

We talk about the Kingdom of God all the time... and thereby, assume that we all know what it is about  
But after last week falling into this seemingly new idea for many of us...

That God's Jubilee system of the Old Testament comes to fruition in the Kingdom of God  
It seemed like a good idea to take a deeper look at the Kingdom of God  
On one hand, it is the culture we swim in all the time  
On the other hand, we can take it for granted and miss the power of living the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is a counter-cultural realm in which we live with God  
Some have assumed that this is only about the future heaven  
Maybe partly because the Gospels talk about both the Kingdom of God and of Heaven  
But Jesus says that Kingdom of God is now—See *Luke 17:20-21 NRSV*  
*Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."*  
As followers of Jesus, we live in both worlds—but our true home is in the Kingdom of God  
It is natural that we feel at odds with the secular world around us

Jim Wallis says, *"The gospel of the kingdom is the central message of the New Testament. The inauguration of a whole new order in Jesus Christ and the establishing of a new peoplehood whose common life bears witness to that new order in history..."*<sup>1</sup>

The Lord's Prayer says in part, *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. "*  
*Matthew 6:10 NRSV*

The Kingdom of God is now!

This counter-cultural realm where we live with God is simply living in harmony with God and God's way  
But it is more than just a "God and me" space  
There is a communal aspect to the Kingdom of God in which we all are together in following God  
In the Kingdom of God—things are rightly ordered and God is in God's rightful place  
And we humans are living life on earth in full cooperation with God and God's right order  
Not only do we benefit from this right order, but the whole world benefits from the right order

We can look back at the Garden of Eden before the fall and see that place of perfection with God  
In Genesis 2, we have a lovely picture of this Garden with Adam and Eve  
Every living thing was in harmony and was pleasant

We look forward to Heaven and life in union with God in the hereafter  
To that place where we are free from earthly encumbrances that entangle us

With those two images in mind, we imagine what it would be like to live in full union with God  
We immediately become aware of the great disparity between what is and what should be  
The truth is that we live in a broken world and we struggle to see what God is doing  
One reason why we are so tempted to withdraw and live separately from the world  
It would make sense to us if God would start over and give everyone a fresh start  
But that isn't how Jesus said it would happen

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Wallis, *Agenda for Biblical People*, Harper and Row, 1976, page 16

One by one—individuals are restored to love and trust in God

From this place of transformation and renewal, people begin to trust God at work within  
From this solid base of trust, we align our lives with God's heart and with God's ways

This is what we've commonly called salvation—as we begin living in the Kingdom of God  
Trust is key here as that is what was broken—we lost trust, both in the Fall and personally

In our brokenness, we can't trust the world or anyone to be there for us—to fix it...  
No one can do this for us—but we begin to trust that God's love is true for me

And in loving me—that God cares for me and wants what is good for me

It helps to begin this trusting while we are in a larger community of more experienced trusters

But it can also be done in isolation—it is just easier to learn from watching others

Again, this is one reason we tell God stories—to bear witness to this trusting God thing

As we begin to trust God—we align our lives with God's heart and with God's ways

We enter into this Kingdom of God and become citizens of it

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:14-17 NRSV*

Paul's prayer for us as found in *Colossians 1:9-14 NRSV*...

*For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

The Kingdom of God is now our home—our primary allegiance

In this new place of living—this Kingdom of God—God tells us what is going on...

The words of Jesus (and where we get our name as Friends) in *John 15:14-15 NRSV*

*You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.*

We aren't left in the dark about things happening around us

God shares the secrets of the universe with us

In so doing—we are given entrance into working together to right the world around us

The Kingdom of God isn't just about people coming back into communion with God

But God is working to transform and restore all of creation

This is where the Jubilee that I spoke of last week really comes into play

The Kingdom of God is global and all of creation submits to the power of God

Jubilee is God's economic system and it is reality in the Kingdom of God

As we live into the Jubilee/Kingdom of God, we make it visible on earth

As people living within the Kingdom of God—we don't separate ourselves from the secular world  
We don't move out of the neighborhood into Christian conclaves, apart from the world  
We rebuild in the middle of the rubble and brokenness that is all around us and within us  
In so doing, we join God's heart to redeem all of humanity and all of creation  
In a holistic redemption that reaches every aspect of our lives and world

Jesus' redeeming death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit  
Was not done to just get us to heaven  
It was done to bring heaven to earth—"*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* "  
It was done that we could live every mundane and ordinary moment in the Eternal Now  
Jesus' death and resurrection means we can fully participate in the resources of the Eternal Now  
All resources, all power, and the fullness of God is available to us  
The Holy Spirit/Living Christ is at work through us to refigure the broken world and its people  
To the very purposes for which they were created and brought into being  
That which was lost is being restored to them as they return to their intended purpose

This Kingdom of God living changes everything for us  
We need to fully live into this new culture of the Kingdom of God  
Like moving to a new country—we are tempted to build a space where nothing changes  
We take our American culture and simply transplant it with as few disruptions as we can  
We are tempted to do the same thing with the Kingdom and wonder why we struggle  
Rather we must fully embrace this new Kingdom of God and live fully into the implications of it  
We have immigrated into the Kingdom of God and we desire to fully align with it  
We want to understand this new culture so we can fully enter into it

For the next few weeks, we're going to look at the Kingdom of God and unpack it  
But for today, I want to simply reiterate that this is our home—we are citizens of God's kingdom  
And we take it with us everywhere we go—to work, at home, in play, in our relationships, etc.  
For me, I like to personalize it and imagine that I take Jesus with me everywhere, side by side  
Then Jesus and I can have conversation about everything  
Whatever works for you, I challenge you to become aware of the Kingdom of God  
Think about how that changes life for you  
Notice where you have stepped out of the Kingdom and into world systems  
Simply move back into the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is Now! Welcome home!