Intro: Have you ever intensely pursued something? Maybe it was your education / maybe it was a hobby / your career / Currently, it is bow hunting season and many people are intensely pursuing deer / elk / even bear. A hunter’s commitment to this pursuit is impressive. They Practice for hours shooting their bows / scout areas in advance / put up trail cameras / purchase a wide variety of clothing and gear / they can spend countless hours in a tree stand…all to seek after that animal.

- Following the real Jesus is about a pursuit as well. Jesus tells us that we are to pursue or “seek after” the Kingdom of God.

Jesus makes over 100 references to the Kingdom of God in the Gospels! Obviously this is a major emphasis in what He has to say. How can we follow Jesus fully if we do not understand His emphasis on the Kingdom?

- So what is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is simply the rule of God…the reign of God. Jesus described it like this…

Matt. 12:28 “But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.” (NLT) Jesus is saying that the rule of God is being played out right in front of you by My authority over the demonic. That is the Kingdom of God.

- There is a present tense and future tense understanding of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God can be experienced in part now and will be experienced in all its fullness in the future when Jesus returns. In the meantime, our response to the Kingdom of God is crucial for following Jesus.

Matt 6:33 “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (NLT)

- What does it mean to be a Kingdom of God seeker? We follow Jesus seeking His Kingdom. We can’t follow Jesus effectively if we don’t care about His Kingdom; if we are ignorant about His Kingdom; or indifferent to His Kingdom. Following the real Jesus is becoming a Kingdom of God seeker. So what does this mean?

1. We Are Called To Be Part Of His Kingdom

I Peter 2:9 “... for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.” (NLT) God has called us in to a different Kingdom…His Kingdom.

Col. 1:13 “For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.” (NLT)

- There’s only two kingdoms. You are either in one or the other. You are either following one or the other. You are either loyal to one or the other. One of these two kingdoms
rules your life. Which is it? Being a Kingdom of God seeker is knowing which Kingdom you’re in and which one you are pursuing.

• This is the entire reason why Jesus came. He gave us a choice which kingdom we can be a part of. This is the entire story of the cross is about being called in to His Kingdom. (explain). He came to destroy the works of Satan.

• When you trust Jesus to forgive your sin and enter into relationship with Him, a transfer of Kingdoms took place. You were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Jesus. Now…live this way!

Phil. 1:27 “Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.” (NLT) Notice what Kingdom we are a part of? Not this one anymore! We are citizens of another Kingdom…citizens of heaven.

• Following Jesus is having a Kingdom mindset. Our problem is we have an earthly mindset. In fact, I call it a “heart set”. It’s not only our minds are set on this earthly kingdom, but our hearts are fixed on it as well. We love the wrong kingdom.

• We tend to be more passionate about the things of this earthly, fallen kingdom rather than God’s Kingdom. We are passionate about money / possessions / success / our careers / chasing after the status symbols of our culture.

• There are two very foundational questions we all have to ask ourselves. Being part of His Kingdom requires us to be very honest with ourselves.
  ➢ Which Kingdom am I a citizen of? Has a transfer of Kingdoms taken place? Have I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior?
  ➢ Which Kingdom do I seek after? Which Kingdom has my loyalty? Which Kingdom has my allegiance? I may be part of His Kingdom spiritually, but I may live like I belong to the other.

• Being a Kingdom of God seeker is accepting the call to be part of His Kingdom spiritually and practically.

2. We Are Commissioned To Be Ambassadors For His Kingdom

II Cor. 5:20 “So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” (NLT)

• We are not just part of God’s Kingdom, we are commissioned to be ambassadors for it. We are representatives of the Kingdom of light living in the kingdom of darkness telling people trapped in darkness there is another option. There is another King and Kingdom.

• This is not the role of only Pastors or church leaders. It is the role of every person of the Kingdom. Being a Kingdom of God seeker is embracing your role as an ambassador for His Kingdom.

• Since an ambassador represents the interests of another country, what interests are we supposed to be representing?
We represent God’s character: How are people to know what God is like. They look at His ambassadors. They witness the character of God in the people of God. They see love / compassion / forgiveness / grace / mercy / justice /

We represent God’s values: We are here to show the world what is important to God in His Kingdom. God values different things then this fallen world. God values people made in His image. His heart breaks for people who are lost and broken. (Next Sunday – Guatemala Sunday!)

We represent God’s truth: These two kingdoms have two opposing messages. This world has its distorted truth for people to believe and God has His truth He wants people to believe. We represent the truth of His Kingdom. This is why the belief that all truth is relative is so dangerous. God’s truth is not relative…it is absolute!

We represent God’s mission: Jesus told us to “GO” and make disciples…” Jesus told us to partner with Him in rescuing people out of this earthly kingdom so they can be part of His Kingdom. We are part of His search and rescue mission.

- Every one of us are ambassadors. We are an ambassador at work / at school / in your neighborhood / in our community. This is a role every follower of Jesus has. Every follower has been given this commission.
- As Foothills enters another Fall, God is asking us to embrace this role like never before!
- Being a Kingdom of God seeker is embracing this role.

3. We Are Compelled To Be Servants For His Kingdom

Luke 19:11 “The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told them a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away.” (NLT) Summarize.

Luke 19:26 “‘Yes,’ the king replied, ‘and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.’” (NLT)

- While we wait for the coming Kingdom, we are servants for the Kingdom. We are to be serving the purposes of our King. We are to be faithful with the responsibilities He has entrusted to us. We are not free to live in a manner doing our own thing. We are compelled to serve His interests on earth.
- It’s easy to be fatalistic like some follower of Jesus day. Is the Kingdom coming very soon? If it is, why knock ourselves out making a difference? Jesus went on to tell them a parable about being faithful servants in the Kingdom. Be faithful! This is the focus!
- I see followers of Jesus who develop fatalistic attitudes. Why try…the world is so bad. We can’t make a difference. Isn’t it supposed to keep getting worse? OR…Jesus is coming back soon so let’s just hang on until He arrives. Both perspectives are wrong.
- Being a faithful servant of the Kingdom is doing what matters to Jesus Eph. 5:10 “Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.” (NLT)
I Thess. 4:1 “Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more.” (NLT)

- Being a Kingdom of God seeker is serving in a way that pleases Him. This is why a non-serving follower of Jesus is a contradiction in terms. We do what pleases Him. This doesn’t always mean you have an official ministry or title. It means you are committed and even compelled to serve His purposes.
  - It may look like buying extra food each time you go grocery shopping
  - It may look like becoming a child sponsor for a Guatemalan child
  - It could be feeling compelled to pray for the city strategically
  - Maybe you meet with co-workers and have a bible study / pray together
  - Maybe it is joining in an existing ministry at Foothills
- For me personally, I am compelled to serve. (explain)
- Being a Kingdom of God seeker is serving the purposes of the King. Jesus also told a blessing and a warning in this passage about serving. Those who serve well receive more. Those who refuse to serve lose even what little they have. Sobering truth!
- Faithfulness in serving creates an abundance in your life. A lack of serving creates scarcity. Faithfulness in serving multiplies blessings. Lack of serving results in subtraction. Which way are you living?
- A Kingdom of God seeker is compelled to serve in the Kingdom of God.

4. We Are Committed To Pray For His Kingdom
Matt. 6:10 “May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” (NLT)

- When the will of God happens on earth, this is the Kingdom of God in our midst. Jesus tells us to pray for this. Pray for the rule of God…the reign of God right here, right now. Pray for God’s will to overthrow the brokenness and darkness of our world.
- When we pray for the arrival of the Kingdom of God in our community / in our circumstances / in our darkness, this is being a Kingdom of God seeker.
- I realize I said tis several weeks ago, but it is worth repeating. Why would Jesus tell us to pray for something He will never do? If His Kingdom cannot come and His will cannot be done, why are we asked to pray for it?
- As followers of Jesus, we can never lose our hope of a better tomorrow…a better community…a better world. How can we become dispensers of hope in the darkness of our world if we have no hope for tomorrow?
- Being committed to pray for His Kingdom is a prayer of hope! Our world is in desperate need of some hope.
- Our mission as a church: “Following Jesus Fully; Transforming the City Completely” is all about hope. There’s a better day coming. We are committed to pray for this until we experience it.

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• Prayer is one of our core values as a church (explain) Prayer Map. I want us to get better at praying for our geographic area and I need some help. I need a small group of people who will keep the prayer map updated and in front of the church this year. I need some creative, committed people. We need to grow in this area.
• Being a Kingdom of God seeker is being committed to pray for His Kingdom.

5. We Are Commanded To Prioritize His Kingdom
Matt. 6:33 “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (NLT)

• The Kingdom of God was never intended to be some lackadaisical pursuit. It was intended to be an all-consuming quest. Jesus tells us to seek the Kingdom of God “above all else”. This is an amazing statement.
• A Kingdom of God seeker is one who is obsessed with chasing after the Kingdom of God and experiencing it in their own situation. For example: What would it look like to experience the Kingdom of God
  - In yourself?
  - In your marriage?
  - In your family?
  - At work?
  - In your church / your ministry?
  - In your community?
• It’s not enough to simply be delivered out of one kingdom into another. You seek God’s Kingdom. You want the reality of God’s rule in your life / your family / your community / your world. You are willing to prioritize this pursuit. It takes time to pursue things. Therefore, you re-arrange your life to seek after it.
What does this look like in my life?
  - It begins with humility. Do you want God to reign in your life? Do you desire God’s rule over you? Do you want His Kingdom to become your reality? Do you desire His Kingdom to impact our community? I wonder if what delays the reality of His Kingdom is our unwillingness to let Him rule our lives. If the Kingdom of God does not rule His people, how can our culture be transformed?
  - It develops with time: Pursuing something takes time. Are you willing to prioritize time to seek after the Kingdom of God? (character / values / truth / mission) This Fall is a great opportunity to prioritize your time for the Kingdom of God. (Life Groups / Tuesday night classes / Ministry)
  - It is realized through faithfulness: Life changes when you do the right thing over a significant period of time. We have way too many sprinters in the Kingdom of God. You can’t do the right thing for a month and expect your life to change. It is experienced through faithfulness…doing the right things for years. It’s time for us to make faithfulness a lifestyle not an event.
Being a Kingdom of God seeker is Prioritizing His Kingdom in my personal life. It is choosing this as your lifestyle. That’s what prioritizing looks like.

So what are you greatest pursuits? If you made a list of your top five, would the Kingdom of God be in your list? Are you
…part of His Kingdom?
…an ambassador for His Kingdom?
…a servant in His Kingdom?
…praying for His Kingdom?
…prioritizing His Kingdom?

This is what it looks like to follow the real Jesus. My prayer is that as we begin another Fall, we follow the real Jesus more fully as a church than ever before. May we experience following Jesus at a whole new level.