

## Detailed Summary: “The Peril & Promise of Systems” (Generated by OpenAI)

By Bryan Hudson, D.Min. ~ New Covenant Church, March 8, 2026

This sermon, the second message in the series “Forward: The Only Direction God Is Moving,” explores how systems influence human life—both positively and negatively—and how believers must understand, navigate, and sometimes challenge those systems while remaining anchored in the system of the Kingdom of God.

### 1. Living Between the Peril of the Past and the Promise of the Future

The message begins by framing the spiritual posture necessary for moving **forward with God**.

Three dangers are identified:

#### 1. The Peril of the Past

People become trapped by regret, memory, and nostalgia. While remembering can be healthy, living in the past prevents forward movement.

#### 2. The Peril of the Present

Circumstances, fear, and pressure can dictate how people think and act if they allow the present moment to define their reality.

#### 3. The Promise of the Future

Believers are called to live in the expectation of what God is doing ahead. God’s direction is always forward, and faith requires aligning with that forward movement.

The Exodus story illustrates this principle. When Israel faced the Red Sea with Pharaoh’s army approaching behind them, God told Moses to “**tell the people to go forward.**” Even when the path was not visible, the first step forward was a **change in mindset**.

Forward movement begins not with physical action but with **transformed thinking**.

### 2. Three Levels of Forward Action

Three scriptures illustrate how God’s purposes operate across three dimensions:

#### Heavenly Perspective

**Psalm 103:19**, *The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.*

#### The Church’s Role

**1 Corinthians 3:9**, *For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.*

#### Society and Justice

**Jeremiah 22:3**, *Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.”*

Together these passages show that believers must be “heavenly minded and earthly good.” Our faith must translate into real-world service.

### 3. The Purpose of the Church

The sermon challenges a shallow form of Christianity focused only on religious activity.

The church exists not merely to “**have church**” but to **serve people and influence society**.

**True Christianity involves action:**

Not only loving in word, but **loving in deed**

Not only praying, but **acting**

Not only preaching, but **servicing**

Believers are meant to become living expressions of Christ—“**epistles read by all people.**”

#### **4. Jesus' Model of Compassion**

Matthew 25 is presented as a defining picture of what authentic Christianity looks like.

**Jesus identifies Himself with:** the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the homeless, the sick the imprisoned

Serving people in need is therefore equivalent to serving Christ Himself.

The sermon critiques versions of Christianity that ignore or reject vulnerable people while claiming religious authority. Authentic faith must mirror the compassion of Jesus.

#### **5. Understanding Systems**

The central theme of the message is the nature of **systems**.

A system is defined as:

**“An organized structure of interacting parts that produces outcomes—good or bad.”**

Systems shape human experience in every area of life.

**Examples include:** government systems, legal systems, healthcare systems, travel systems, cultural systems, religious systems, family systems

Even God's kingdom operates as a system—one that is perfectly just and life-giving.

#### **6. Navigating Systems**

**Successfully navigating systems requires several qualities:** Knowledge, Patience, Perseverance, Adaptability, **Courage to challenge unjust systems**

Every person lives within systems they did not create. These systems influence opportunities, expectations, and outcomes.

Understanding systems helps believers serve people more effectively because people's struggles are often connected to the systems surrounding them.

#### **7. Systems Can Be Good or Harmful**

Not all systems are negative. Many systems are necessary for order.

For example:

##### **Air Traffic Control**

Without it, aviation would be chaotic and dangerous.

Civil laws are also intended to create fairness and stability.

However, systems can be corrupted and used to control or disadvantage certain groups.

**Historical examples include laws that:** enforced racial segregation, prevented enslaved people from learning to read, criminalized basic freedoms

These examples demonstrate that some systems were **not broken but intentionally designed to produce inequality.**

## 8. Systems and Social Inequality

The sermon discusses how societal systems often determine who receives opportunity.

The concept of **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** is described as an attempt to correct systems that historically excluded certain groups.

The idea is not to promote unqualified individuals but to ensure that **qualified people from underrepresented groups receive fair opportunity.**

The biblical vision of heaven supports diversity:

**Revelation 7:9** describes a multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and language worshiping God together.

*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

This heavenly picture affirms that God values diversity rather than hierarchy among people.

## 9. The Danger of False Religious Systems

The sermon strongly critiques religious systems that claim Christian authority while ignoring Christ's teachings.

History shows that harmful systems often arise from distorted theology, including:

- slavery justified through false biblical interpretation
- racial supremacy ideologies
- religious nationalism

When religion becomes detached from Christ's character, it becomes dangerous because it prioritizes power and control over compassion.

## 10. The Systems at Bethesda

The story of the healing at the **Pool of Bethesda (John 5)** illustrates how multiple systems can collide.

Several systems were operating simultaneously:

- 1. The System of the Sick:** A community of disabled individuals gathered around the pool, trapped in a cycle of waiting and suffering.
- 2. The System of False Hope:** A legend claimed that an angel stirred the water and the first person into the pool would be healed.

However, historical evidence suggests no reliable healings occurred.

The system gave people hope but actually maintained their stagnation.

- 3. The System of Social Neglect:** In that era, disabled individuals were often believed to be cursed by God, which justified society's failure to care for them.

- 4. The Religious System:** Religious leaders prioritized Sabbath rules over human suffering.

When the healed man carried his bed, they accused him of violating religious law rather than celebrating his healing.

- 5. The System of Jesus and the Kingdom of God:** Jesus introduced an entirely different system—one based on compassion, liberation, and divine authority.

When Jesus said, ***“Rise, take up your bed, and walk,”*** He overrode every other system operating in that place.

### **11. Systems Can Trap People**

The man at Bethesda had been trapped for **38 years**.

His greatest limitation was not his physical condition but the **system he believed in**.

When Jesus asked if he wanted to be healed, the man responded by explaining the system of the pool. Instead of expressing faith, he defended the system he had learned to rely on.

People often remain stuck because they are attached to systems that cannot truly help them.

### **12. Detaching From Broken Systems**

Deliverance often requires **detaching from the systems that sustain stagnation**.

A person connected to a failing system will continue moving in the direction that system is going.

Just as peer groups can influence young people toward destructive behavior, larger systems can also shape life outcomes.

Transformation requires re-alignment with a better system.

### **13. The Kingdom of God as the Ultimate System**

The sermon concludes by affirming that the **Kingdom of God** is the system believers must anchor themselves to.

Jesus taught: ***“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”***

The kingdom provides the wisdom necessary to navigate every other system in the world.

### **14. The Call to Action**

The sermon closes by challenging believers to evaluate their relationship to systems.

#### **Each person must ask:**

What systems influence my life?

Which systems are helping me?

Which systems are harming me?

Where is God calling me to bring change?

Christ followers must move beyond simply attending church and instead become **agents of transformation**, helping people navigate and improve the systems that shape society.

#### **Central Message:**

While the world is governed by many flawed systems, believers are called to anchor themselves in the system of the Kingdom of God. From that foundation, they can discern the **peril of destructive systems and the promise of systems aligned with God’s justice, compassion, and truth**, enabling them to move forward with wisdom and purpose.