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Hampton Baptist Church

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## A Kingdom Dream Mark: 4: 30-32

People go to college for a variety of reasons, but Bob Kuechenberg, a former Miami Dolphin, may have given the best reason yet in a Newsweek interview. He told the reporter, “My father and my uncle were human cannonballs in the carnival. My father told me, ‘Go to college or become a cannonball.’ Then one day my uncle was shot out of the cannon, missed the net and hit the ferris wheel. That was when I decided to go to college.”

Bob had a clear vision of what his life would have been like if he had not gone to college. Jesus also had a clear vision, a clear vision of the Kingdom of God. Through out the gospels Jesus shares with us brief glimpses into the Kingdom of God. Over 80 times through word pictures and parables Jesus opens the door and lets us peek into what the Kingdom of God is like. When Jesus speaks this much about anything it must be important and we should pay attention to what he is saying. If we were to compile all these sneak peeks into one vision we would get Jesus’ Kingdom Dream.

Whenever Jesus uses the phrase in scripture, “The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven is like...” he is sharing a part of His Kingdom Dream; and our scripture this morning is one of those occasions where Jesus shares one of those snippets that give us insight into the glory of that dream.

Now a mustard seed is quite small, and when you look at it doesn’t seem that much can come of it. Small beginnings don’t necessarily mean small results; we should not be deceived or discouraged by appearances. Many times it takes small steps; incremental building blocks can lead to momentum that can produce a huge impact. So many times we want to skip the small, building steps and get to the huge results immediately.

Charlie Brown is bat, “STRIKE THREE!” is called. He has struck out again and drops his head to his chest and drags his bat back to the bench. “Rats! I’ll never be a big-league player. I just don’t have it! All my life I have dreamed of playing in the big-leagues, but I know I’ll never make it.”

Lucy turns to console him. “Charlie Brown, you’re thinking too far ahead. What you need to do is set yourself more immediate goals.”

He looks up, “Immediate Goals?”

Lucy says, “Yes, start with this next inning when you go out to pitch. See if you can walk out to the mound without falling down!”

When we think of how the Christian faith began and how it spread and developed we have a great illustration of small beginnings. It began with just one man, Jesus, granted not an ordinary man but still only one man. Then it grew to include 12 ordinary men of questionable character, who began to learn and live the radical and controversial teaching of Jesus. After the death and resurrection of Jesus those ideas and teachings spread further, and then came Paul.

In John Steinbeck’s classic book The Grapes of Wrath, we meet that strange preacher Casey who said, “One person with their mind made up can shove a lot of people around.” Paul gave a “divine shove” to the world around him as he went from town to town starting and encouraging churches and new Christians.

God's greatest instrument to get anything done has always been a creative minority. There are no limits on what can be done by a group of people whose lives reek of the Spirit of God and their only concern is to do what is best for God's people and His Kingdom. Jesus dared to have a big Kingdom Dream, and as Christians and His church much has been accomplished since those meager beginnings, but there is still much that we are called to do in this world for the Kingdom of God. Individuals and churches cannot be satisfied with where they are in their faith journey, they must continue to find ways to be real and relevant in this world so others can become a part of the Kingdom of God.

A Kingdom Dream is absolutely vital to the life of a church. A Kingdom Dream shapes every aspect of ministry in a church; from ministering to babies, to young families, youth, older adults, maintenance of the buildings and grounds, to Sunday School curriculum, the sermons that are preached, the songs that are sung, and budget that is proposed. The Kingdom Dream of every church defines what it is doing in its community so others can know and experience the love and hope of Christ.

Winnie the Pooh and Piglet were taking walk in the 100 acre wood one evening. Piglet asks Pooh, "When you wake up in the morning what is the first thing you say to yourself?" "What's for breakfast?" Pooh answered, "and what do you say Piglet?" "I say," Piglet replied, 'I wonder what exciting thing will happen today?'

As individuals and churches we choose to have a "breakfast" Kingdom Dream or an "exciting" Kingdom Dream. A "breakfast" Kingdom Dream is one of being happy with the way we are, but an "exciting" Kingdom Dream is one of stepping out in faith into who God wants us to be. A Kingdom Dream has got be born out of the very dream that Jesus has. When we look at Jesus' Kingdom Dream we see that it has 4 characteristics.

#### It all starts with redemption.

God's purpose has always been and always will be for humanity to experience salvation, to be brought back into a right relationship with God. We see this in Jesus' Kingdom Dream in Luke 15 in the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. These are stories of God's love and grace toward sinners.

There was a father and son that worked for months to build a toy sailboat. Every night after supper they would go to the garage and work together to create this beautiful work of love. Finally the boat was finished and they took it too the lake for its maiden voyage. They tied a string to the boat so it wouldn't sail too far. It was beautiful, sparkling in the sun and the father and son were enjoying themselves until a motorboat crossing the lake cut the string.

The boat drifted out of sight and they searched for hours but could not find the boat anywhere. They were heartbroken and cried together at the loss of the boat. Farther down the lake a man found the boat and took it to the local toy store and sold it to the shopkeeper. The boat took a place of prominence in the front window, and a few weeks later the boy saw it while walking home from school. He rushed in and told the shopkeeper the story about his boat. He had no way of proving it was his boat. The shopkeeper said that we would sell the boat to him for \$50. The little boy couldn't believe that it would cost so much to buy back his boat, but since it meant so much to him he began working to earn the money to buy it back.

It took several months of doing odd jobs at home and for neighbors but finally he had enough money. As the boy walked out of the store with his boat he said, "You are twice mine, I made you and then lost you and now I have bought back and now you are mine forever!"

That is what God has done for us through Jesus and that is what a Kingdom Dream is about first and foremost. There are many people that do not know the grace and forgiveness of God. Have you ever asked the question why God has left us here on earth after we have experienced salvation? We remain here after we experience God's wonderful grace so we can share the love of Christ with others that need to experience it. The main characteristic of a Kingdom Dream is to share Christ with others.

#### God rules in a Kingdom Dream.

Have you ever seen team rowing in the Olympics? A group of 3 or more people in a sleek boat rowing together in a race, it looks easy doesn't it? Getting a group of people to work in exact precision and unison isn't easy and that is the job of the coxswain. That person sits in the back of the boat, and the team faces the coxswain while they propel the boat in the opposite direction with each stroke. The team can only see and listen to the coxswain and they depend on that person to tell them how to adjust their direction, and keep their stroke in unison and gives encouragement. If one team member decides not to listen to the coxswain the entire team suffers and can lead to defeat. The coxswain rules that boat.

When God is allowed to rule in the hearts and lives of his people a Kingdom Dream flourishes. In Matthew 20 & 22 we find the stories of the workers in the vineyard and the great banquet then in Luke 17 the story of the farmer and his helper all point to the importance of allowing God to rule in our lives.

In a church there are many people with differing needs and points of view, and various backgrounds and that means there will be many views on what the church should do and be. God's intention was for the church to be diverse, but also unified, with God's agenda taking precedence over our personal wants and convenience. The greatest question a church and its members can ever ask is, "What is best for our church and what will help us fulfill our Kingdom Dream?" Then genuinely seek God's leadership and guidance. A Kingdom Dream demands individual and corporate commitment to God's lordship over the church.

#### Christ becomes concrete in a Kingdom Dream.

Jesus embodied the Kingdom of God; He didn't just tell stories about the Kingdom of God, He brought it to life. The Lord's Supper, washing the disciples' feet, the healings and resurrections He performed are all examples of Jesus physically showing the people the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' message wasn't candy-coated; it wasn't always easily understood or accepted because it was so new and radical, nor was it some abstract theory beyond possible comprehension. Jesus made it where people could see, feel, hear, touch and in some cases taste the very Kingdom He spoke about. Jesus made the Kingdom of God real for people.

It is unacceptable for God's people to insulate themselves within the walls of a church building and just talk about ministry. They must step beyond the comfort of church walls and embody the Kingdom and make it concrete so others can experience it in real and tangible ways.

#### Finally, a Kingdom Dream causes growth and change.

We see this characteristic in Mark 4 in the parable of the Sower and John 12 in the parable of the kernel of wheat. A Kingdom Dream changes people because they are reaching for and dedicating themselves to something that is bigger and greater than they are. There is so much risk that comes with growth and change, but there is also so much blessing. When individuals and churches say to God, "We have gone as far as we'll go because we are not comfortable where you are leading us. We don't like what we will have to do to receive or be a blessing" lives, ministry and church becomes stale and stagnant.

Over 18 years ago my son Josh was born and we brought him home and placed him in a crib. What if we never moved him out of that crib? What if his mother and I decided we wanted to keep Josh in that crib because it reminded us of one of the happiest times of our lives? Now that he is 18 and 200+ pounds it would be quite embarrassing when his friends came over not to mention extremely uncomfortable. He probably would also have other negative issues to deal with because of that decision.

A Kingdom Dream that embraces growth and change is worth the risk because the blessings gained are unimaginable.

When I was working in the playground equipment business we would have to bid on jobs. Those of you that have been a part of the bid process know it can be a tricky thing. We wanted to make sure we submitted a competitive bid but we didn't want to bid too high and lose the job to another company whose bid came in lower. But we didn't want to play it safe and under bid either, because if our bid was too low we would cut our profit and miss out on money that was just sitting there waiting for us, we just we would just leave it there unclaimed.

Sadly so many people and churches play it safe and miss out and sacrifice incredible blessings on the altar of comfort and complacency.

Throughout this sermon I have intentionally not referred to our church specifically. I hope that you have been drawing comparisons. So I want to ask the question, "How is our Kingdom Dream? Does Hampton Baptist even have one? If we do is it a 'breakfast' dream or an 'excitement' dream?"

Each person here today has some expectations, hopes, desires and aspirations for our church. A Kingdom Dream for Hampton Baptist Church lies within the hearts and hands of its members. We must make sure that it is redemptive, that God rules over it, that it is concrete and that it embraces growth and change or we will be what Paul refers to as a resounding gong or clanging cymbal. We make some noise, but that's about it.

If we don't have a Kingdom Dream, maybe it is time we did. We can start small, God blesses small, remember the mustard seed? You see, if we open ourselves up and allow a Kingdom Dream to be born it is no longer just our affair, it is God's affair, and He will be faithful.

Amen