

Christ Alone is King of the Kingdom of God

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God...Mark 1:14

Let's take a pause a minute. Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming the gospel, but the question is, what gospel was there for Jesus to proclaim? We know the gospel is built on and centered on Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection three days later but those things hadn't happened yet so what gospel – what good news – was Jesus was proclaiming? If we continue reading Mark will tell us:

*Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, **and the kingdom of God is at hand**; repent and believe in the gospel." Mar 1:14b-15*

The gospel Jesus came proclaiming was the gospel of the kingdom of God. He proclaimed to Israel that the kingdom had drawn near them, was among them. So the question is, is the gospel of the kingdom a different gospel than the gospel of salvation through Christ's atoning death? Is there a "kingdom gospel" and a "salvation gospel"? Or are these two aspects of the same gospel? And if so, how do they intersect?

That's what we're going to be looking at this morning and I'm really excited about what we're going to learn about the kingdom of God, and about Jesus, the King of the kingdom of God.

We're not used to thinking in terms of kings and kingdoms. There are 27 kingdoms in the world today, and most of them are constitutional or parliamentary monarchies. Only 3 of those 27 are absolute monarchies where the king has absolute power over his kingdom, unrestricted by a constitution or a parliament or a democratic process.

So we don't think in terms of kingdoms. And most of us don't particularly want to exchange our democracy for a kingdom. Very few Americans would want to exchange what we have for what they have in Saudi Arabia.

So as we enjoy our last days of summer, and prepare for the fall, and try to figure out what school and work will look like in these COVID-19 days, as we deal with family issues, and workplace challenges, and our own personal baggage, kingdom is a concept that seems far removed from our lives. It just does.

But here's the surprising truth: whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not, everything about our lives is about kingdom. Every single aspect of your life is connected to, and centered on, and all about kingdom. Every problem you have is about kingdom. Every dream you have is about kingdom. Every relationship you have – good, bad, and ugly – is about kingdom. There's no escaping it: our lives are all about kingdom.

And the gospel – the one gospel, the gospel that Jesus came to save us, to die for us, to give us life – is all about kingdom. So I'm excited for us to jump in and see the centrality of the gospel to everything.

1. The kingdom's centrality in human history

Kingdom is woven deeply into our DNA. It's who we are, it's what we want, it's the controlling power over our lives.

At the very beginning of history when God created the heavens and the earth, He describes His goal and purpose for creating Adam and Eve this way:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen. 1:26

Dominion. Rule. Over everything. God made mankind to be His viceroys over all the earth. He is Lord over all the earth, but we have been given authority under Him to rule the earth.

It's built into us, woven into our DNA to rule. From the king of Saudi Arabia to the President of the United States, to the founder of a start up business to the mom trying to keep her kids in tow when she goes to the grocery store to the minimum wage worker at McDonalds to the hermit living in a cabin in the middle of the woods – everyone is governing their life, their world. We can govern well, we can govern poorly, but we are ruling our world.

When the devil tempted Eve to break the one command God had given them in the garden, he tempted them to throw off God's rule, and become their own gods (you will be like God). When Adam and Eve threw off God's rule over their lives in order to be their own Gods, at the same time they and all their offspring became subjects of Satan's kingdom through sin.

- Jesus called Satan the "ruler of this world".
- Paul calls Satan the prince of the power of the air.
- John writes that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

The good news of the kingdom Jesus was proclaiming was that the kingdom of God had invaded Satan's kingdom and reclaiming subjects of Satan's dark kingdom back to the glorious kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' ministry was a clash of two kingdoms.

Just as rulership was right there at the very beginning of creation, rulership and kingdom is right there at the end of human history as well as recorded in the book of Revelation:

15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Rev. 11:15

The last chapter of Revelation tells us God will restore the garden of Eden, only this time we will rule under God's perfect kingship.

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life (remember that from the first Garden of Eden?) with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb (kingship) will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Rev. 22:1-5

God didn't create us to just get by in life, or drift aimlessly in life, or live for empty things like pleasure or accumulating stuff. He created us to rule, to govern, to lead – under His perfect rule. That was God's goal in the garden of Eden, and at the end of history God will bring us full circle back to what He originally created us for. We will reign forever and ever under His perfect rule forever and ever. The kingdom of Christ is central to all of human history, from beginning to end.

2. The kingdom's centrality in the gospel

The theme of kingship is also woven inseparably into the gospel. Throughout the OT God promised that the Messiah would be a king and would sit on David's throne forever and ever. When Jesus was born, the magi came asking, "where is he who was born *king of the Jews*?"

When Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out demons, it was more than Jesus being a nice guy who did nice things for people. It was a good King setting people free from the bondage of an evil king.

¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. Luke 13:16-17

As Jesus gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, new skin to the leper, ability to walk to the lame, the gospel of the kingdom was invading the kingdom of darkness and setting men and women free from the oppressive reign of Satan.

We see the theme of kingship vividly in Jesus' journey to the cross. Satan's reoccurring temptation of Jesus was to give him the crown without the cross. Remember they put a purple robe on Jesus mocking his claim to be a king and pounded a crown of thorns on his head. Pilate had the inscription *King of the Jews* nailed on the cross over Jesus.

As Jesus hung there dying, stripped of clothes, thorns piercing his brow, nails piercing his hands and feet, Jesus looked anything but a king. Those who stood watching either mocked him or wept over him. But interestingly, the person closest to Jesus in that moment, the thief who hung crucified next to Jesus, looked at Jesus and saw a king. "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*"

I've heard it preached that Satan beat Jesus temporarily on the cross, but Jesus beat Satan permanently at the resurrection. That's not right. The cross wasn't defeat, the cross was victory! Jesus fought Satan as he hung on the cross, and dealt the death blow to Satan, the mortal head wound Genesis 3 talks about. History changed on Calvary, there was a cataclysmic shift as the kingdom of God invaded the kingdom of hell and destroyed its works. That happened on the cross. The resurrection confirmed it, but the cross was where it was accomplished.

As Jesus hung on the cross he hung there as a conquering King. That's what the dying thief saw. King Jesus – on the cross – conquered sin, death, hell, and Satan.

Because it was on the cross that Jesus broke the hold Satan's kingdom has on us. All who believe in Jesus are forgiven of their sins, cleansed of their guilt, and given eternal life as a gift. And our citizenship is – at the moment of faith – transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you are a citizen of heaven. That is the gospel of the kingdom! And that was made possible, that victory was achieved, on the cross.

3. The kingdom's centrality to our everyday lives

We aren't used to thinking in terms of kings and kingdoms, but the kingdom theme is central to human history, central to the gospel, and whether we know it or not it is central to our everyday lives.

So central and so inseparably woven into our lives that it will take more time to unpack than we have this morning so next week we'll see what the Bible has to say about the kingdom at work in our lives.

But I want to close this morning by reminding you that Jesus is a good king. He's a great king, but he's also a good king and we can trust his Lordship. Whatever is going on in your life right now, Jesus wants you to trust and obey him with it.

Lucifer became the devil when he said in his heart "I will be like God."

Adam and Eve started an avalanche of sin and death and heartache when they gave in to the temptation "if you eat of the fruit God said not to, you will not die, you will be *like God*."

The way back to the life God meant for us to live is to bow our knee to Jesus and his good kingship over our lives. To yield our lives and our hearts and our will to God's plan.

What's going on in your life right now? Where does the Lord have you right now?

Let's make it more personal: what's going on in your heart right now? Where are your thoughts, emotions, and desires right now?

That's where Jesus invites you to bow the knee and yield it all to him. Will you trust him? Will you obey him? Will you serve him? Will you seek him?

Let's pray and if that's the desire of your heart, tell the Lord. Make your heart an altar of worship and surrender your life, your fears, your dreams, your plans to Jesus. He can govern your life better than you can, guaranteed.

Pray