

**Kingdom Series - Autumn 2005 - King's Centre Church**  
**Week 2 – Living in the reality of our kingdom condition (18.09.05)**  
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READING - Romans 8:1-4, 12-17

You will find in the future that Marjorie & I will base our teaching on 2 basic sermon topics – kingdom & grace. Boil down most sermons into one of those categories. Listen out for it each week and see if you can spot which one we're doing!

Last week I laid out something of the kingdom – we talked about how it was an invitation. Jesus said “come, follow me”. And I painted a brush stroke picture of some of the requirements of being subjects of the King of Kings. There are fantastic rewards on offer, both spiritual and practical for us in our everyday lives, and in light of eternity. But alongside that, Jesus is clear that he also makes demands on us. Its an invitation to radical discipleship – learning from Jesus and taking him seriously.

This week the message is one of grace. We aware that there are people who feel damaged here – hurt and affected from the past. The realities of life can be harsh, and no rousing message from scriptures gets away from that. And there may well be people here for whom the joy of living the Christian life has faded recently. Or others who often hear about the ‘good news’ but look at their own lives and feel guilty, inadequate, not free to indulge in all the good things of Jesus because of repeating sin in their lives, or a sense of unworthiness, or being timid or frightened and so forth.

I felt - important this week, before we embark on an in-depth look at particular aspects of the Kingdom of God, to keep setting the practical foundations of *how* we should approach this kingdom life. It's a simple message – but it is key to our foundations for kingdom living.

SO – today I'm going to lay out a few of the glorious realities of our kingdom life and encourage us to get hold of them, and weave them into our everyday lives.

- Let me encourage you to savour them as I speak – pretend it's a good wine, swill it around your mouth, savour the flavour, let the reality seep into your consciousness and build you up

The tension of ‘Now’ and ‘Not Yet’

Before I get into the detail of this good news, its important to underpin our understanding with the theology of what is called the ‘Now’ and ‘Not Yet’ of the kingdom of God. Last week we looked at the proclamation Jesus made the start of his ministry - Mark 1:15 “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”

In this statement we have the 2 sides of the ‘Now’ and ‘Not Yet’

- The Greek word used here for ‘the time’ is (as I'm sure many of you know) Kairos. It means an ‘event’, a ‘magic moment’ a NOW thing – rather than the other Greek word for time Chronos – as in time ticking along, clock time, dates in a calendar
- So when Jesus says the ‘time has come’ he means that his kingdom is available NOW
- We are NOW living in the presence of the future kingdom where everything is going to be made perfect – and that situation is available to all mankind equally – if we call on the name of the lord. [Gal 3:28]
- The full resources, authority, power, and blessing of this future rule of God are available NOW to those who yield their lives to be true subjects of this kingdom

- Important that we understand this as a church and take it on board
  - Ephesians 1:3 – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with *every spiritual blessing* in Christ.”
  - Hebrews 6:4-5 says that we “have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age...”
  - So with these full resources available to us NOW through faith in Jesus, we can see victories in our lives, we can see healing, freedom, living righteous lives, seeing others set free and so forth.
  - And the more we submit to Jesus and the Holy Spirit – the more we are likely to see

Yet even in this statement, as Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom and says it is ‘near’ or ‘at hand’, its implicit that although the kingdom life is now available and at hand, it is *not complete*.

- Jesus inaugurated his kingdom rule and reign when he began his ministry, but he has yet to consummate it – to complete it, to bring the kingdom into full reign in humankind where no evil or disobedience to God is allowed to exist
- He will consummate it – when he comes again in glory, and that is when we are promised that God will dwell with men again.
  - “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev 21:4)
  - But until that future event, we live in the tension whereby we have the kingdom available to us, and we see aspects of the kingdom coming, and we pray “thy kingdom come” more – yet we don’t see the complete works without any blemishes
  - Because the kingdom is still advancing, we are still in the battle even though our victory is assured
- But the good news is that everytime we do see and experience the good things in life, we experience the future kingdom breaking in to the present.
  - FOR EXAMPLE – healing. The lord heals people today. We have seen a number of dramatic healings in KC, and we continue to see healings of different kinds as we pray for each other each week (here, and at home, in cells etc).
  - And it’s a fact that God wants us well – and that sickness is not his will for humanity, but is a result of the fallen nature of this world. But it is still a fact that even if I am fully healed in the present, one day my body will die – its just the way it is.

And for some people who don’t see full healing from sickness now, ultimately for all of us who are all growing old – the time when we receive that full healing and restoration will only come when we are in the presence of Jesus. And that will be a wonderful thing.

But we as a church should be looking to see as much of God’s kingdom coming now as we can possible get. We should be pressing in and asking God for healing and other gifts – because as Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”

So when people are healed, when you are joyful, we you find you are free from a former addiction, when you feel at peace, when there is new life, when you enjoy that perfect summer’s day....

- all of these are tastes of the perfect future – the future kingdom of which you and I are a part if we are followers of Jesus. And when ever we experience them, the kingdom of God has broken-in to the present condition of the world – and this is GOOD NEWS.

I hope this is helpful in setting the backdrop to this series on the kingdom. It is hard to explain, and I realise that at times this situation can be hard to live in. There is undoubtedly a tension between the now and not yet – but Jesus taught us to pray for more of the kingdom, and so that is what we should be setting our sights on.

## Realities

### 1. You are a child of God

John 1:12-13 – “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he [JESUS] gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Romans 8:14-16 – <sup>14</sup>because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

What does it mean to be a child of the king?

- It means we are members of the royal family! We have status in the spiritual realms – and with status comes authority and rights
- It means we have access to the courts of the king
  - We can approach the throne of God boldly and present our requests before our Dad
    - Hebrews 4:15 - Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need
  - And it means that our Dad in heaven is looking out for us
    - Jesus teaching in Matt 7 about ask and it shall be given –
    - <sup>9</sup>"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

You are a child of God – you are in the family of the creator of the universe, the maker of heaven and earth. The Almighty one! The source of love and life.

### 2. As children, we are heirs – we inherit the kingdom now and in the future

Romans 8:17 – “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

- This is where the now & not yet comes in again. We inherit some stuff now, and the rest, the fullness/consummation later as we spend eternity in God’s presence.
- Jesus promised that his disciples will see and do greater things on earth than even He did.
- The inheritance available to us NOW is a mixture of **tangible things** – like healing, deliverance, miracles
- and **intangible** things like joy, peace, changes in our personalities, growing in love, patience with other etc
  
- Its yours for the taking! It’s a gift .
- Will you accept that gift? Or do you feel like you aren’t worthy of this stuff?

- Are you living like you really can inherit the kingdom? Because Jesus' opening statement was that it is at hand, available

### 3. We are new creations

2 Cor 5:17 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come."

- QUESTION - the old has...what? GONE. The new has come." Gone
- Apostle Paul is talking here of the old self – our old natures which we were born into. Those natures which we held before we came to know Christ and allow his spirit into us to change us.
  - The old nature is described as 'dead' Paul says we were 'dead in our transgressions'.
  - It's the root of our sin, our shame, it's the nature which makes us do the things we ought not to do.
  - HERE IS THE TRUTH TO GET HOLD OF.....
    - Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified – killed-off the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:24)
  - The old self frequently tries to resurrect itself in our lives
  - Those times when we let God down in our thoughts, words, deeds
  - Those times when we find we want to do stuff which we know is not the kind of thing of which Jesus approves
- When that happens – the TRUTH is that you don't have to be captive to the old self, and the old ways of the world.
  - Remember – the old has GONE. The new has come.
  - Jesus' death has set us free from the old nature, and instead we can actively 'put off the old self' (as the Apostle Paul puts it)
- Obviously it's a process. We need to be going through the cycle of repent and believe frequently – but the reality for us is that we ARE new creations, and God has given us a new spirit within us, and an eternal nature which one day will be perfected, and while we are on earth our nature is in the process of being 'renewed'

### 4. We are free

QUOTE - It was for freedom that Christ has set us free

What does this mean in reality? – we are free from our sinful nature. Jesus came to bring salvation – that is, setting people free – saving them.

- As new creations, not only is our identity new and to be found in Christ – but we are made free to be able to inherit all that Christ has for us!
  - We are able to "throw off those things which hinder and so easily entangle" so that we can run the race with Jesus

You ARE free – is a heavenly condition at work in you now.

#### **But are you living like it?**

- Because we do get entangled and bogged down, we do feel guilty or depressed, or something of a failure at times
  - this is a process and it can take time to be fully free in our lives of our old nature and the old trappings of the world, as we are renewed.
- BUT – you will be on a major advantage if you are able to grasp the reality that even though we "all sin and fall short of the glory of God" you are NOT A CAPTIVE to this stuff.

- You don't have to be a captive, because Jesus has already been to the cross to set you free. It's a done deal! And it's a great deal!
- In my own life, I sometimes verbally remind myself of this – I was praying and worshipping recently and I felt I needed to remind myself and do spiritual battle that I was free. So I repeated the phrase “I am free” over and over again.
  - And after a while, it turned from being a good reminder to myself – and it turned into praise to God because he made me free, and from that it turned into spiritual strengthening as I proclaimed to the spiritual powers that I am free

### 5. The Holy Spirit is our helper

- You are not alone in this – because I realise that it may still seem like a struggle to come to terms with these realities of freedom in our lives, and to come to terms with our personal issues
- Romans 8:9-10 “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.....
- God has sent us a helper – his own spirit – to help us to cope and to change (Eph 1:13-14)
- And the Spirit is freely available to those who ask for it

### **REALITIES REMINDER**

- These are Realities to get hold of – which we so easily forget.
- as Christians we are free people, we are new creations – different from our old selves which were orientated to the fallen-nature of this world, and the sin and messed-up stuff that goes on.
- You and I, if we are followers of Jesus, are adopted children of God, members of the royal family!

And I do mean to say that these are *realities*

- even though we may frequently forget them, or they don't seem to be real for us at times, or we don't weave these facts into our lives,
- they remain reality – set in the heavenly realms because of what Jesus achieved for us through his death on the cross.

### Jesus has made this possible

The message of grace from today is that these wonderful realities have been achieved not by our own hard work, but by Jesus.

- Jesus has taken the future punishment for sins onto himself.
  - When he died, among other things he achieved – he acted as a sacrifice on our behalf, so that the punishment that was due to us was laid on him, and he took it willingly.
- So we don't need to strive to become a ‘good person’
- but we do need to accept that faith in Jesus, and following Jesus, gives us free access into these realities which we've spoken about

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### Recommended reading

- first half of Romans ch 3-8 and ch12 (the ‘what shall I do now I am free?’ application)

- Galatians – full of the message of grace

## How do I put to death my old self and live free?

### 1. Repent & Believe

- Jesus tells us how – Mark 1:15 “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”
  - Repent – the Greek word means ‘change of heart’ ‘change of the inner person’
    - When we recognise our sin, those elements of the ‘old self’ still with us, we not only need to say sorry to the Lord God,
    - we need to instigate a change in our behaviour.
    - A change in the way we function as a person
  - Believe – the Greek means ‘faith’ or ‘belief’.
  - It means in both cases an active application of an inner conviction
    - Putting into practice what we hold in our inner being
- This is a process – it will take time
- Sometimes it may be that you need the help of the body of Christ – perhaps you would benefit from others praying with you & for you
  - Sometimes counselling my help
- BUT – don’t forget the element of personal responsibility in there, and practicing the realities we are speaking about!

### 2. Have faith

- “Faith comes from hearing the word.....” – So get into it, and get into the church community – cells, accountability, prayer etc
  - (Hew 10:25 “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”)
- Faith comes from hearing the word and **putting it into action** - are you?
- Faith is part of the ‘NOW & NOT YET’ situation.
  - Put your trust in God, not in yourself
  - God cannot fail you. (Ps. 36:7 – “How priceless is your unfailing love!”) He is unfailing love.
- Do you believe it? Are you putting your hope and trust in the right place?
  - You *are* free, you *are* a child of the most high God, you *are* heirs to the promises of God, Jesus promised Christians *will* see greater things than even He did on earth, you *are not* condemned for your sin and actions if you live in repentance and faith.

### 3. Holy Spirit

- Living lives in and through Holy Spirit is the key, the enabler to living in the realities of the future kingdom NOW, even while we struggle with our present conditions
- Gal 5:16-26 “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.....(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have

crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

- Don't feel guilty when you hear that list bc you are not always like that but take heart and be thankful bc that is what the HS is actively changing your nature towards these things, if you allow him into your life

## **RESPONSE**

- There are important realities which we need to remember to grasp
- Jesus has made a way for us to live free lives – so let us as a church body encourage one another on to running this race together into the fullness of life Jesus promises us