

THY KINGDOM COME

Pt 7: Kingdom Purpose

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. That phrase is used 53 times in the gospels, 35 times by the Apostles in the rest of the New Testament. 4 years ago I bought a Pontiac G6. Not a big deal except that when I did that I began to notice all the other G6s on the road. Before I made that decision I was oblivious to them, now I see them all the time. I hope that this series will cause you to take notice whenever you see that phrase, Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven in the Bible and remind yourself of the spiritual battle that's going on right now over the hearts and souls of man. A lot of people may think of Christianity merely as Jesus saving us from our sins. But there's a whole lot more going on in the spiritual realm that will culminate at the end of time when Jesus throws Satan and his demons into the lake of fire and establishes His kingdom on earth where you and I will reign with Him forever. The Apostle Paul understood the implications of the kingdom of God.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

¹⁴For the love of Christ ^(U) controls us, because we have concluded this: that ^(U) one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, ^(V) that those who live might no longer live for themselves but ^(W) for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, ^(X) we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

NIV says, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. In verses 14, 15 Paul talks about the redemption offered in Jesus. In verse 16 he says I didn't think much of Jesus at one time in my life. What's the deal with Jesus? Christian – you have friends, relatives, coworkers and neighbors who don't think much of Jesus. They indicate it by the decisions they make and the life they live. Paul thought the same until one day on the road to Damascus all that changed. He realized who Jesus was and that perspective changed the way he looked at every human being he met from that time on. There's always a first impression, right? You can be introduced to somebody who is a great person; quite charming, nice home, good family, respectable job, involved in the community, morally upright. From a human point of view – someone you'd like to be friends with. But as a believer, there is one profound lingering question in your mind that has nothing to do with how nice and attractive they are. This question has eternal implications. What's their relational status with Jesus? And this becomes particularly sober when you're standing at the casket of one who is praised by the whole community for how good this person was and if anyone is going to get into heaven, surely this person. . . The Apostle Paul realized that every time he engaged an unbeliever he was dealing with a human being held captive in a kingdom of darkness.

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is ^(Y) in Christ, he is ^(Z) a new creation. ^{(b)(AA)} The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, ^(AB) who through Christ reconciled us to himself

Jesus changes everything; from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

and gave us^(AC) the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling^(C) the world to himself, ^(AD) not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us^(AE) the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, ^(AF) we are ambassadors for Christ, ^(AG) God making his appeal through us.

Ambassadors are representatives. They speak on behalf of the one they represent.

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. And we pick up where Jesus left off.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ^{21(AH)} For our sake he made him to be sin^(AI) who knew no sin, so that in him we might become^(AJ) the righteousness of God.

The word reconciled or reconciliation is mentioned five times in this passage.

Reconciliation is bringing together two parties whose relationship, for whatever reason has been broken.

Reconciliation is

This is the gospel: Sin has broken our relationship with God. Jesus came in the flesh, died on the cross and provided reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man. Paul explains the doctrine of reconciliation.

1. OF GOD vs. 17-18

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is^(Y) in Christ, he is^(Z) a new creation. ^{(B)(AA)} The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, ^(AB) who through Christ reconciled us to himself

Romans 3:23: all have sinned, all of us are sinners. Romans 6:23: the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:15,19-20

Paul writes in Colossians that God, through Christ reconciled all things to himself. God is the great reconciler. He is the initiator. That's the difference between Christianity and all other religions of the world. Only in Christianity do you have a God who made the first move to make peace with sinners. Every other religion in the world is merely a system or process by which man makes his way to God. It's man oriented, man centered and man driven. That's why Christianity is not a religion because it doesn't seek reconciliation through the effort of man. In the Garden of Eden, when Adam sinned and surrendered dominion to Satan, it was God who came looking for Adam. The gospel of John tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God came looking for us. Jesus said in Luke 19 that he came to seek and to save the lost. Back in the mid '90s, Maria Shriver was working for the news magazine, "Turning Point." She was assigned to cover what was quite a phenomenon in the country at the time called Promise Keepers. PK was a mass movement of men dedicated to growing in their commitment to Christ and their families and their churches. A large segment of their activity was pursuing racial reconciliation. It was quite an experience that several of our own men took part in. Maria Shriver showed up in Denver to witness 70,000 men in Mile High Stadium standing to their feet to sing Amazing Grace. And some of you men were with me in Indianapolis and Washington D.C. experiencing the same thing, you can't describe the overwhelming experience. And Shriver knew she had happened

upon a moment that needed to be recorded. One of the speakers on the platform relates the story. He saw Maria gathering her crew together, rushing to find a position where she could catch this on video. And in the scuffle and commotion of the moment Maria shouts to her crew and says, “common on guys, if we don’t get this we’re dead.” Amazing Grace: if we don’t get this, we’re dead. She couldn’t have been more prophetic. Ephesians 2 says we have been saved by grace and this not from ourselves, it is a gift of God. Reconciliation begins with God and it is accomplished in Christ.

2. IN CHRIST vs. 19

in Christ God was reconciling^[C] the world to himself, ^(AD) not counting their trespasses against them,

Guys, have you ever walked into the house after you knew, you were fully aware that you were in the dog house? How many of you married men have ever messed up? When you’ve got an innocent party and a guilty party in a broken relationship – the guilty party, by reason of their offense, has lost all rights and privileges to dictate the terms of reconciliation. The offended party is in the driver’s seat. That’s why flowers and candy and jewelry never work; that’s why trying to get romantic makes them even more angry with you, that’s why any attempt on your own to fix it creates a greater divide, and you’re left wondering: what do women want? Well, have you ever asked them that question? “What can I do to make this right?” And have you ever listened when they answered that question? Restitution is a big part of reconciliation. And the offended party is in control of dictating the terms of restitution and reconciliation. Here’s the gospel: in order to be in relationship with a Holy God, you must exhibit holiness yourself. The bible says that’s not possible because you’re a sinner and any attempt on your part, your righteousness is as filthy rags, you can’t do anything to make it right? And most human beings left with that scenario just walk away and write you off. But God, though He is the offended party, and knowing that you are powerless to make proper restitution, loves you too much to write you off. So what is He left to do?

Ephes. 1:7 (NIV)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

This is Amazing Grace: the offended paid the price owed by the offender. In other words: God did to Jesus what he should have done to you. We created the debt, but God paid the price. Reconciliation is Of God, in Christ, but it doesn’t stop there, reconciliation occurs by faith.

3. BY FAITH

20 we implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God starts it, Christ completes it but we have to accept it. A gift only benefits those who receive it.

Mark 1:15 (NIV)

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God and He sets the condition for reconciliation: repent and believe the good news. Two weeks ago Jesus explained that in the story of the Prodigal Son: he had to repent, he had to turn around, he had to realize that the life he was choosing for himself was not the life worth living. And he had to believe that life with the Father was better than any life he could create on his own. In other words: life was better lived in the kingdom, under the rule and reign of God.

Sharing the Ministry - Communicating the Message of Reconciliation

And Paul is telling us in 2 Corinthians 5, as representatives of God, ambassadors of Christ, we have been given. . . If you've been with me throughout this series you might remember that Jesus came with a message: The kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe. And a ministry: taking back dominion from the kingdom of darkness through healing the sick, casting out demons, all the things Jesus did to confirm his message. Verse 18: we've been given the ministry of reconciliation. At the end of verse 19: we've been given the message of reconciliation. So, just as Jesus had a message and ministry. We have a message and ministry.

Matthew 28:18-20

We call it the great commission. This is the last thing Jesus did on earth before he ascended into heaven: he committed to us the message and ministry of reconciliation.

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, ^(V) "All authority^(W) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ^{19(X)} Go therefore and^(Y) make disciples of^(Z) all nations, ^(AA) baptizing them^(AB) in^(B) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them^(AC) to observe all that^(AD) I have commanded you. And behold, ^(AE) I am with you always, to^(AF) the end of the age."

There are several things you find in each of the first three gospels. But this is the one thing, the only thing that is recorded in all four gospels, AND it begins the book of Acts. This mission is so important that Jesus repeated it five times. It's as if he was saying: I really want you to get this. You are my ambassador. You represent my message and my ministry. You are the only Christian that some people will ever know. Your story may be the only story some people ever hear. And just to set the stage for the conclusion of this message and the conclusion of this series, I want you to watch this.

Video

This is what it's all about – we go through life telling people, announcing to sinners that there's a breach in the relationship between you and God that has been mended, he has provided reconciliation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And by repenting and believe in this good news, you have the hope of eternal life in heaven and abundant life on earth. Number one: this is our purpose.

1. Is Our Purpose

Being an ambassador is simply representing Christ to another human being. And the best way you do that is to give them what you've got.

1 Peter 3:15-16 (TEV)

Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, [16] but do it with gentleness and respect.

A lot of us think that the key to evangelism is Bible knowledge. That's why we avoid it. I don't know the message of reconciliation well enough to share it with someone else. But I want you to look at that verse: it doesn't tell you to explain the Bible. It tells you to explain the hope. Now, we need to be students of the Word, and you need to study. But this has been my experience; most people far from God don't understand the value of Biblical truth. And most of their questions are smoke screens anyway. They just want to know if it's real? I believe it was St. Francis of Assisi who coined the phrase: preach the gospel, if necessary use words. Listen, the best advertisement for Christianity is a changed life. Think about what you give your life too. You only have so much time and money and energy, think about the investments you're making with the resources God has given you. You've heard the phrase, 'you can't take it with you.' which is true for everything in this life except your relationships. Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to go to heaven and take as many with you as you can. That's your purpose – to spread hope; to be a compelling witness to those around you.

2. Is Our Privilege

God could have saved the world anyway he wanted. The way He shares the ministry and message of reconciliation is through those who have been reconciled. Evangelism has been described as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. We're just sharing with people the hope that we have found in Jesus. I'll tell, the highlight of my ministry. People often ask me what I enjoy most about my job – and you just saw it in that video. Some of you have had the privilege of standing in the water next to a believer confess their faith in Christ, and then to participate in what Romans 6 says; in baptism we are buried with Christ and raised to a new life. We're going to witness that again tonight at our picnic. I've been at the birth of both my children and you can't describe what goes through your heart and mind at you witness their first breath, entering the world. What's more exciting than that? I'll tell you: I've had the privilege of baptizing both of my children. You tell me, what's more fulfilling in this life than to participate in the rebirth by the Holy Spirit of a person who repents and believes the gospel of the kingdom. It doesn't get any better than that. The greatest thing you could ever accomplish in your life, the one thing that you will do that will last for eternity is to help another human being cross the line of faith. And God lets you be a part of that.

3. Is Our Priority

You can discover the cure for cancer and AIDS, you can save the world from nuclear holocaust or global warming. But what's the use of eliminating all the ills of this world and not prevent people from a Christ-less eternity?

Acts 20:24 (NLT)

But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love.

The mission of reconciling people to Jesus is the only thing that matters because it's the only thing that's eternal.

Bottom Line: Don't Go Home Alone

There is someone in your life, right now, that needs the ministry and the message of reconciliation. Here's my encouragement to you: stop looking at them from a worldly point of view. You think of every person you know and love: and start looking at them in the context of their relationship with Jesus Christ. How would that change your attitude toward them? How would that change your approach with them, what you say to them and how you say it? How would that influence the way you live in front them? Maybe you're here this morning and you need to respond to the message of reconciliation. You know you've messed up and need to make it right with God. And I want to tell you – can't make it right. God has already made it right through Jesus. You just need to accept it, believe it, and surrender to the rule and reign of God. Check off the appropriate box on your connection card and let us know where you are on your journey of faith.