body or our physical flesh. It's a set of beliefs based on lies from the devil's world – from the devil's own mouth initially.

The example of how to combat this we see in the scripture, modeled by Jesus Himself, was His temptation by the devil. He's going to show us how to do it. The devil would suggest that He

should do something against God's law, and Jesus would quote a scripture refuting the devil's offer. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.* I bet that first response by Jesus probably struck terror into the devil's heart. He probably knew he was dead meat before the power of God when Christ quoted that scripture. If we respond to the devil in the same way, he will also be dead meat with us. He will have to flee, because of Christ's grace covering us like a shield. In God's books we're clean. So, the devil has no valid criticism when he comes to criticize.

So, if we're going to refute the temptations thrown at us – temptations that weaken our example to others and destroy our ambassadorship – we need to know what God wants us to do out of the Bible. So, studying our Bibles is great. And it's even better if we will apply a specific orientation to that. And what would that be? Well, every time the Bible shows someone making a mistake, or doing something good – either way, whatever they're doing – committing a sin or doing a good deed – we could rehearse what God would want *us* to do if we were that person. And how would that fit into our lives in the present day? For example, we read about Moses striking the stone at Meribah in anger. So, if I read that, I should think, “What would I do if I were Moses? What would be the right thing to do? What did he forget? And what could I say and do to make it go God's way?”

Well, another example: There was a widow who had two mites to her name, and she gave it all at the temple. And Jesus said she gave more than the rich. So, what would it take to have that kind of generosity and faith? Am I up to it? By the way, that kind of generosity and faith doesn't mean that every time we go to church, we should give everything we have. That was just an example of something He said. He said that was great faith.

Another example: When the disciples shooed away the little children from Christ, and He corrected them for it, what would you hope to do in their place? Why? What would be your attitude? What kind of attitude would that take? And what would the results be?

I think most of us have experienced that kind of reading. What if we became intentional about it? What if we made a point of reading the Bible that way every time? What would that do for us? Not to be a passive reader of the scripture, but an involved reader, allowing God and Christ in us to integrate our own heart, our own behaviors, our own thoughts with theirs. As we incline our heads and peer into the word of God, it would be like getting shoulder to shoulder with God and Christ, standing with the Ones who *will* bring the Kingdom, studying their instructions for ambassadorship. Think about the power of it. It's right there. That's what we're supposed to do.

Here's another one: Romans 8:5 and 6 – the second thing I want to point out to you.

**Romans 8:5-6** – *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh....* Now most of us don't have to do that, because they're already set on it. We've done it so much, it's a habit. *...but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the*

*Spirit.* That's what Jesus was doing when the devil said, "Why don't you just turn these stones into bread?" And Jesus said, "Well, we're supposed to live by every word of God." So, that's it! Our part is to continually set and reset our minds on the things of the Spirit – the way Christ, who lives in you, thinks, acts and believes. Focus on that all the time. Paul said in verse 6: *For to set the mind on the flesh is death* – that's where that way of thinking will take you – *but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* Notice those words. When Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, He promised us peace, lighter burden, an easier way to live life. He was promising us that this life, as well as the Kingdom.... One of the big keys is the setting our minds on it.

So, what would happen if we intentionally set our minds – minute by minute – on the things of the Spirit? How much would that help God and Christ in us to transform us into effective ambassadors – and eventually into His own family in eternal life? What could a congregation accomplish if everybody in that congregation made an effort to do that? What if we all began living and practicing Kingdom values in our congregation, for example? Jealousy, envy, competition, coveting control, marginalizing others, ignoring others, including the kids, and discouragement, anger and self-righteousness, and all other ungodly attitudes and behaviors would greatly diminish if we did that. And what would happen as a result of that?

By the way, did you know that the people God is calling are drawn to spiritually healthy congregations? In the past, when I've heard ministers say things like that, I would go back to my "good luck with that" mode. But I don't have to do that for all of you or anyone else. I only have to do it for me. But what if we *all* did that? When we sync up with God and Christ through the Holy Spirit – something all converted people have the opportunity and the skill to do – amazing things will happen! When we set our minds on the things of God, instead of the lies of the devil – when those open – change happens. Get ready for change. Consider the possibilities. Welcome them.

While I was listening to Jordan Peterson's speech, I realized I could not welcome the possibilities when I was in my "good luck with that" mode. Jordan Peterson also said that the ability to welcome the possibilities *now* of what can happen when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit is a matter of faith. I was stifling my own faith and connection to God. But I was not alone. All of Jesus' disciples had a really hard time accepting the possibilities of living in a godly way. What would happen as a result of that? Jesus told them they could move mountains with faith! That they would do even greater miracles than He did – raise the dead. That probably didn't even compute. They didn't believe it. Do you? But after Christ's resurrection, the lights went on. They got it! And look what happened. They were instantaneously changed from fearful and discouraged to a group of excited, brave people who could not be stopped. How many Christians are there today because of their insight and their change of attitude? Well, there are billions of them.

If we would all do the simple things we discussed today, amazing things would happen. Don't infer from that that I believe that all of those billions of Christians are actually genuine

Christians. But that's not for us to judge, is it? But we can certainly say that what the apostles accomplished in their lifetime after Christ was an amazing, amazing feat.

Let's look at the third and final thing. Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 5:17. He said:

**1 Thessalonians 5:17-18** – *Pray without ceasing* – he told his congregation – *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ*. After Adam and Eve listened to the devil, and decided they could decide for themselves what was right or wrong, they stopped thinking about all the good things God had already done for them. They thought maybe He had lied to them, and they were suspicious of him. And they stopped thinking about all the blessings. *Give thanks in all circumstances. Pray without ceasing.*

Look at Ephesians 6:18. Paul said:

**Ephesians 6:18-20** – *...praying at all times in the Spirit* – in the Spirit, not the gimmes for what we want, want, want, and not against His will, but for Him – *with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me* – he said – *that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

So, do you pray for your pastor? Do you pray for all of the brethren in your congregation? To have the right things to say when the time comes to say them? That's what we're supposed to do. Praying at all times. If we're doing that, we can't be thinking too much about doing something wrong, can we? If we just focus our minds on it. Praying is probably the primary way. The problem is, when we pray, we should also listen, instead of just speaking. Maybe sometimes, we just need to be quiet and listen to what God is telling us. I'm going to do a sermon on that pretty soon.

So, how far can we take this? Are we going to be found stuck in the mindset of this world? Or, will we be found welcoming the possibilities of a Kingdom that's already at hand now – Jesus and Father living in us now. Let's remember: With God, all things are possible. So, let's aim for those possibilities. Remember that Christ has been resurrected. He's not dead anymore. He lives in us now. And the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.