

Mark 1:12-15 & Matthew 26:26-30

## Thy Kingdom Come

Sunday April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016



Today, we are going to begin a series on the Kingdom of God. It will go through May and in the midst of it we will also be celebrating Mother's Day, The Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost too. So let's get started.

We pray for the Kingdom of God weekly if not daily, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We pray for the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the here and now and for it to become a reality in the future.

The Kingdom of God was..... and is..... the heart of Jesus' preaching. Jesus' preaching is summarized in the scripture that was read today, Mark 1:15, *"The time has come," he said. "THE KINGDOM OF GOD has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

That single sentence is the heart of Jesus' teaching. It is the summary of Jesus' teaching. Luke 4:43 reads, *But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the KINGDOM OF GOD to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."* It is the message he was sent to proclaim. It was the message he taught his disciples to proclaim. It was the message they did proclaim. It is our message too!

When he sent out the 12 & the 70 his instructions to them were simple and the same, *Matthew 10:7. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The KINGDOM OF HEAVEN has come near.'*

This is our same message today! The proclamation of the Kingdom is the heart of our message.



In the New Testament there are about 40 or 46 parables of Jesus depending how you define a “parable”. But no matter what way you define ‘parable’ at least 1/3 of the parables of Jesus directly address the subject of the Kingdom of God. In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John there are 107 references to the Kingdom of God.

I tell you all this to lift up the importance of understanding what the Kingdom of God is in order to understand Jesus and his message; in order to understand the Kingdom’s importance in our lives today and into the future. For us as Christians I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding what Jesus was talking about when he spoke about the Kingdom of God.

The understanding of the kingdom is what always forms and guides the life of the Christian Church.

Now in the Book of Matthew the author referred to the Kingdom of God as either simply “**the Kingdom**”, or “**Kingdom of Heaven**”, and very occasionally as “**the Kingdom of God**”. In Mark the author referred to “the Kingdom” or the “Kingdom of God”. In Luke it was the “Kingdom” but almost exclusively “the Kingdom of God.” In John it was the “Kingdom of God” or “Kingdom”.

All three of these terms: Kingdom, Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God refer to the same concept and reality. Each one emphasizes a different aspect of the Kingdom.

Vital to understanding the Kingdom is the knowledge that it is a **present reality as well as a future one**. In that it is a present reality referring to it as “the Kingdom” or “the Kingdom of God” hints at the

present reality of the Kingdom. In that it is a future reality to refer to it as the “Kingdom of Heaven” hints at its future reality, or fulfillment.



Now in some senses the Kingdom of God is a mystery and you can see that as you read various parables that refer to the Kingdom. Its growth is mysterious, like a mustard seed, like seeds planted in the ground, like yeast hid in a large pile of dough. It is mysterious, but it should have concrete manifestations in our lives today.



When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those who are sick and in prison these actions are clear and present manifestations of the Kingdom of God for which we pray to be a part. The Kingdom is not just the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ way out there somewhere in time. It is as present as this service when you receive and welcome someone who is to you a stranger here in our midst.

Matthew 25 has 3 parables of Jesus all of which sketch out various aspects of the Kingdom. The first parable is that of the 10 Bridesmaids, the second is that of the Talents and the third is that of the Sheep and Goats. All 3 lift up various aspects of the Kingdom and how we can, and do need to manifest the Kingdom through the way we live our lives in terms of service, or good works.

Now we enter the Kingdom of God through repentance and belief. Repentance literally means turning to God. When we turn to God we turn away from things that separate us from God: sin, worshipping other gods, and simply wandering around lost and pointless in life.

Again Mark 1:15 gives us the key to entering the Kingdom. Hear Jesus' simple message again, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

We enter the Kingdom through faith/belief. The New Testament has many ways of saying this, the favorite one of course is John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."*

That eternal life is the Kingdom Heaven. It is the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. We enter it through belief or faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to think back to the series I did the first part of this year on the DNA of the Bible. I spoke about the DNA of the Bible being Covenant and Kingdom. This we see in our Matthew passage both the covenant and the Kingdom. Verses 27 & 28 read, *"Then he (Jesus) took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this my blood of the COVENANT poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's KINGDOM."*

There it all is in 2 sentences both covenant and kingdom brought together in the Last Supper. And as we read these sentences we see that Jesus' message about the Kingdom was consistent from beginning to end: from his first proclamation in Mark to his Last Supper.



Now I want to put up on the screen the DNA chart I used earlier this year.

<u>Covenant</u>	&	<u>Kingdom</u>
Invitation	&	Challenge
Relationship	&	Responsibility
One with God (atonement)	&	what we need to do for God

I want to particularly point out the second strand in the DNA of the Bible of:

Relationship & Responsibility

The immediacy of the Kingdom is found in **relationship** with Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God was near in Jesus' day because wherever Jesus was there was the Kingdom in relationship with him. To be in a relationship with Jesus is to enter the Kingdom and once in the Kingdom we take on the responsibilities of that relationship, which we see in Matthew 25 and many of Jesus' other parables like the Good Samaritan.

Again remember:

**“Covenant is the way in which the Bible describes and defines relationship: first our relationship with God and then our relationship with everyone else.”** Covenant and Kingdom Mike Breen p. xv

**“Kingdom is the way in which the Bible describes and defines responsibility, first, our responsibility to represent God to the people we know and then to everyone else.”** Covenant and Kingdom Mike Breen p. xvi

Now I truly want to emphasize the importance of the Kingdom of God and entering the Kingdom of God, so I am going to lift up another scripture here where Jesus equates entering the Kingdom of God with being saved and receiving eternal life.

Luke 18:25-27 say, *Jesus said, “Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the KINGDOM OF GOD.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be*

*SAVED?" He replied, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God."*

Indeed the Kingdom of God is worth our all. In Matthew 13 there are 7 parables of the Kingdom. Here again are two that speak of the immeasurable worth of the Kingdom: the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."*



The point of both is the Kingdom of God is worth all we have. It is worth all that we are, and all that we have and all that we ever will be, for if we enter it through faith, it is our eternity. It is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Revelation 21:1-4 makes this point dramatically, *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, ... And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed*

*away."* This is the Covenant and the Kingdom of God Fulfilled!! We will be in a face to face relationship with God!!!

Once again then, we enter the Kingdom of God through repentance and faith.

We also enter it through humility. Matthew 18:1-4 state, *"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said,*

*"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes HUMBLE like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* We will come back to this on May 22<sup>nd</sup> when I speak on the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector.

Humility is hard to achieve and hold onto. Did you hear the story about the Pastor who was awarded a prize for humility? When he showed up to receive the prize for humility it was withdrawn.

Our humility today comes from the acknowledgement that we receive entrance into the Kingdom of God as a gift. It is a gift of faith and even the faith that we use to gain entrance is a gift of God.

In the coming weeks through the words and parables of Jesus we will discover more in depth what the Kingdom is for our lives today and what it means for our future.

Today I issue an invitation to you to enter the Kingdom of God. I invite you to enter into a relationship with Jesus by giving your whole self to God. Give God all you were: the good, the bad and the ugly. Give God all you are: your time your treasure your talent. Give God all you ever will be your hopes, your dreams for self, family and friends.

We are invited to enter the Kingdom of God through a relationship with Jesus Christ that is worth our all, and then challenged to live as children of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Come in faith and receive the Kingdom prepared for you!!

Amen

Prayer to receive Christ: God today we give to you all that we have ever been, all that we are, and all that we will be in the service of your Kingdom. Take us, and use us, for the divine purpose for which you have created us. In Jesus' name. Amen.