

Kingdom People and a Kingdom Church

Delivered: May 26, 2024

Scriptures: [Ephesians 4.8, 11-12](#); [John 3.4-8](#), [Romans 8.1-11](#)

Recap

Why is it important to define some terms and lay these foundations when talking about the kingdom of God? I'll share this story to help illustrate my point...

I remember when I was just beginning to surround myself with kingdom people. I went on a trip to the Philippines with the director of our Bible School, a man named Keith Collins. There was a missionary team there in the Philippines who had graduated and been sent out by our Bible School. Keith had been asked to come minister to them and the people in their community. On one of the nights they had planned a big outdoor crusade. Keith was going to preach. I asked Keith what he was going to preach on. He said, "The kingdom of God." I thought that was a pretty vague topic...I had no idea what he meant by "the kingdom of God." I had been around church, I had heard hundreds of sermons, but I had never heard anyone talk about "the kingdom of God."

So I understand that many believers don't understand what is meant by the phrase "kingdom of God." Neither did those in Jesus' day. But none the less, the kingdom of God IS the message that Jesus came preaching. The kingdom of God is what John the Baptist said was "at hand" ([Matthew 3.2](#)). The gospel of the kingdom is the gospel that Jesus preached...but just like those around Him 2,000 years ago, most followers of Jesus don't understand this kingdom.

For example; after His resurrection, [Acts 1.3](#) says that Jesus was with His disciples for 40 days,

"Speaking to them of the things regarding the kingdom of God."

But consider this; even after 3 years of walking with Jesus, and after 40 days of one-on-one Bible study with the resurrected Lord teaching about the kingdom, His disciples still didn't understand what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God. Before He ascends to heaven He tells them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. Their response,

“Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1.6)
...they still saw the kingdom through their lens of nationalism (keep this in mind as we move deeper into this election year).

Most of us are like the disciples in this sense...we *hear* the language of the kingdom preached, we *read* the language of the kingdom in our Bible, and we assume that the kingdom of God must be a better version of every other kingdom we're familiar with. Saying that the kingdom of God is a better version of other kingdoms we are familiar with is like saying salvation means I'm a better version of my unsaved self. Jesus didn't come to make us better...He came to make us brand new, which means He first eradicates the old to establish the new. In the same way, His kingdom is not a superior version of the older version, it's not a 2.0 upgrade...it's a complete annihilation of every other kingdom that is attempting to perpetrate, forge, and counterfeit itself as the greatest of all kingdoms.

I mean just look at the way Jesus defeats His enemies...by laying down His life. His kingdom is nothing like other kingdoms.

In God's kingdom the greatest aren't the ones being served but the ones who serve.

In God's kingdom the first aren't first, the last are first.

In God's kingdom the rich don't inherit the land, the meek inherit the land.
a widow gives one penny out of her poverty and it's worth infinitely more than the rich who give out of their abundance...

^^remember that next time you think, “we can't afford to tithe this week... there's not enough left over...that's giving out of your abundance when in the kingdom we give first, and live off of what is left over^^

His kingdom is altogether different from every other kingdom.

In God's kingdom bread is flesh and wine is blood...

in God's kingdom 2 become 1, and faith can move mountains...

In God's kingdom leaves can heal nations, shadows heal the sick, kings carry crosses, and power is perfected in weakness.

There is nothing like the kingdom of God. It's like an airplane to a starfish...how can you explain the sensation of flying through air to a creature that only knows the bottom of the

ocean? This is why Jesus tells Nicodemus, unless you're born again you cannot see the kingdom of God. You need a complete reset.

There is nothing that can compare to the kingdom of God. Jesus didn't say the kingdom of God is like Rome, but better; Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, His kingdom is like leaven which is hidden inside of a loaf. [Damon Thompson](#) said the kingdom of God doesn't establish itself like the 81st Airborne on the beaches of Normandy, the kingdom of God is like leaven that spreads, and completely transforms enemy territory by occupying it from the inside out. The kingdom of God is not a better version of the kingdom of America...the kingdom of God is a complete rebrand of everything you and I have ever known.

And learning the ways of this kingdom is now the responsibility of every citizen of the kingdom...

Titles and Gifts

The Holy Spirit woke me up with something today that will help us discern the difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world,

“the world gives itself titles, Jesus gives gifts.”

The world gives itself titles to tell people what we do...I'm an electrician, I'm a worship leader, I'm a hair dresser, I'm a youth pastor.

Jesus gives us gifts that then define who we are..."I'm Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of God."

When we self-identify by the titles we give ourselves, we maintain that title as long as it still benefits us. But the minute I no longer enjoy being a hair dresser, I stop calling myself a hair dresser and I do something else.

However, when God gives me a gift, I am compelled to function in that role until God says otherwise. "Paul, you look terrible man...scars all over your body, shipwrecked, people hunting you down...why don't you do something different with your life?" "I'm Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the will of God."

“The world gives itself titles, Jesus gives gifts.”

He showed me that when Jesus is exalted as King in a local church family, He then entrusts that church with the gifts of the kingdom. When Jesus is enthroned in His house, when He is “ascended”, then He will give gifts. That’s Ephesians 4,

“When He ascended on high...He gave gifts to men...some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds, some teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of SERVING...” (Ephesians 4.8, 11-12)

The gifts of the kingdom are given wherever the King is enthroned.

But most of the church thinks the gifts are given to those called into full-time ministry... that’s what our Bible says, right?

“He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of MINISTRY.”

The Greek word that most of our translations translate as “ministry” is *diakonia*...it means to serve. The root of that word is *diakonos* - a servant. So when Jesus is enthroned in the midst of His people, He empowers them to now serve and lead the way He serves and leads.

The way it works in the kingdom of God is Jesus touches you, Jesus changes you, and then Jesus equips you to serve the way He serves...which means He equips you to lead the way He leads...that’s ministry.

Translation: we are all called to live and serve and lead like Jesus. That’s kingdom ministry.

For example; Peter’s mother-in-law was sick. Luke 4.39 says Jesus,

“rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and served (diakonia) them.”

That’s kingdom ministry; Jesus touches her, changes her, and her response is to turn and serve those around her, the way the King just served her. The Bible uses the exact same word for “ministry” as it does for “servant”...but we have two entirely different definitions of what is a minister and what is a servant.

We hear ministry and we think “pastor” or we think “missionary.” Or we hear ministry and we think someone that God calls “into full-time ministry” instead of being a full-time electrician or a salesman. And the result is 99.9% of born again Christians don’t see themselves as “ministers” because they’re not the pastor. But if you’ve been changed by Jesus...guess what...you’re in ministry. This is the kingdom...everyone in this kingdom, by way of being changed by a touch from the King, is now called, qualified, and commissioned to serve.

“For freedom Christ has set you free...but don’t use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Galatians 5.1, 13).
We’re all called to serve, which means we are all called to “the ministry.”

Serving in the Kingdom

In the kingdom of God, the greatest is always the one who serves. In the kingdom of the world, the greatest is the one being served. And O how this leaven has found its way into the church. This is nothing new...Jesus dealt with it with His disciples.

In Matthew 20 Jesus sees His disciples jockeying for position and He tells them,
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them...It is not this way among you, but whoever desires to be great among you shall be your servant (*diakonos*), and whoever desires to be first among you let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20.25-28).

Side note: it was James and John asking Jesus to “sit on His right and His left when His kingdom comes” that prompted Jesus to tell them who the greatest is in His kingdom. Jesus says, “You don’t know what you’re asking.” He looks at James and John, who want to sit on His right and His left when He is glorified, and says, “Are you able to drink the cup that I will drink and receive the baptism that I will be baptized in?” They said, “Yes!” Jesus says, “Ok, the cup you’ll drink...and the baptism you’ll undergo...but,

“to sit on My right or on My left is not Mine to give; that is for those to whom it has already been prepared” (Mark 10.40).

There were already 2 criminals assigned to be on Jesus’ right and left at the moment of His glory. Those positions were already filled...and James and John didn’t understand

that the ladder they were trying to ascend in God's kingdom only comes to those who first descend. They wanted to jockey their way into position the way the world does, networking and connecting to the Guy multiplying bread and raising the dead. But Jesus says, "You don't even know what you're asking...you don't understand My kingdom...the rulers of the Gentiles act this way,"

"It is not this way among you, but whoever desires to be great among you shall be your servant (diakonos)."

The world gives itself titles, Jesus gives gifts...and those gifts equip us to serve...and to the degree that we leverage the freedom that Christ has given us, NOT to satisfy the flesh, but to turn around and, through love, serve others, we will be absolutely radiant with kingdom glory. Creation groans for the revealing of such incandescent sons and daughters of the kingdom.

I once sat in a leaders meeting in a church where the new guy was asked,

"What do you want your title to be?"

And then those leaders turn around and expect Jesus to entrust them with precious things like revival and souls.

We've all been conditioned by the world to think that the leaders are the ones with the titles making the decisions and telling everyone else what to do.

How do you know who the leaders are in the church? According to the principles of the kingdom of God, the leaders are the ones washing feet...because they've walked with the King long enough to become like Him.

But if the church doesn't know the ascended and enthroned King, she won't understand His kingdom, so she has to adopt the ways of the world. Why? Because Jesus isn't ascended in the church that operates like the world...He's only ascended in His kingdom...His isn't a kingdom of dictators and self-appointed CEOs. Dictators and CEOs ascend in the world. In the kingdom of God servants ascend...because if anyone wants to ascend he must first descend; unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it remains alone, but if it *descends* into the ground and dies it bears much fruit...it becomes

fruitful...it brings increase...it becomes something important and valuable and glorious. The flesh doesn't want to descend into the ground and die, the flesh wants to sit on the throne, and make sure everyone knows their name and gets their title right.

I sat in another leaders meeting in a church where a leader expressed their concern because the people who were coming to the church didn't know that they were a leader. This person wanted a title to be introduced as so people would know they were a leader. My suggestion was, "If you want people to know you're a leader then find ways to serve the people you are leading...if some is new then maybe get their number and invite them out for coffee. Or how about being the first one to show up and the last to leave...how about serving more than anyone else in the room and letting that be a witness of your leadership."

If Jesus is not ascended and enthroned among a people, it doesn't matter what titles we give ourselves, how much we call what we do "church", put a sign out front that says "church", use church language, and invite people to our church, it won't be a church operating in the authority of the kingdom...because His gifts are only poured out where He is enthroned. And the majority of what we call church here in the west has someone else enthroned...not Jesus.

You say, "Hold on man, all we do is talk about Jesus in the church, worship Him in our songs, tell others about Him...of course He is the One on the throne of this church." A church may acknowledge the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus...the church might have the right language ("Jesus died on the cross for you and rose from the dead..."); but until He is ascended and enthroned in that church, and given the keys of that church, they will not operate in kingdom authority...because kingdom authority only comes from the King. If we are on the throne in His house we will be forced to operate in our own authority...so the church will have to adopt the strategies of the world to play like she's someone she really isn't. And that's exactly what we see in so much of what is called "church" today. Got the right language, but the words are hollow...and the world knows it. (This applies to your life, too...not just the corporate Body). The right church language might impress people, but just like a \$100 bill, if there's no gold in the depository backing

it up, that things just a piece of paper. Anyone can learn the lingo, but only kingdom people can bring heaven to earth. Just look at the 7 Sons of Sceva,

“We command you, demon, by the Jesus whom Paul preaches (come out of him)...
And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ (Acts 19.13-15)

The demons weren’t impressed with the right lingo because they knew Jesus wasn’t enthroned in their midst...those fancy talking Jewish exorcists were enthroned...so there was no authority, because heaven’s authority in the earth is only given to the church submitted to the rule and reign of King Jesus...the Body connected to the Head connected by joints and ligaments supplying the life of the Head to itself. So the demons pounced on those men and sent them running away naked...exposed for who they really were...bankrupt counterfeits trying to impress people with their twitter-sized sound bites.

So if we want to be the thing...authentic kingdom people living a crucified life and planted in the upper room of Pentecost...if we want to be Jesus People...if we want to become mature enough to handle the weight of the answers to the prayers we are praying, we must resolve to be a people who are absolutely dependent on, and submitted to, that beautiful Man on the throne. He said when He is lifted up He will draw all men to Himself...and from that position of ascension in our midst -

He will give gifts that bring us to maturity and fullness.

He will give gifts that enable us to show the world what He is really like.

He will give gifts that unite us in one faith as one body.

We will no longer be divided among the clergy and the laity, the ones with the titles and the ones who come to watch the titles do their thing; we will ALL see ourselves as gifted servants...servants of the King and one another. And when we all see ourselves as “called”, then the muscle-memory of simply attending church, and looking for the best church to entertain us and cater to our desires, will be purged.

This is why we live a crucified life. This is why we offer up our bodies as living sacrifices (what we talked about last week)...because the flesh wants to be enthroned and served. So we live crucified...offering up our bodies as a living sacrifice which is...

“your spiritual act of *service*.”

These are the marks of a kingdom church...not all the marks, but marks none the less.