

Sunday 05 October 2008 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

Covenant: Father, Identity, Obedience

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Intro

This season is going to be broadly UP focussed – reminders of our core theology Kingdom & Covenant. And I've felt particularly to preach on the issue of Identity – who God is and who we are in Christ. I know that the more we understand and imbibe this issue of identity, getting the correct biblical mindset, the more we will see the kingdom come in and through our own lives.

- So we started with 'False Faces of God' a couple of weeks ago – who God is not.
- Marjorie spoke about identity 2 Sundays ago
- Today – a refresher on the absolutely foundational understanding of Covenant. Not going to repeat the basics that I've taught on before – get the mp3s from the website, or the welcome pack.
 - (RECOMMEND TO EVERYONE WHO HAS JOINED US SINCE WE FIRST TAUGHT COVT AUTUMN 06).
- Going to build on it.

Covenant Refresher

- **Definition of covenant**
 - Covenant is an **agreement between 2 parties to become one**. To enter into 'one-ness' - To have unity by having relationship
 - God chose to enter into covenant with humanity, to join forces, to be unified with His creation
 - In various instances in the Old Testament with his people – the nation of Israel,
 - then *upgrading* the covenant to include anyone who wanted it – the new covenant of Jesus, in a deal sealed with his own blood.

The bible kicks off with the covenant God made with Abram in Genesis 12-17

- God made a promise to Abram in Gen 12 that from him would come a great nation, famous, and a blessing to the whole world
- A little time later God *ratified the covenant* following the custom of the age through the sacred ceremony of 'cutting a covenant'
 - Called Abram to bring several prize animals representing his wealth and possessions, **cut them in half**, walk down the middle
 - That night, the presence of God himself – represented by darkness and a flaming torch – moved between the pieces, through the corridor of blood.
- Later in Gen 17 God establishes a **sign of the covenant** – a covenant scar as was common in that age.
 - In this case, **circumcision of every male** – a physical sign, reminder of the **promise and boundaries** of the covenant made to the new nation – the new people of God - for all time to come

These are traditional images/rites which symbolise the deepest of relationships – between God and humankind

- What they MEAN is that the two parties have exchanged their identities, their possessions, their priorities

The bible teaches us that because you believe in Jesus, you are a recipient of the covenant that God made with Abram

- Jesus came to set a new covenant in place – one based not on animal sacrifice, but on the ultimate sacrifice of the pure spotless Lamb of God.
- That means that all the resources of heaven are at your disposal (Eph 1:3)
 - Because the covenant exchange means that what once was God’s is now shared equally with you
 - And what once was yours, you now share with God

Exchange of identity

- Our old self is exchanged (put to death) in Christ – he takes on our identity of sin, so that we can take on his identity of sons/daughters of the Father
 - **Jesus became sin, so that we might become sons and daughters**

What it means to live under the boundaries of the covenant

- **Protection and provision** (Moses)
- **Boundaries of blessing**
- Stay within God’s best plan for how to live life, as revealed in the scriptures and particularly the life of Jesus – and you’ll enjoy the blessings of God
- Step outside from those boundaries (sin, deliberate or otherwise) – and you step away from the protection & provision of being in Covenant with the Almighty God.

So that’s why Covenant and kingdom are very important foundations to our understanding of what it is to be a Christian!

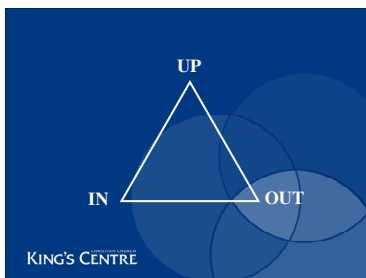
YOUTUBE CLIP http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJ6gGmj6R_k

Covenant & Kingdom equation

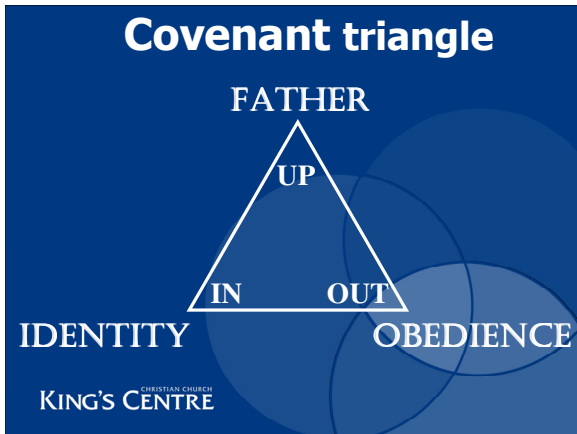
POWERPOINT –

Covt	Kingdom
Being	Doing
Who	What
Identity	Action
Source the ‘stuff’	
Character	Gifting

LIFESHAPES TRIANGLE



COVENANT TRIANGLE



Father

The whole root of Christianity is love. It's not about law & performance. It's less about freedom, less about power, less about healings.

- The real foundation, the most important thing you and I need to know and take onboard is love.

God is love. Love is God. The perfect expression of love. The Trinity invented love – 'love comes from God' (1 John 4:7).

- Calling out to us.
- Demonstrating itself to the whole universe. (Ps 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.)
- Spread out over us like a banner, ready to encompass all our failures (S of S 2:4)

You and I, all humankind, was made to love. It's what really makes us tick. That is because we are made in God's image.

At the centre of the Trinity is the love of God the Father. He created all things (Rev 4:11, Col 1:16) not as some cosmic game of chess. He created us to be in relationship with him.

- God the Father loves us, and wants to be in relationship with us
- The love of the Father is absolutely foundational to us, and to Covenant
 - As he revealed himself to Abram in the beginning, he said 'I will bless you' (Gen 12:2) – I want only good for you and humankind.
 - To Moses he said 'I will be with you' (Ex 3:12).
 - To you and I, this is what happened:
 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16)

The **centrepiece of covenant** with our almighty God isn't an angry old man, or a cruel judge, **it's a perfect Dad.**

- Who looks out for us, stands up for us, trains and rebukes us when helpful, calls us to sit on his knee with Him and bask in the love of a good Father.

You and I need to know the love of the Father. The affirmation that God has for us.

- Because of Jesus we are now sons & daughters of God.
- That means when he looks at us, he also sees Jesus.

- So its true now that God says to you and to me, today, “This is my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22; Matt 17:5).
- This is my daughter....

Nick personal example:

In Toronto – their biggest message is about the Father’s love. They see many signs, wonders & expressions of God breaking out – but they always always come back to foundation of the love of our heavenly Dad.

- In worship – I was really struck by how **we can receive as well as give**
 - Not always giving, offering up, praising with no thought for ourselves
 - Our response to God’s love must also be to receive it, and ask for more.
 - That’s OK too! In fact, our Father really wants to love-us-up.
 - So make space to receive from him in worship, as well as give to him

Covenant is based in the love of the Father, reaching out to make relationship with humankind.

- To make a way for us to be at peace with him, and friends again.
- To give to us all the blessings of heaven,
- and willing to pay the ultimate price of Jesus’ blood to make it happen.

If you’ve never fully realised this until today – don’t stop now! God the Father is reaching out to you. Say ‘yes’ back!

Identity

Our covenant relationship with God the Trinity means we change identity. We move from darkness to light, despair to hope, objects of wrath to objects of blessing, sinners to sons...

- The more you grasp the truth about your identity, the more the kingdom of God will advance through you

The gospels show us that Jesus was very clear about his identity. A son of the great Father. An heir of all the blessings of heaven.

- At his baptism we hear the Father’s affirmation – Luke 3:22 "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- John 5:19-20 - Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does..."

Jesus knew who he was. He was **acting as a human** who understood that when we are in God’s family, when we are forgiven and our path to the father is clear – then we can operate in great Kingdom power.

- The reason Jesus saw healing on earth, is because he knew his identity in heaven –
- his access to the power of our Father through the holy spirit.
- And because he chose to be obedient.

FOR US?

The truth for you and me today, as followers of Jesus, is that the **Covenant exchange** first enacted by God and Abraham **is ours too**.

- **Jesus defeated sin**, and took on the **wages of sin** – death, so that you and I might become sons of the living God.
- By faith, we inherit the same promises as Abraham.

- “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom 8:1-2)

What does that mean?

- Me in Christ. Christ in me. On earth as it is in heaven
- The most powerful resource in heaven behind little old me.
- The kingdom is everywhere, and wherever I am.
 - Me immersed in the Trinity, and the Trinity immersed in me.
 - **This is going to make you live differently**
 - It means when you enter a room, the chances of the kingdom breaking out – perhaps healings happening – suddenly rise for everyone else in that room
 - **When you face sickness in prayer, it's not you facing it – it's Jesus.**
 - The devil sees Jesus in your place – and that makes the devil flee!

Nick eg

For me, understanding who I am in Christ means.....

- Don't feel condemned or held by what other people may think of me
 - I am far less bothered about comparing myself to others
- Great hope & deep inner peace – I know I'm loved, accepted.
 - I don't have to prove myself to anyone or anything – God's love is a free gift to me
- Kingdom stuff – I act out of authority (eg deliverance)

(We'll look at identity more in future sermons)

Obedience

A **covenant is an agreement, a binding promise to act and think in a certain way.** We know this covenant is based on grace not law. But it still requires both sides to act in the correct way. **In our case, God is looking for faithful love.**

Jesus – being rooted in his identity, strong in the knowledge of who his real father was – **Jesus models to us the pathway to a radical life of miracles and kingdom... obedience.**

Philippians 2 – All about a call for us to imitate Christ's humility.

Phil 2:5-11 “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The Father is always working in our lives and ready to extend his kingdom on earth through us.

The Father is looking for children who, **now they know their identity, take on the same mentality as Jesus – a servant. Faithful love.**

- (John 5:19) Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing [**no-thing**] by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.
- The Father is looking to find sons & daughter who are trying to do no-thing by themselves.
 - But are constantly asking the Holy Spirit for direction.

- Following the biblical commands of Jesus.
- Spending time with our Father in prayer, so as to get the full instructions of heaven.

We are obedient in this covenant not because of law, but because of love. **Obedience is simply faithful love.**

1 John 5:2-5 “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. **This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,** for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Nick eg:

- I find carrot works better than stick
- I’m happier to be obedient, because I know that I’m serving a loving father, on my side, and who has proved it through exchanging me from death into eternal life
- And when you & I don’t feel like being obedient – let’s try & remember this triangle!
 - I know from my experience and that of others that it’s always better to stay within the boundaries of blessing – obey first, grumble later if you must.
 - Don’t grumble first, and get the right hand of God correcting you as a result!

Conclusion

I hope that’s a covenant refresher for many of you with a new twist, to keep things tangy!

I’m saying that if we ‘get’ the reality of being new covenant people today – we’ll really get going with the kingdom lifestyle.

In our focus on the kingdom life, never forget the covenant.

The correct balance is this:

- Presence ahead of power
- Covenant ahead of kingdom

Response?

- Share communion
- Ps 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”