



In the Gospel of Matthew, the content of Jesus' initial preaching is summed up in one sentence: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:12-23). In one sentence, Jesus exhorts us to turn away from sin, and gives us a very good reason to do so: there is a new kingdom at hand, the kingdom of heaven! Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognizes this new advent as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." The truth is, many people today do not realize just how good and fulfilling it is to live in the "great light" of Christ. If they did, they would certainly repent of their sins. We must ask ourselves: Is it worth it to take the time necessary to ponder our sins and formally renounce them? I agree with Pope Benedict XVI, who in the inaugural Mass of his pontificate proclaimed, "And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ and you will find true life."

Years ago, I helped facilitate a retreat for the students at Auburn University. As a part of the retreat, a young couple who had three young children told their "life's story." To make a long story short, they had a good caring relationship when they got married, but neither of them was raised in any kind of Church. Before too long, they seemed to be subtly drifting apart; they felt something was missing. After a few years of visiting different churches and researching Christian teaching they found their home in the Catholic Church. They had trials before and after their conversion, but they noted how with their new found faith they were able to find God and trust in Him even in the hardest times: God had united them in a new way. They described in detail how they prayed together every day as a family kneeling in a circle. They related some of the precious—and humorous!—things the smallest one would pray for at times. As a couple, they got up every morning before the kids awoke (well, ALMOST every morning!) and prayed the rosary together. As they described their life, it was evident how central their faith was in all they did: in their conversation, in what they did together, in how they treated one another, in what they watched or didn't watch on TV, etc... I remember the mother saying, "Our prayer time is when we get strength for the day." Anyone who has eyes to see, could see the profound influence Jesus had on this entire family. Yes, it is true: "on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen."

As I thought of this couple's life me: What would happen if you family's history and remove all together—all the conversations faith—what would be left? I would be a mere shadow of what it took a lot of effort for this lives around Christ. They had to ways; they had to give up certain God—in order to "open wide the life." Was all their repentance exhortation is proven awaits those who will repent; we

*"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils."*

(Isaiah 9:1=2)

story, the question occurred to could somehow reach into this the prayer times they had spent about God and our beautiful would submit to you, their lives it has in fact come to be. No doubt, young couple to structure their repent of some of their former things in order to make time for doors to Christ" and "find true worth it? Absolutely!! Jesus' trustworthy: a new kingdom receive a hundredfold in return!

Your Servant in Christ,  
Fr. Terry Staples