

1 January 2008

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

I am so glad you have taken a set of these devotions. Being in God's Word is an important part of growing in Jesus. It is my privilege to provide these for you. I always want to be a servant and this is one of the ways I do that.

Do your Scripture Readings every day and you will read the whole Bible, Old and New Testament, this year.

God bless you as you study God's Word this month.

Gladly in His Service,

Dr. Jason B. Brittain

Tuesday January 1

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1-2

Matthew 1

Praise the Lord! I am going to take the first part of our Devotions in January and talk about the trip I went on to Uganda. Actually, I am going to start that tomorrow because today I want to explain something else I am going to be doing this year. As we go through the New Testament, I want to comment on the Kingdom of God every time it is mentioned in our reading. I have already marked them all in the Bible I am going to use so I won't miss them. I believe this is going to be a blessing to you.

I am doing this because the Kingdom of God was the thing Jesus talked about the most. Look at Luke 4:43, **But He said, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."**

I want you to notice how important this verse is. It is Jesus Himself saying that He came to **PREACH THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD** and He said that is **WHY HE WAS SENT**. I know He preached other things, but they were all a part of the Kingdom.

Since Jesus put so much emphasis on the Kingdom, I am going to do the same thing here this year. So, be ready to hear about the Kingdom of God and set your will to believe everything the Word says about it.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that I have given my life to You. Please help me to live like a Christian really should live. I also want to learn more of Your ways this year and I want to be quick to put them all into action in my life. Please teach me about the Kingdom of God. I pray for Your Kingdom to come and for Your will to be done in every area of my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wednesday January 2

Scripture Reading: Genesis 3-5

Matthew 2

Praise the Lord! Going into Uganda was very different for several reasons. First of all, I had never been to Uganda and I didn't know anyone there. I did have a contact person but we had never met. Secondly, I went on this part of the trip alone. I will share some more about all this as we go along, but I went with confidence that God would direct my every step and He did. There is never anything for us to fear when we are doing what He asks us to do.

Matthew 2 tells us about the visit of the wise men. Look at verses 10-11 for today, **When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.**

Look at their reaction to Jesus. First they worshipped and then they became givers! May I say that those two things should be happening in our lives as well? None of us worship Jesus as much as He deserves, but we should try. Just keep worshipping Him more and more and you will be going in the right direction. Then be a giver. Jesus is a giver and we are becoming more and more like Him. That means we will be givers. Remember, you can't ever out-give Him. So, go for it.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I want to worship You more. Help me to make worship a regular part of my day and help me not to wait until Sundays. I am also thankful for all that You have given me. Help me to consistently tithe and help me to give offerings just because I love You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday January 3

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6-8

Matthew 3

Praise the Lord! Well, let me tell you about my first motel room in Uganda. I got in late so we went to a place right in Entebbe. The room was clean but it was so small that I couldn't open my suitcase all the way. When I asked if they had hot water they said, "Oh yes, we will bring you some." That means I got a bucket of hot water to use any way I wanted with the very cold water that came out of the wall. Jesus is Lord!

I told you that we were going to emphasize the Kingdom of God as we go through the New Testament, and the first time the Kingdom is mentioned in Matthew is in our reading for today. Verses 1-2 say, **In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."**

John the Baptist came as a forerunner to Jesus. When John said the Kingdom of Heaven was near, he was talking about the fact that Jesus was on His way and He was going to reveal the Kingdom. It is also important to notice that John told people that they needed to repent. They could not be a part of the Kingdom without changing how they were living. They would need to turn to God and let Him rule and reign in their lives and we have to do the same thing. You see, the Kingdom is where the King rules.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so glad that I have given my life to You. Please come and rule and reign in every area of my life. I pray for Your Kingdom to come and for Your will to be done in my life. Please continue to speak to me from Your Word about the Kingdom and everything else I need to learn. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Friday January 4

Scripture Reading: Genesis 9-11

Matthew 4

Praise the Lord! While in Uganda, we hired a taxi and driver to get us around. This was quite an experience. They drive all over the road and our driver was very aggressive. So, he would pass any time he wanted and he never backed down if someone else was coming. On more than one occasion, I can't believe we had room to get through without hitting someone but we always did. I just kept trusting Jesus, which is a good thing to do all the time.

The Kingdom is mentioned twice in Matthew 4. The first time is in verse 17, **From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."** Jesus' message was just like what John the Baptist had been preaching. Jesus preached about a lot of things but they were all a part of the Kingdom.

Now, look at verse 23, **Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.** Now we have more added. We see that the message of the Kingdom is GOOD NEWS and we see that HEALING is available in the Kingdom. You see, Jesus came to establish His Kingdom and He came to destroy the devil's kingdom and all of his works. So, Jesus healed every disease and sickness. Praise God that healing is still for us in the Kingdom today.

Prayer: Lord, I want You to be my King and I want You to rule and reign in my life. I am also thankful that I can have all the benefits of the Kingdom in my life. Help me to know that You are the Healer and help me to come to You for healing when I need it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Saturday January 5

Scripture Reading: Genesis 12-14

Matthew 5:1-26

Praise the Lord! The Kingdom is mentioned three times in our reading for today. So, I am going to skip my comments on Uganda and come back to them tomorrow.

Matthew 5:3 says, **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.** There are two kinds of people. Those who know they need help and those who are proud and think they can do everything on their own. When a person is proud, they won't turn to God for help and they will miss Him and His Kingdom. When we know we are poor and helpless without His help, we will turn to Him and we will find Him and His Kingdom.

Matthew 5:10 says, **Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.** Now, please know we should not go around looking for persecution. That would be foolish, but when we really live for God some people will oppose us. When that happens we need to keep living for God and know that we are in His Kingdom and that those who are not in His Kingdom will sometimes persecute us.

Matthew 5:19-20 say, **Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.** We are righteous because Jesus has made us righteous and we are in the Kingdom because Jesus has opened the way for us. Take some time and pray about these things on your own today.

Sunday January 6

Scripture Reading: Genesis 15-17

Matthew 5:27-48

Praise the Lord! My first day in Uganda, we traveled to Mbarara, where I would be staying for several days. We went to a motel so I could change clothes and then we were off to a meeting. The meeting was wonderful and several people were healed. I told them that Jesus never changes. He was a healer in the past and He is still a healer today. They believed the Word and God confirmed His Word! Praise the Lord! His Kingdom was being demonstrated right in their midst.

Matthew 5:37 says, **Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.** We should be people who speak the truth and who keep our word. When a person has to say a whole lot more for people to believe him, it is because he hasn't been keeping his word in the past. Look at how similar this sounds to James 5:12, **Above all, my brothers, do not swear - not by Heaven or by Earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.** So, saw what you mean and mean what you say!

Matthew 5:44-45 say, **But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that You are working in my life. As I learn Your ways, I know that I need Your help more and more. Please help me to really live like You want with Your help. I also ask You to bless Church today. Help us to worship You and help us to learn from Your Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Monday January 7

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18-19

Matthew 6

Praise the Lord! When I write to you about my trips, I try to tell you about the good things and some of the struggles as well. One of the struggles I had was the fact that the person I met there had never hosted a guest from overseas like me. This might seem like a little thing, but I had to have several very straightforward discussions with him to make sure we were on the same page. It is always better to be open and honest about potential problems rather than letting them fester and grow.

In Matthew 6:9-10 Jesus speaks to us about prayer. He said, **This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."** We will be putting this into practice many times this year.

The Kingdom was also mentioned in Matthew 6:33. It says, **But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** This is a wonderful verse. We need to keep our priorities right. We need to seek God's Kingdom and His righteous way of life. When we do those things, He promises to help us with every other area of our lives. I would much rather keep God in first place in my life and have His help rather than trying to work everything out in my own strength and ability.

Prayer: Lord, I pray for Your Kingdom to come and for Your will to be done in my life. I know that Your ways are always right and I willingly submit to You and Your ways. I also ask You to help me to know if I am really seeking Your Kingdom first and help me to do better if I am not. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday January 8

Scripture Reading: Genesis 20-22

Matthew 7

Praise the Lord! On my trip, I realized that some of potential problems we were having had to do with cultural differences. In Africa, time is looked at much differently than here. For instance, when I was told that I would be picked up at 8:00 AM and they came at 9:30, it was no big deal to them because that is how they do things. So, I had plenty of opportunities to be patient with my precious brothers and sisters. All in all, it was a good thing because it helped me to grow.

Look at Matthew 7:21, **Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven.** You see, what we say can be wiped out if we don't live like we should. So, we do need to call Jesus Lord AND we need to live like He wants us to live! Living that way is how we really show that He is our Lord.

Look at verses 24-25, **Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.** When we HEAR the Word and DO what it says, we will be safe!

Prayer: Lord, it is good to call You that AND I want to live like You really are my Lord. Help me to know Your ways and help me to really DO what You say. I know that hearing and doing what You say will bring strength and security to my life and I want that so much. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wednesday January 9

Scripture Reading: Genesis 23-24

Matthew 8

Praise the Lord! I preached on the Kingdom all day long for three days at one place in Uganda. Believe me, that is a lot of preaching and yet it was very good. I told them that I wanted to show them how wonderful the Kingdom of God was so they would all want to learn even more about it. Many of the people there were Pastors themselves and they were all very receptive and I believe God was pleased with it all.

Look at Matthew 8:10-11, **When Jesus heard this, He was astonished and said to those following Him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven."**

This was an amazing statement that Jesus made. You see, He was talking about a man who was not even a Jew and He said that man was going to make it into the Kingdom of God before some of the Jewish people. How was this man going to make it into the Kingdom? By faith!

This is so important. Being in the Kingdom of God is not a matter of who we are in the natural because of our birth or nationality. We are in the Kingdom of God because we have put our faith in Jesus and we have been born-again!

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that I have been born-again in the Kingdom of God. Please help me to remember that is why I am so blessed. I also ask You to teach me more about how to live by faith. I want to do this for myself and I want to use my faith to be a blessing to others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday January 10

Scripture Reading: Genesis 25-26

Matthew 9:1-17

Praise the Lord! There was one lady who was having a very hard time breathing in Uganda. When I prayed for her, she was able to breathe deeply with no problem. Evidently many of the people there knew her because they really rejoiced when she was healed. When I came back, she was usually there and she would come up to me and take a deep breath to show me that she was still healed. Praise the Lord for the fact that she was healed and she stayed healed!

In our reading from the Gospel of Matthew, we read about Jesus going and having a meal at Matthew's house. Mathew was a tax collector and this caused quite a stir. You see, the religious people didn't think that Jesus should spend time with sinners.

Look at what Jesus said in verses 12-13, **On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."**

Praise the Lord for the fact that He came to reach out to sinners because every one of us were sinners. He came and reached out to us even though there was nothing in the natural that made us special and yet He loved us.

Prayer: Lord, I am so thankful that You came and saved me. I know that You were at work in my life even before I gave my life to You and I am so thankful. Now that I have given my life to You, please help me to live my life like You want. I now want to represent You well so that others can come to know You like I have. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Friday January 11

Scripture Reading: Genesis 27-28

Matthew 9:18-38

Praise the Lord! While I was in Mbarara, Uganda, I wanted to get on the internet and write an email home. So, we went to an internet café. You see, no one has computers there, and even though I had mine there was not a connection for it. So, one night we went to this very run down building and way in the back there were about 5 computers that we could pay to use. I had just finished my email when the electricity went out and it was very dark. I just sat there until someone found a match and then a candle so we could find our way out. We take so many things for granted here.

Look at what Matthew 9:35 says about the Kingdom, **Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.** Praise the Lord! I have made these points before, but Jesus is making them again and I am too.

The Kingdom message is Good News and the Kingdom of God is a place of healing. This is why I ministered healing to those in Africa and it is why I minister healing to people here. Healing is not just for Africa or the United States. Healing is a matter of the Kingdom! When we pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done, it includes healing.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that I have given my life to You. Please continue to teach me about the Kingdom and help me to walk in the things You show me. I also want to live for You this weekend. Help me to allow You to rule and reign over every decision I make and help me to be an example of how a real Christian should live. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Saturday January 12

Scripture Reading: Genesis 29-30

Matthew 10:1-23

Praise the Lord! When I preached about the Kingdom in Uganda, I used an example of a brochure that people put out telling about a really nice motel. I said they would put a picture of a nice bed in it so we would all imagine ourselves sleeping in the bed and things like that. Then I told them that I was going to describe the Kingdom to them so they could all imagine themselves in the Kingdom enjoying all the benefits, and we really had a good time with the illustrations I made.

In our reading from Matthew, Jesus began sending out His disciples to preach. It has always been God's will to use His people in His work and that is what we see happening, but look at what Jesus specifically told them to preach in Matthew 10:7, **As you go, preach this message: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.'** He told them to preach the Kingdom!

Look at the next verse, **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.** Here we have the preaching of the Kingdom being backed up with signs and wonders again. You see, Jesus doesn't want us to merely know about the Kingdom. He wants the Kingdom to come into our lives, and that should always make a difference. When His Kingdom comes, His will is done in our lives.

Prayer: Lord, I pray for Your Kingdom to come and for Your will to be done in my life, and I pray that You will use me to tell others about how the Kingdom can come into their lives as well. Set me free and then use me to set others free as well and please bless Church tomorrow. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sunday January 13

Scripture Reading: Genesis 31-32

Matthew 10:24-42

Praise the Lord! Yesterday, I told you about the illustration I used in Uganda of a brochure telling about the Kingdom. I told them that the Kingdom was a place of abundance and I shared about Jesus feeding the multitudes. I told them that God wanted to meet their every need too according to Philippians 4:19 which says, **And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.** By the way, that is true for them and it is true for you!

Look at Matthew 10:26 & 31: **So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. And So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

Jesus told them (and us) twice to not be afraid! How could He say that to us? He could say it because He will take care of us. When we remember that He will never leave us or forsake us, we should realize that we don't have anything to be afraid of. Look at verse 32, **Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in Heaven.** When we acknowledge Jesus and live for Him, He will acknowledge us before the Father and They will always take care of us. Now, this doesn't mean we will never face anything hard, but we will always have Him with us to help us.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that You are always with me. Please help me to be aware of Your presence more and help me to keep my trust and confidence in You. I also ask You to bless Church today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Monday January 14

Scripture Reading: Genesis 33-35

Matthew 11

Praise the Lord! In one of our services, a local Pastor received an offering and a real spirit of giving broke loose. They were giving all kinds of things to each other. I was given a jacket, fruit, bowls, and a goat! No kidding, I was really given a goat. The people there are very poor but they sure love to give. I ended up giving most of the things I received to others and the whole time was a wonderful expression of God's love being put into action.

Look at Matthew 11:11, **I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.** It would probably be good for you to read that verse again and then I will comment on it.

Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest person ever born until that time and He said that every one of us in the Kingdom is greater than John! You see, all the Old Testament saints were not born-again and they could only look forward to the things we have because we are born-again.

We are so blessed to be living in the Church age. We can not only know about God, we can have Him live right in us all the time.

Prayer: Lord, I love You so much and I am so thankful that I have given my life to You. Please help me to know how blessed I am to be Your child and help me to live my life like a child of God should really live. I want to represent You well so others can come to know You like I have. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday January 15

Scripture Reading: Genesis 36-37

Matthew 12:1-21

Praise the Lord! The currency used in Uganda is Ugandan Shillings. One US dollar buys 1750 of their Shillings. I had one Pastor who interpreted for me several days and I wanted to bless him. I gave him 100,000 Shillings and he was very blessed. That was only about \$57, but it was a lot to him. It is such a blessing to have God bless us so we can bless others. I was able to live that out in Uganda, and I hope you put it into practice in your life.

Look at Matthew 12:21 for today, **In His name the nations will put their hope.** Isn't this an interesting verse? Actually, it is a wonderful verse. Nations can put their hope in Jesus and it is a good decision when they do.

Look at why these nations put their hope in Jesus. Verse 15 says, **Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed Him, and He healed all their sick.** When people came to Jesus, He healed all their sick and this caused others, even nations, to put their hope in Him.

Now, I want you to really get what I am going to say. When Jesus heals someone, it is because He loves that person and because He wants to meet their every need. He also heals because He wants to use healing to draw others to Him. Both of these things are true and they don't cancel out each other.

Prayer: Lord, I love You. I am so thankful that You are revealing Yourself and Your ways to me. Please help me to get all that You are saying to me. I pray that many people will put their hope in You and I pray that nations will put their hope in You as well. Please bless everyone who is doing these devotions today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wednesday January 16

Scripture Reading: Genesis 38-40

Matthew 12:22-50

Praise the Lord! Part of my reason for going to Uganda was to share Faith Covenant Ministries' vision with the Pastors there and to see if we have an open door for ongoing work there. It is always a good thing to be involved in ministries that are bigger than we are individually because we can always do more together than we can alone. The Pastors there were very receptive to FCM, and we are now praying about continuing our work there.

God always blesses unity. Look at Matthew 12:25, **Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand."** Now I know this is on the negative side but it is still true. When people are not in unity, things are going to fall apart.

The next three verses say, **If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.** Jesus was destroying the devil's work and that showed that His Kingdom had come and that His Kingdom was greater. Praise God for the fact that we are in God's Kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, I love You. Please have Your way in my life. I don't want to miss out on anything You have for me. I also ask You to help me to walk in unity with all my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Help me to be a person who always brings peace and not strife and I ask You to destroy all the devil's work in my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday January 17

Scripture Reading: Genesis 41

Matthew 13:1-32

Praise the Lord! Many of the Churches in Uganda have orphanages. There are so many orphans in Africa that it can seem overwhelming at times. I had to pray about what to do; then I obeyed God and trusted Him. You see, that is how we need to live. There is always more than each of us can do individually. So, we need to pray, hear from God, do what He says and trust Him for the rest. Being overwhelmed could stop us from doing anything and that would be a mistake.

The Kingdom of God is mentioned 12 times in Matthew 13! I am going to spend several days on these verses. Keep reading your Scripture Readings each day and I will catch up later.

Matthew 13:11 says, **He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them."** Praise God! We are so blessed. God is teaching us about His Kingdom and it is important for us to pray and ask Him to help us to really get what He is showing us.

Matthew 13:19 says, **When anyone hears the message about the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.** Again, let's ask God to help us understand the Kingdom truths He is showing us.

Prayer: Lord, I am so thankful for the Kingdom. Please help me to accept the knowledge You are giving me and help me to understand Your ways more. I don't want to miss out on anything You have for me because I know it is all good. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Friday January 18

Scripture Reading: Genesis 42-43

Matthew 13:33-58

Praise the Lord! We spent several days in Uganda going to village Churches. I loved this part of the trip because it was getting way out where the people really live. Every place we went had never had a white person there and many of the children had never even seen a white person. It was humbling for me to go and tell them that God loved them so much that He sent me to tell them about His love.

Matthew 13 has several parables about the Kingdom and that is why I am going to spend several days on it. Matthew 13:24 says, **Jesus told them another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."** Jesus went on and said that an enemy came and sowed bad seeds in this same field.

This is talking about the world. God's Kingdom is here and the devil's kingdom is too. We need to grow and let God have His way in our lives. As for the other things going on, we need to trust God to take care of all those things. We even need to trust Him when it doesn't seem like He is doing things as quickly as we think He should. He is God and He is always right. So, trust Him and you will be alright. Keep living for Him and keep telling people about the love of God. When we are busy doing what He wants us to do, we won't waste as much time worrying about everything else.

Prayer: Lord, I am glad that I am in Your Kingdom and I want to trust You more. I can actually see that trusting You is a part of Your Kingdom coming and Your will being done in my life and I know that is always good. Help me to keep reaching out to others with Your love and help me be a good witness for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Saturday January 19

Scripture Reading: Genesis 44-45

Matthew 14:1-21

Praise the Lord! In the village Churches we went to, they always wanted to feed us. The way they treated us was quite an honor and I knew they were really honoring Jesus. Uganda is right on the Equator and so they have a lot of tropical fruit and it was all very good. Some of the Churches are right in the middle of banana plantations so we had bananas everywhere we went and lots of other fruit.

Matthew 13:31-32 say, **He told them another parable: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."** God's Kingdom has come into our lives and we need to let it grow and take over.

Matthew 13:38 says, **The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the Kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one.** And verse 41 says, **The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.** I want to make the point again that it is Jesus Who will sort all these things out and He will do it in His time. We need to live for Him and keep trusting Him.

Prayer: Lord, I am so thankful for Your Kingdom work in my life. I yield to Your work in my life and I want You to rule and reign completely. If there are any areas in my life where I need to submit to You more, please help me to know and help me to give in to You. I know that Your work in my life will bring peace and freedom. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sunday January 20

Scripture Reading: Genesis 46-48

Matthew 14:22-36

Praise the Lord! Because we wanted to see many of the village Churches and we only had a limited amount of time, we often had to leave after only a few minutes. I would speak words of life over them and pray for them. Mark 11:24 says, **Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.** I asked God to bless them and I believe they received the blessings I prayed for.

Matthew 13:41-43 say, **The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

God wants His Kingdom to be a place where we really live for Him, and we are right in the middle of these verses being lived out. I don't want you to miss this, so let me make it really clear. He is weeding out everything that causes sin and all who do evil. As we let His Kingdom come and His will be done our lives, there will be less sin and more righteousness in our lives and that is exactly what He wants. HE WHO HAS EARS, LET HIM HEAR.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I know that Your will is right for my life. Please help me to know what You want to do and help me to submit to Your will. I want to HEAR what You are saying and I want to DO what You want. I also ask You to bless my Church today. Help me to be there and help me to faithfully support Your work. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Monday January 21

Scripture Reading: Genesis 49-50

Matthew 15:1-20

Praise the Lord! In several of the places we went, they would have a drink that they wanted me to drink as their honored guest. You see, they had never had a guest like me before and I tried to represent Jesus well. We are all called to represent Him everywhere we go and I hope you are doing a good job of it. We do that when we live for Him and speak words of life as He leads us.

Matthew 13:47-48 say, **Once again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.** This is Jesus using a parable to teach us about the Kingdom.

He uses parables to help us to understand the Kingdom because He really wants us to understand. In this parable, we again see that the Kingdom is a place where sin is dealt with. When you were born-again, I am sure that God made many changes in your life and I am also sure He continues to work in your life. We need to be quick to let Him rule and reign as the King. When we do that, bad things will be thrown away and that is a good process. Trust that He knows what He is doing and live like He wants. That is always the right way to live.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I know that every time I have given in to You it has been the right decision. Help me to quit struggling against Your will so much. I really do want Your Kingdom to come and I want Your will to be done in my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday January 22

Scripture Reading: Exodus 1-3

Matthew 15:21-39

Praise the Lord! When we traveled to the village Churches, I would sometimes ask one of the Pastors who was with us to share a little bit. It was very gratifying to hear them relate the things I had taught them about the Kingdom. This is the process we should all be in. We learn from God and then we need to be ready to share what we have learned with others.

Well, we are finishing up the things Jesus taught about the Kingdom in Mathew 13 today. Tomorrow, I will get back to making my comments from our reading for that day. Matthew 13 is a whole chapter of parables about the Kingdom and I hope you have benefited by the extended time we have spent covering it.

Mathew 13:52 says, **He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the Kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."**

This goes right along with what I started off with for today. We need to learn about the Kingdom and then we need to be willing to share what we know with others. So, continue to learn about the Kingdom and then lay your treasures out for others.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am glad that I am learning more and more about Your Kingdom. I want what I am learning to help me to grow and I want to be more faithful to share about Your Kingdom with others. I know that I have more to learn and I know that I need to be willing to share what I do know. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wednesday January 23

Scripture Reading: Exodus 4-6  
Matthew 16

Praise the Lord! While in Uganda, I wanted to go to a game park and see the animals there. Several of the pastors from there had never been to a game park and so I paid for them to come along. We were in a very small Toyota and five of them stacked in the back seat to go. It was wonderful seeing the elephants, hippos, crocodiles and many other animals. And it was neat to be able to bless the people who went along.

Look at what Jesus said in Matthew 16:19, **I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.**

We have a lot of authority in the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the King, and we can't ever forget that, but as King He gives us authority and we need to take it. Jesus tells us that we have "the keys of the Kingdom" and He tells us that we are the ones who "bind and loose" things on Earth and what we do here affects what happens in Heaven.

Verses like these are why I wanted to spend extra time on the Kingdom this year. In our closing prayer for today, I am going to give you an example of putting all this into action.

Prayer: Lord, I bind myself to You and Your will. I loose myself from all errors and deception. I bind my life to Your will and I bind the devil from leading me astray. I also bind Your provision and abundance to my life and I bind poverty and lack from having any place in my life. I thank You for Your Kingdom and I ask You to continue to teach me Your ways. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday January 24

Scripture Reading: Exodus 7-8  
Matthew 17

Praise the Lord! On my last Sunday in Uganda, we had a service at Moses' Church. It started at ten in the morning and ended at three in the afternoon. There were a lot of people there and about half of them were standing outside. So, I would walk back and forth through the door so they could all hear. The service actually ended at three because it started raining really hard, and I have no idea how long it would have gone if it hadn't rained when it did. I faithfully preached the Word, God encouraged the people and many were healed.

The last verse of Matthew 16 mentions the Kingdom and I didn't cover it yesterday because it ties in with Matthew 17. It says, **I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.**" The first verses of chapter 17 say, **After six days Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.** They were seeing Jesus in His Kingdom.

Look at verse 5, **While He was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"** God was letting them know that Jesus was His Son and He was doing what God wanted.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I want to see Your Kingdom coming more. I know that Your Kingdom is already here and I want to see it more. Please continue to speak to me from the Word and help me to recognize Your work and Your power more. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Friday January 25

Scripture Reading: Exodus 9-10

Matthew 18:1-20

Praise the Lord! After the Sunday service at Moses' Church, we went to several other village churches. We also went to some people's house and they honored me in many ways. For one thing, they planted an orange tree to commemorate my visit. They said that they will show that tree to others who come there and tell them about my visit.

Look at Matthew 18:1-4: **At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."**

If you want to be great in the Kingdom of God, you have to go about it God's way and His ways are very different than the world's ways. In God's Kingdom, the way to be great is by being a servant. The more we serve the greater we are.

You see, Jesus came to serve and we are being conformed to His image. So, when we serve, we are being like the King of the Kingdom and that is how to be great. Please don't think you have to wait to put this into action in your life.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I really do want to be great in the Kingdom. Help me to know that I can serve people right where I am and help me to really do it. I don't want to just read about how to live, I want to really live like You want. So, please show me who to serve and help me to be a DOER of Your Word, today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Saturday January 26

Scripture Reading: Exodus 11-12

Matthew 18:21-35

Praise the Lord! Somewhere along the way, I ate something that didn't sit well and so I fasted the last two days in Uganda. We continued to travel to village Churches and they were all very gracious when I told them that I was fasting. God is always faithful to us. He healed me and I was able to do everything that we had planned.

Matthew 18:23 says, **Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.** I don't have space here to write out the rest of this parable. So, let me tell you what it says. There was one man who had a huge debt and it was forgiven. Then he went out and would not forgive someone else! When the king of the kingdom heard about it, he was upset and threw the man in jail.

Now, don't forget that this is a parable about the Kingdom. Look at what Jesus said in the last verse, **This is how My Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.**

We need to forgive people! In the Kingdom of God, we have been forgiven of so much and now the King (Jesus) wants us to forgive others just like we have been forgiven. Ephesians 4:32 says, **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

Prayer: Lord, I am so thankful that You have forgiven me and I want to forgive others. I know that this is a part of Your Kingdom coming and Your will being done in my life. Please help me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sunday January 27

Scripture Reading: Exodus 13-15

Matthew 19:1-15

Praise the Lord! I always enjoy seeing all the children on my travels. If you could see the pictures I take, there are probably more of children than anything else. I play with them, make them laugh, take pictures of them and always pray for them. No matter where I am, I don't ever want to be so busy that I forget to bless children.

Jesus did the same thing, and we read about it in Matthew 19:13-15, **Then little children were brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." When He had placed His hands on them, He went on from there.**

The disciples evidently thought Jesus was too busy to bless the Children. They were wrong! Jesus said that the Kingdom "belongs to such as these." We need to be loving, forgiving and willing to learn like children. When we are like that, we will be able to accept Kingdom ways more and that will be a very good thing. Also, don't forget to reach out to children. You are not too busy and if you think you are, you need to order your life and put God's ways ahead of all your plans.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so thankful that You always take time to minister to me. Help me to take that truth and apply it to others. Help me to see children and help me to bless them. Help me to take this truth and put it into practice today at Church and then help me to do it all the time. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Monday January 28

Scripture Reading: Exodus 16-18

Matthew 19:16-30

Praise the Lord! I told you earlier that there are many orphans in Uganda. We went to one village Church that feeds 1,800 orphans every day! Here's what I want to point out from this: they are doing what they can and we all need to do what we can. If all of God's people would do their part, I believe all the work would get done.

Look at what Jesus said about the Kingdom in Matthew 19:23-24, **Then Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."**

Now, I am sure we need to talk about these verses today. First of all, notice that Jesus said it was 'hard' for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom. He did not say it was 'impossible'! You see, people who are rich often rely on themselves too much and when they do that they miss out on Jesus and the salvation that He offers us.

Everyone, rich and poor, are all saved the same way. We all have to put our trust and confidence in Jesus. We need to confess our sins, give Him our lives and let Him be the Lord of our lives.

Prayer: Lord, I love You so much and I am glad that You have become the Way of salvation for me. Help me to know that I am saved because of what You have done for me and that I can never earn my salvation. I also want to live for You more and more. I want my life to be a good example for others to learn from. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Tuesday December 29

Scripture Reading: Exodus 19-21

Matthew 20:1-16

Praise the Lord! We are almost to the end of January already. One of the Churches we went to had land donated to them for a School/Church building. They were in the process of building the building. I met with the man who had given the land and he told me that he and others were ready and willing to give more land as the work went along. It was great to see God providing for His work through His people.

The first part of Matthew 20 is a parable about the Kingdom of God. Verse 1 says, **For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard.** Later he went out and hired others and he kept doing this all day long. Some were even hired right at the end of the day.

When it came time to pay the workers they were all paid the same amount and those hired first didn't think this was fair. Verses 15-16 say, **Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."**

This is a picture of people going to Heaven. Some will get saved a long time before they go and others will get saved right before they go, but we will all go the same Heaven.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so glad that I have given my life to You. I am also glad that I didn't wait until the last moment because I know that my life is better now. Help me to tell others about You and help me to show Your love to people by the way I live and by the way I serve others. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Wednesday January 30

Scripture Reading: Exodus 22-24

Matthew 20:17-34

Praise the Lord! At the end of my trip to Uganda, we went to the source of the Nile River. It is the longest river in the world and it flows from Lake Victoria, where I was, all the way through Africa. I declared that Jesus is Lord over the Nile! God is doing a great work in Africa but there is so much more work to be done. It is a privilege to be part of what He is doing.

Look at Matthew 20:20-21: **Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. "What is it you want?" He asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your Kingdom."**

She was vying for her sons to be in places of honor in the Kingdom. Verses 25-28 say, **Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."** The way to be great in God's Kingdom is by being a servant to others.

Prayer: Lord, I love You and I am so glad that I am part of Your Kingdom. Please continue to teach me about Your ways and help me to really put them into practice in my life. I want to be great in Your Kingdom. So, teach me how to be a servant and then help me to really serve others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thursday January 31

Scripture Reading: Exodus 25-26

Matthew 21:1-22

Praise the Lord! I hope you enjoyed hearing about my trip to Uganda this month. Next month we will get back to covering the book of Psalms and we will be starting with Psalms 7:1. I want to thank all of you who helped me on my trip with your prayers and your finances. We are making a difference around the world as we work together.

The Kingdom is mentioned twice in our reading for tomorrow. So, I am going to go ahead a little bit and cover the first one here. Matthew 21:28-32 say, **"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you."**

We need to be people who really live for God! Talking about it isn't enough. Our lives need to line up with what we say. So, when we pray for His Kingdom to come and for His will to be done, we need to obey Him because that is how His will gets done in our lives.

Lord, I love You and I don't just want to talk about living for You. I want to really do it. Help me to know if there are areas of my life where I am not doing this and help me to change. I also pray for Africa. Please bless Malawi and Uganda and help the people there to grow in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.