

Red Letters – the Kingdom

Turn to Mark 1. Other than words for God, what word did Jesus use more than any other? Over 100 times in the gospels? “kingdom” Jesus was constantly talking about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Many parables begin “the **kingdom of heaven is like...**” Why did Jesus emphasize it so much? Why was it so important to him? Are we using the word the same way Jesus did? As I studied this out I realized some of my thinking had to change. As Yoda told Luke, “you must unlearn what you have learned.”

:14-15. What did Jesus preach? What was his message? He preached about the kingdom of God. **The time is fulfilled!** All the OT prophecies about the coming of the Messiah – God’s anointed; the long promised king from the line of David - will now be fulfilled. All of the great and awesome promises about the long awaited kingdom of God will now come true. **The kingdom of God is near!** What does the word “near” mean? Let me read a couple of passages that use the word “near.” Rom 10:5-8. What does “near” mean? Phil 4:4-5. What does “near” mean? It means “at hand.” Right next to you. You can reach out and touch it. Jesus is not saying the kingdom of God will come 3 years later at the Day of Pentecost. Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is here right now. The kingdom of God has arrived. He is proclaiming it. He is the king and he has arrived to establish his kingdom. The answer to all the prayers of the Jews. The fulfillment of all the prophecies. In Luke 12:28, Jesus said “**If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**” Well, Jesus did cast out demons and it was by the Spirit of God. Jesus clearly meant the kingdom of God had come to them at that moment. Not later. Then and there. In him. The king had arrived.

Notice how Mark 1:14-15 tells us this message about the kingdom was the good news. The gospel. We usually think of the gospel message as having your sins forgiven so you can go to heaven. Certainly Jesus came to give us that. But Jesus gospel message was more than just forgiveness. The gospel message of Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom of God. That was Jesus’ good news. The long-awaited kingdom of God is finally here! Repent and believe the good news! The king has come!

Mat 4:23 Jesus was going all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom.

Mat 9:35 Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom.

Luke 4:43 **I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was sent for this purpose.**

Luke 8:1 He was traveling from one town and village to another, preaching and telling the good news of the kingdom of God.

If this was Jesus gospel, should this be our gospel message too? I think so. Mat 24:14 **This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations.** This is the good news we have to share with people. The kingdom of God is here. It is real. You can be part of it. The kingdoms of the world have nothing to offer.

Jesus is the true king; accept Him as your king. His kingdom brings salvation and God's blessings in your life. Finding the kingdom of God is worth everything. Mat 13:44-46. The kingdom of heaven is the treasure worth selling everything you have. The kingdom of heaven is the pearl of great price. Brothers and sisters, we have to get excited again about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven. That is the good news Jesus offered people. It is the good news we have for people.

Something else I think we must unlearn. Turn to Mat 6. We were taught and used to teach that the kingdom is the church – they are essentially one and the same. But that's not exactly true. The church can be part of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God is something much bigger than the church. Let's read Mat 6:10. The kingdom of God is the reign of God - the place where God reigns - where His will is being done. Certainly in heaven where the angels do God's will. And here on earth, wherever there are people who do God's will. Your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Luke 17:21 the kingdom of God is within you (in your heart) or among you (in your midst) – either way it means the people who do the will of God. That is the kingdom of God. Jesus says we should pray for the kingdom to come. Did that happen just once 2,000 years ago? No, the kingdom comes into our lives today. We are sinners; living apart from God; not doing His will. But the kingdom of God invades our lives. We hear the good news of the kingdom: Jesus calls us to become his people; to come under his reign. To repent and believe. We are called to join Jesus kingdom and start doing His will.

That's what this prayer is about. **Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** God, I want your kingdom to come in my life. I want to do your will here on earth just as it is done in heaven. If we made this commitment in the past, but at some point pulled back from doing God's will, we can pray this prayer again. Pray for God's kingdom to come in your life again and start doing His will again. This is the kingdom of God. Rather than thinking of the church as the kingdom, we should think of the kingdom of God as the people doing His will. Living the life Jesus called us to live. Living a life worthy of the kingdom of God – a life lived under the reign of God. If the church is doing God's will, then yes the church is part of the kingdom of God. But if the church is not going God's will, then the church has ceased being the kingdom. Based on the parables of Jesus about the kingdom, most likely the church is a mixed group - some folks do God's will, but others do not. The more folks in the church who live a life doing God's will, then the more the church is the kingdom of God. However, if anyone stops doing God's will, then the church becomes less the kingdom of God. Brothers and sisters, let's start praying this prayer in earnest. Let's start asking God for His kingdom to come again in our lives; to renew our commitment to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven. And then pray that prayer for each other in the church. And for people around us in the world. May your kingdom spread; may more and more people do your will on earth as it is done in heaven. Let's get excited again about the kingdom of God.

Turn to Mat 22. Did Jesus teach more about how to be saved or more about how we should live? I think he taught more about how we should live. Jesus certainly

came to bring salvation and that is the main reason we respond to Jesus, but that is not the focus of his teaching. Jesus taught more about what kind of people we should be. What did he say were the two greatest commandments? Repent and be baptized and go make disciples? No. :37-40. **Love the Lord Your God. Love Your Neighbor.** That was Jesus emphasis. Think about the Sermon on the Mount in Mat 5-7 or the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6. Jesus spoke about (1) our heart for God and (2) how we treat others. Who we are on the inside and how we act on the outside. When Jesus did talk about salvation, he didn't really talk about grace; he warned people about being lost. He spoke of Judgment & being held accountable. He was urging us to do the will of God; to be the people God wants us to be. That is what the kingdom of God was all about for Jesus. People who do the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. Who love God and love others.

Turn to Titus 2. Why did Jesus come to earth? Luke 19:10 to seek and save the lost. But also John 18:37 **You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born and came into the world.** He came to do both. I know it is not red letters, but Titus 2:14 tells us about Jesus purpose; his intentions. *Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.* We try to separate the two. We want forgiveness for our sins, but aren't as keen about doing good. That's why the doctrine of praying Jesus into your heart and being saved by faith alone is so popular. One without the other. But Jesus came to do more than that. He came to create the kingdom of God, a people belonging to Jesus the king - who do God's will on earth as it is in heaven. Yes, the kingdom brings salvation; through Jesus, God breaks into history and reveals His plan to save humanity. We are saved by Jesus death on a cross. Yes, he forgave sins. That's why people were drawn to Jesus. But there is more to it than just being forgiven. Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom; not the good news of being saved. Think about all the times he said, **"Unless you, you will never enter the kingdom of God."** He was not just talking about one time repentance when you get baptized. He is saying people who accept him as their king must become different. We don't live like people in the world. We have different priorities; different goals. We are the kingdom of God on earth. We do God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

This emphasis on what Jesus expects us to be isn't a burden. A heavy load. This is good news. Jesus announced the time is fulfilled. The Messiah has come and established his kingdom. Repent and believe. Change the way you live. Accept the king. Live by his standards. Follow in his steps. Do God's will on earth as it is in heaven. This is good news. This is exciting stuff. We get to be part of the kingdom of God. We get to be different people. People of love, joy, peace and hope. Righteous people; people close to God. People who bring those things to others. This is not a chore. a duty. This is good news. A tremendous opportunity from God. A great treasure; a fine pearl. We get to a royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people belonging to God. Let's get excited about the kingdom of God again. About doing His will. Amen! Let's close by praying Mat 6:10 together: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.