

THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

3- Thy Kingdom Come

11/10/24

Introduction: You might be from Kansas if:

- You no longer associate bridges or rivers with water.
- You aren't confused by the phrase "Rock Chalk Jayhawk".
- Your closest neighbor can be a mile away and you can still see him from your front porch.
- A traffic jam involves two cars staring each other down at a four-way stop, each determined to be the most polite and let the other go first.
- A Mercedes Benz is not a status symbol. A 4x4 pickup is. (Except in Johnson County)
- You think people who complain about the wind and weather in their states are SISSIES!
- You have been asked, "Where is Toto" more than once.
- Traffic congestion is ten cars waiting to pass a combine on the highway.
- You have had to switch from heat to A/C in the same day.
- A tornado warning siren is your signal to go out in the yard and look for a funnel.
- You measure distance in hours.
- You know the 4 seasons as: summer, road construction, still summer, winter.
- It takes you 3 hours to go to the store for one item even when you're in a rush because you have to stop and talk to everyone in town.

I wonder what we would write when answering "You might be a citizen of the Kingdom of God if...?"

Recap:

- The Lost Kingdom of God was the original created plan, epitomized by the Garden of Eden. It was where all of creation was in perfect communion with God and each other and where God lavished all of His goodness and provision with Adam and Eve. Sin shattered all of that and humanity was expelled from Eden. God has been working to restore His Kingdom ever since.
- Jesus is the Once and Future King. He was the Word of God in the

Beginning and will be the Returning King. He is BOTH the Lamb of God AND the Lion of Judah. His time in the Gospels was to fix the sin issue and pave the way for His return.

This morning we are going to dig into WHY I titled this serious The Upside Down Kingdom. While the Triumphant Return of Jesus will usher in the full reign of His Kingdom on earth...a new Eden; the Kingdom of God broke ground at the Tomb. It BEGAN with His death and resurrection. And **the invite went out to become citizens of this Kingdom NOW.**

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.
(Philippians 1:27 NLT)

One of the greatest problems the Pharisees had with Jesus was that He did not come into this world as they imagined He should have. They were looking for a royal birth in the palace, a mighty warrior king who would be blessed and empowered by God to cast out Rome. Jesus was born in lowly Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth as a carpenter's son, and walked the dusty roads of Israel like a vagabond. He just didn't fit their expected image. **The Pharisees were looking for the Lion of Judah, and so they couldn't see the Lamb of God.**

This past week, a few of us attended the Nazarene Leadership Conference in Tulsa. Some powerful messages and I'm excited to begin to unpack everything we learned in the weeks and months ahead. Much of what was said by the speakers dovetailed with our series. One statement that I loved was by General Superintendent David Busic and he said ***"The work of Jesus is to reunite heaven and earth and He has already begun!"*** This great work is all about a cosmic restoration and the evidence of this is found in our restoration with God.

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure...And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. (Ephesians 1:5, 10 NLT)

Jesus, when He taught us how to pray, begins with *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

We are to pray for this Kingdom of God to come and for the reign of God to be established. We pray that God will reunite heaven and earth.

We have referenced Jesus saying come follow me throughout this series. And we've talked about getting out of the boat and letting Jesus set the destination, the pace, the path. But following Jesus is not just about the journey...it's also about watching and learning from Jesus. He came to show us what a citizen of heaven lives like and acts like. So **following Jesus also means that we are to emulate Jesus.**

So what does that mean? How does a citizen of heaven behave here on earth? Well, it's *upside down*. **The Kingdom of God values things that this world doesn't...and the world values things that aren't actually that important in the Kingdom of God.** I've heard some say that the church is supposed to be counter-culture to the world, but I don't like that picture. It sounds as if we are in a battle against this world, always in conflict. But Paul tells us we aren't really fighting these lost people, we are striving against the darkness behind it all. So I like the concept that instead of being counter-culture we are supposed to be beacons of light...invitations...living testimonies of the Good News of Jesus.

In the parables, Jesus often begins with a phrase like ***the Kingdom of God is like***. **Jesus was teaching us how it is different, what is important and what isn't.**

Let me give you an example of Jesus teaching Kingdom Ethics:

Jesus has just told the disciples again that He will be killed and then rise in three days. In spite of that, James and John (the sons of Zebedee) come up alongside Jesus and request a favor, *"When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left."* Do you feel Jesus roll His eyes? That's worldly thinking! That's about getting respect and having stature. It's about who gets the gold, and who gets the trophy. Jesus says, *"You don't know what you're asking!"* We pick up in Mark 10:41-45... *When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had*

asked, they were indignant. So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(Mark 10:41-45 NLT)

Some research institution posted this statement recently, "*Statistically the church looks no different than the world.*" How does that make you feel? On the one hand, we aren't perfect people- we are all just sinners saved by Grace. On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit is in us and we have claimed our citizenship in heaven, shouldn't we be different? Shouldn't our behavior and our reactions and our interactions be Christlike?

But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. (2 Peter 3:13-14 NLT)

If your church doesn't look different from the world, then might I suggest your church is just a building filled with worldly people. **Let me be clear, we (the church) are not the Kingdom of God. We are the teaser!** We are the light to this world! An invite to all sinners to defect from this sinful world and to enter into Thy Kingdom Come which has already started!

How does one apply for citizenship in the Kingdom of God? What's the pathway?

- **Believe** that Jesus is the Savior and King
- **Repent**- walk away from the old, the Hebrew concept is *Sheen Beyt* which means to burn down your home so you have nothing to return to.
- **Be baptized**- literally to die with Christ and be raised to new life with Him which is celebrated in water baptism.

As Citizens in the Kingdom of God, our hope and joy is in the things above. **I am a testimony to the restoration that God brings.** Our purpose is to show people what Christ can do to transform our lives and make us fit for citizenship in the Kingdom of God, and to be an invite to all.