

Overview Kingdom Theology
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Reading Matthew 10:1-10

"He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep." (NIV)

Introduction

A refresher today on The Kingdom of God – a foundational theology, which underlies not only what we believe in the King's Centre & St Thomas' Philadelphia – but also what we practice. Covenant & Kingdom thinking should underlie how we live as followers of Jesus in the 21st Century. This is because Covenant and Kingdom are the heartbeat of God throughout the bible, and the bible defines how we live following God. If they are the heartbeat – the way God reaches out to this world, and his plan to transform it with our help – then we should pay close attention!

STORY – Pizza Hut

The kingdom of God is what we, as Christians, are a part of. It's absolutely key to our day-to-day living, and to our eternal destinies. When we chose to become followers of Jesus, we chose to enter into this kingdom, and take on his kingdom lifestyle.

And we enter it, as we've heard already, through Covenant. **Covenant is the invitation**, the way God chooses to make relationship with his creation. **Kingdom is the outworking, the 'what now?' of being in covenant relationship with the king of kings.**

When we grasp a little of what it is to be active & part of God's Kingdom, we get a glimpse of how *dynamic* the Xian life can be. It should massively impact our hopes and dreams, what we think is possible and what we choose not to do in life. For me and Marjorie, it has changed our way of how we *share* this good news with others – its become less about pushing people to 'pray the prayer' – its more about experiencing the 'the power that raised Christ from the dead'. Now! In real life, not just when you die. Life before death. Life to the max (John 10:10) We've understood so many ways of living out & further Kingdom in everyday life: acts of service, love, kindness, patience. Living justly – buying fair trade, boycotting certain high street shops. Sowing seeds of hope & purpose in people's lives (finding God's destiny).

CONGREGATION BRAINSTORM - How and when have you experienced the Kingdom of God in your life? How do you know?

- Basically the expression of God's heaven on earth (often Jesus called it 'The Kingdom of Heaven' (eg. Matt 4:17))
- Peace, joy, hope, love
- Healing, forgiveness, restoration
- Justice, fairness
- Kingdom of power not (?just) of words
- Fruits of the spirit in action – kindness, patience, self-control
- Breakthroughs now, and hope for the future when we don't see instant change
- Upside down – 'more than you'd expect'
 - Anti-establishment

4 truths about the kingdom

4 truths about the kingdom in this sermon. Jesus mentioned over 100 times in the gospels, spoke the church about 4 times. He said about the kingdom that we are to:

- preach it
- teach it
- enter into it
- demonstrate it in our actions
- pray for it

1. The Kingdom is: The effective rule and reign of Christ the King in us

ie: actually happening - At the level of our hearts, minds, body, spirit. 'Love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' (Mark 19:29-31 Greatest Commandment)

Kingdoms can grow and shrink – just like earthly kings and their territory. Our aim is to allow more and more of God's real rule into our lives – him being in control, him influencing our direction and decisions. Jesus is called King of Kings in the bible. And He said Himself that he was inaugurating a new kingdom on earth, and we subjects in that kingdom.

Jesus is quite clear that we are called to be obedient to the ruler of our kingdom. [Eg. 2 Thess 1:5-10]. **But the great news is that radical obedience brings radical results!** There is of course grace in abundance – we all fail at times and we all have off-days or weeks. But – the 'goodies' of the kingdom come to those who are willing to pay the price to be full participants

We get to be members of it through COVENANT. Adopted into the family, adopted in the spiritual battle raging to bring hearts & minds back to relationship with their almighty creator.

So the kingdom is basically God having his way – his rule (which is what King's like to do) over our lives, personalities, ways. **Easier said than done, but definitely do-able!**

2. The Kingdom is the power of God now in our life

When Jesus started his ministry, the new kingdom was set in place, one promised throughout the OT. With a bang – a massive power encounter of the power and kingdom of God vs. the power of the devil. He demonstrated in word and action that this new kingdom was nothing like the earth had ever seen before – its upside-down from perhaps what you'd expect, its radical, its caring, its revolutionary. All sorts of things kicked off – healings, deliverance, violence towards Jesus, and the disciples and others who, as Jesus remarked 'had ears to hear' realised that something major was upon them.

WHY? "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor 4:20)

- **Eg. Movie 'Bruce Almighty'**: Bruce gets to be God for a while and realises he's 'got the power'.
- ALPHA Course recent examples – sat through lots of talk, but what really impacted the people on the course was encountering the *power* (eg. words knowledge, physical healings, speaking in tongues)

So the Kingdom is about power of god being manifest (in everything, not just services!)

The Greek word for power = DUNAMIS: Translated "strength," "powerful", "power". From this word the English word 'dynamo' comes. Turning one kind of force into another. A slow, building power as it cracks up. Also from same root = dynamite (explosive power). **God often works in both ways. Not one or the other only**

For example:

- Healings (often instant) = dynamic power of God, breaking into the present
- Inner healing (emotions, effect of our past) = often more dynamo, a gradual process of change and improvement in our human condition
- Deliverance from demons = dynamic, grabs attention, also reassures me (and doesn't scare me now that I've had some experience/practice) that the power of God is absolutely true, real, GOOD, wholesome and liberating
- Improving communities through kingdom action = a more gradual process
 - Eg. Eden project – giving some of those 'buzz words' to people in poor urban Manchester (hope, opportunity, purpose, peace etc)

If we're going to see our vision realised to 'call this city back to God', then its going to need us pursuing both aspects

- Seeking to revolutionise and redeem the city's institutions/businesses for good
- Seeking the HS power to break out in our midst – healings, God's prophetic word setting people free, outbreaks of repentance and of peace

3. The Kingdom is God's future

Rev 21 1-4 "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 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."

One time in the future, God's kingdom is going to be established without anything stopping it, fully in humankind and in creation. There will be no more death, pain, tears – only the perfect presence of God, and perfect access for Jesus' friends to his presence and to worship him!

Right now, we're in the battle for mankind which Jesus has ultimately won by his death on the cross – defeating the power and grip of evil on any human who chooses to trust in Jesus. One day, the battle will be over and won by God the Trinity. And a new order will be established, like that described in Revelation. **So the Kingdom brings great HOPE to people. A perfect future to look forward to.**

What we experience and long for NOW on earth, in our present situation of less-than-perfect humankind is the future of God breaking-in to our present. So when someone is healed by a miracle today, that's something of the *perfect future happening now in our midst*. When a person gets new direction in life, when a person's depression is lifted and they again look forwards into life with hope because of Jesus - that's something of the perfect future happening now in our midst.

Spiritual warfare

We are engaged in the spiritual battle, as Ephesians 6 says

- The power and promise which is ours through covenant relationship with Jesus means that
 - Yes, we're in a battle and evil days do come and go
 - But hey! We can battle it out, and still 'stand' afterwards.

We say 'Lord, let me wear your armour'

- **And when the devil confronts us – he see Jesus**
- I've said this before, but its worth repeating.....When I pray for people, I don't tell them to get healed 'in the name of Nick'!
 - The first thing I do is tell the enemy that I'm acting solely in the name of Jesus!
 - Because "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." (Philippians 2:10-11)
 - WE DON'T DO THE FIGHTING - GOD DOES!
 - 'Take on my yolk' – that's What Jesus said. That's the covenant transaction

And because we still know the final future (eg. perfect healing) we can also keep praising God when the future doesn't break in. And our part is simply to keep praying – for the future to break in to the present. And for anything stopping God's kingdom to be defeated and removed.

4. The Kingdom is good news!

Read extract from Alistair Campbell Diary – 5 May 2005, the day he met Princess Diana. When you encounter royalty, a princess like Diana – its captivating, inspiring. You go away energized, inspired. The kingdom of God is like this – its infectious. When you meet God you gossip about it for weeks. When you encounter his kingdom first hand - its inspiring, it makes you want more.

The Kingdom is good news! There is a hope, purpose, future, power, someone who loves you, wants to be in your life everyday. Its Good news for people longing for meaning & spirituality in life - Which is basically everyone. Everyone on your street, in your school, in your workplace. They definitely want meaning and a spirit that feels alive - They just may not think it comes from Jesus.

Jesus message is – this good news, this good life is available NOW, its within touching distance, to all who choose to go for it. That's what Mark 1:15 means: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Or as Dallas Willard (who writes brilliantly on the kingdom and on the spiritual disciples) puts it

'All the preliminaries have been taken care of,' he said, 'and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable opportunity.'
(Divine Conspiracy p.15)

Our response is to repent (put your house in order), believe (have faith, allow God in to control all aspects of your heart, soul, mind, strength. Stop holding back!)

Conclusion

SO – if you want to understand Christianity, there are 2 keys to unlock the door.

- 1) **The Kingdom.** Rule, reign, power, future, good news
- 2) **The Covenant** – wonderful relationship with God, tremendous prosperity, forgiveness and freedom, grace in our lives

The Kingdom = gives you vision and purpose

The Covenant = gives you your values & community (the relationship within which you can work out your vision & direction)

You enter the Kingdom & Covenant through the cross. God offers forgiveness and freedom, once and for all, through **the cross**. The CROSS is the great gateway, great power, to this covenant and kingdom. To forgiveness and freedom, to the promises of God, to relationship

The cross is both covenant and kingdom. Its both substitution (cov) "lamb of God" or "Crucified with Christ" (Gal 2) **and victory** (Kdom) "he disarmed the powers" (see Col 2).

Rev 5:6 ("Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.") – presents our saviour as: Lamb slain, standing in centre of throne – Covenant & Kingdom together.

J died once, so that we can be one with God. Through the cross, you then become part of the big story of God, and you have a part to play. Part of the family of God on earth. Jesus is our Champion, fighting on our behalf. And he invites us into the battle with him, to be part of it. To set more captives free. Free to be in relationship. Free, to be one with God.

Reminder of another way to read Mark 1:15 - 'All the preliminaries have been taken care of,' he said, 'and the rule of God is now accessible to everyone. Review your plans for living and base your life on this remarkable opportunity.' (Divine Conspiracy, Dallas Willard p.15)

So let me ask you a question? **Is the kingdom good news for you?**

If its not for you, it won't be for the others you know. Jesus said – “see first the Kingdom of God, and ALL THESE THINGS will be added to you. You will not be in *need* if God is your covenant king. Come back to the cross – lay it down again, take on his easy yolk and leave what you are carrying behind.

If it is good news, where can you make space for it to come more?

Let's live it out! Lets preach it, teach it, enter into it as fully as we can, lets demonstrate it in our actions, and pray for it to come more!