



TIME OF GRACE®

Churchy Words Explained (and Why You Should Care): Kingdom

Study Notes

Summary

Jesus loved to teach about the kingdom of God. More than love, more than grace, more than forgiveness, more than heaven, and more than hell, Jesus spoke of the kingdom. But for 21st-century Americans, the idea of a “kingdom” feels more cloudy than clear. So what did Jesus mean? What challenge is there in the message of the kingdom? What comfort?

- **Matthew 3:2:** Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.
- **Matthew 4:23:** Jesus went throughout Galilee . . . proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.
- **Matthew 13:24:** The kingdom of heaven is like . . .
- **Act 1:3:** He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.
- **Acts 28:31:** [Paul] proclaimed the kingdom of God.
- Kingdom = _____ + _____
- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.
- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be **your name**. Your kingdom come. **Your will** be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.
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- Our Father in heaven, hallowed be **your name**. YOUR KINGDOM COME. **Your will** be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. FOR THE KINGDOM, the **power**, and the **glory** are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Points to Ponder

1. Name at least three things that all citizens of the kingdom of God have in common. Is your list big enough to overcome all the differences in age, education, wealth, ethnicity, and gender? Why or why not?
2. Pick one of the gospel accounts of Jesus' death (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and look for connections to the "kingdom of God." For example, note how a "crown" fits into the story. Consider the uniqueness of Jesus' kingdom.
3. Spend two minutes today praying that King Jesus would keep you safe from the fear that is keeping you from extravagant generosity.

Homework for Next Week

Search for "cross" on biblegateway.com to see how this word is used in the Bible.

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Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:23; Matthew 13:24; Acts 1:3; Acts 28:31
February 27, 2022

Pastor Mike Novotny

It is pretty hard to understand the teachings of Jesus unless you know the thing that Jesus taught about the most. If you are sitting right here in church today, if you are watching on the live stream at home, you might be able to take a good guess by this point what Jesus talked about the most. But just in case you are watching this on TV and you were not here for the intro of the service could you guess, what the number one thing that come off the lips of Jesus was? Now some people might think love. Alright it was Jesus who told us not just to love God and love our neighbor, he taught us even to love our enemies because God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. That would be a good guess. But it will not be number one.

If you guess eternal life, what happens after you die, what endures forever, being with God forever, not being with God forever, heaven and hell. That actually be a really good guess. Jesus talked about that stuff all the time. But it still was not number one. If you guess money, you would be this close. You know probably the number two thing that Jesus talked about in the gospels was gold, silver, taxes, treasure, inheritance. He could not stop talking about the power of money for better or for worse. It is a good guess but it is not quite there because the number one thing that Jesus talked about, the most probable words to come out of his mouth once he opens his lips was not above love, and it was not about eternity, it was not about money.

It was about the kingdom. The kingdom of God he spoke of. The kingdom of heaven he repeated in lesson after lesson after lesson. And just in case you think I am making that up, let me direct your attention to the screen and just machine gun a bunch of passages at you from the New Testament. The first ever sermon that Jesus preached was about... the kingdom. He said repent, change the way you think, change your mind, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. A bit into his teaching ministry one of his biographers in the Bible tried to summarize exactly what Jesus did and what he said. And so, we find this passage, it says, "Jesus went through Galilee proclaiming the good news of the kingdom." And then Jesus told a bunch of stories which were called parables. He wanted to teach people what God is like. What heaven is like. What eternity is like.

Do you know how he started almost every one of those stories? I will show you. He said the kingdom of heaven is like... And then after he was done teaching, Jesus died. And three days after Jesus died, he rose from the dead. And for about 40 days Jesus stayed on this earth with his friends. And do you know what they talked about between his resurrection and his ascension? I will give you one guess. And I will prove it from Acts 1, it says this, "Jesus appeared to his

disciples over a period of forty days and spoke about... the kingdom of God. And then after Jesus was gone off this earth do you know what his friends talked about? Peter, Paul, John, Steven. Read the entire book of Acts and get to the very last verse. Chapter 28, verse 31 and we find the summary of what the apostles did. It says in that verse, "Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God."

So you do not have to be a theologian, you do not have to be a Bible expert, you do not have to be a pastor to figure out in Christianity in Jesus' heart and in the hearts of those who knew him best there were few things that mattered more than the kingdom. Now it is perhaps even more emotional and interesting is the kind of things that Jesus said about the kingdom. He told the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. And he also told his friends that this kingdom was a place of untouchable peace and unshakable joy. Get into the kingdom of God and you will have the kind of peace that winning the lottery cannot give you. And the end of every single day in the kingdom of God its citizens can say, but I am going to be okay. Every single morning when they wake up as complicated as life can be and family can be and work can be and the country can be, they always have a reason to rejoice. There is always some huge bit of good news to take hold of. That is life in the kingdom.

And even better, my favorite part are the kinds of people that Jesus said could get into a place like that. Jesus once said the kingdom belongs to little children. Like if you are a grade schooler right now, how incredible is that. We will not give you a license. You cannot buy alcohol. You probably cannot get into college, but Jesus said that you can get into the kingdom of God. And then people with really messy, like broken lives and tons of baggage in their past, prostitutes and tax collectors and notorious sinners, came to Jesus and he promised them that they too had a place in the kingdom. It was like when he was teaching the most unbelievably beautiful place you could ever imagine, its gates were open to the kind of people that you never would have expected. That was the kingdom of God. But rich people Jesus said, were they religious people, better than average moral people, few of them got into the kingdom. What a concept, huh? But we have been saying for the past few weeks that it is hard to really enjoy a word. And it almost impossible to apply a word unless you first understand a word.

So, I will not make you raise your hand, I am not going to pass you my mic. But if it was just me and you and a cup of coffee right now and I ask you what is the kingdom of God? Where is the kingdom of God? How do you get into the kingdom of God? Do you think you could define the number one thing that Jesus talked about? Well, if you are kind of sheepishly shaking your head no, or I think so, or maybe I could take a good crack at it, today I want to give you a very, very simple answer. Alright, today I am going to keep it as simple as can be. If you are taking notes in your program, I will get there in just one second. I am going to give you a very clear definition that I personally work off of when I think of the kingdom.

But first let me tell you a story so you can feel the emotion of this concept. I want you to imagine for just a second that you and your closest family live way out in the country. A few miles outside of the city of Jerusalem in the year 701 B.C. And the reason you live way out in the country is, to be honest with you, it is just kind of nice to do your own thing.

But one day as you get up in the morning you kind of look in the valley to the north and you see something glimmering in the hot Israeli sun. And if you take a second look you see two things glimmering in the sun. And then suddenly there is a hundred things and a thousand things and then ten thousand things and then countless things. And as you are trying to figure out what is lighting up the horizon a messenger comes sprinting through the valley and he comes right past your home and he only says one word, "Assyrians!" And suddenly you realize a nightmare is coming true. The Assyrian army from modern day Iraq and Iran is marching towards your village. And you do not know much about the Assyrians, but you do know this, they are not nice people. In fact, when Assyrian artists wanted to depict what their culture was like, what their kingdom was like, they loved to prove that they were not nice people. The Assyrians loved to capture their enemies, stretch them out by their hands and feet. Sharpen the knives and swords. And while they were alive peel inch by inch by inch of skin off their screaming bodies. If that was not disturbing enough let me show you one more picture. The Assyrians also loved to impale people. They would chop off the top of a tree. They would sharpen it into a point. They would climb up on some ladder. They would pick you up and then let gravity gruesomely kill you.

So can you just imagine what they would do to you and to your family. There you are with all your independence in your little country plot of land. You have freedom to do whatever you want outside of the kingdom walls. When the Assyrian army comes marching, what do you do? The answer is obvious right. You run. You run as fast as you can to Hezekiah's kingdom. You sprint as fast -- you will leave behind everything you know and love to get behind his walls. Because here is the beautiful truth. Around the year 701 B.C. Hezekiah built something for you. Let me show you one more picture. This picture I actually took a few years ago in the city of Jerusalem. Little bit hard to see. That is Hezekiah's building addition. He built this. A wall of stone that at some point was 23 feet thick. And the Assyrians are strong, but they do not have canons, they do not have tanks, they do not have drones, they do not have helicopters.

If you are behind 23 feet of solid stone, guess what you have? Safety. But once you walk behind those walls through the gates before the doors are closed guess who is waiting for you. The king. And King Hezekiah welcomes you with open arms, but he does not pass over his crown. And behind his walls you will get to experience life within the kingdom.

If you are taking notes, here is my only blank. I want you to remember today, grab a pen, if you are taking notes at home write this down too. A kingdom in the Bible is a place of two things. It is a place of authority and it is a place of safety. In the kingdom there is a king, he has authority, you have to submit to him. You do not get to make the rules. You have to bend the knee to his rules. You do not always get things your way. Things are done the king's way. In the kingdom there is a kingdom. There is authority over you. And if it is a good kingdom, if it is a kind and merciful king like Hezekiah, there is safety. There is a place where you can be defended against things you simply cannot defend yourself against.

And so, to put a spiritual spin on it we would say the kingdom of God is the place, in your heart or mine where God is the king. Where he is the Lord. Where he makes the rules. Where he decides what is good, bad, how we can live and how we cannot. What we need to applaud. What

we need to abhor. What we repent of. What we keep doing. We give up all of that authority. It belongs to God in his kingdom. And because God is the best kind of king, he provides safety. Against sin, against guilt, against shame, against fear, against death, against the devil, against destruction. All these things that are bigger than me and you, that we just cannot defend ourselves against. He promises to provide a wall and doors and gates and bars. And his arms are wide open for you and for me to live in his kingdom. He says, I am Lord, the gates of my kingdom are wide open but I am not sharing this throne. And in the kingdom, here is what I say about love and marriage and sex and divorce. Here is what I say about kindness, compassion, the rich and the poor. Here are my demands when it comes to gold, silver, taxes, treasures. Here is what I say about truth, about life, about meaning, about everything.

And I am not asking you for a vote. Jesus says I am telling you. I am demanding of you. I am ordering you to submit because this is the kingdom. And that is the hard part, right? I mean sometimes you and I struggle with the church politics and the man-made rules and the traditions that put us off. But have you ever just honestly heard something in the Bible or read something in the Bible and your heart just wanted to fight back against it? It could be a thousand things but when Jesus just flat out confronts you and your heart says, "But I... I do not want you."

I have a hunch that for those of you here today, for those of you who are watching at home, there is probably a bunch of you who are hesitant about coming into the kingdom of God because of that very reason. You have heard enough about the Christian life and you realize it is not very easy. I mean, oh my goodness, it is not easy. To have every dollar and every cent that comes into your hands be under God's control instead of your own. That is not easy. To forgive people and be patient with people and be kind with people instead of venting about people and criticizing people and going off on people. That is not easy. Absolutely no sex allowed outside the bonds of the covenant of a heterosexual marriage, what? That is not just not easy. And so, it is very tempting for me and for you to be the person out of the country saying no thanks. The rules, the regulations, the laws, the lifestyle. You do you, but I am enjoying life out here. But that is you -- you know what Jesus would say? The kingdom is a place of authority, yes, and safety. And if you do not want the kingdom, you can hold on to your authority for a bit. But guess what you miss? Safety.

Jesus called it the judgement day. It is a day when just like that villager outside of Jerusalem saw 185,000 soldiers. When you and I will face something that we cannot handle on our own. Except unlike the chance that you would have to run into the city if you saw the army marching. Jesus said that day will come like a thief in the night. And so, he said today's your chance. The gates are open. Before the day comes and you have to stand before the king and he ask you to account for your behavior. Before the court is seated and God himself is the judge. And before he asks you to account for all the things. All 185,000 plus of them, Jesus would say this. But before that day comes, before you are caught outside the walls with your own sin, your shame and your guilt which God has to take seriously, Jesus would say to you, repent. And then he would smile and he would say, for the kingdom of heaven is near. The kingdom of heaven Jesus said. The kingdom he wants you to enter. The kingdom that he wants you to submit to is not some kingdom on earth. It is not some self-centered, how much can I take from these people, how many rules can I keep on their shoulders.

No, Jesus said it is the kingdom of heaven. And yes, this king will challenge you and, yes, he will make you change a lot of things about your life, your ways, your efforts, and your direction, but if you change your mind and come into the kingdom, you will find out it is not hell. Following Jesus is hard, but it is not hell. It is the kingdom of heaven.

And so, for a few of you here today and so many of you watching I want to just plead with you, before the day comes, repent. Run to Jesus. I am not going to lie. The kingdom is a place of authority. But please, do not forget what else it is. A place of safety, And God's arms are wide open. He is kinder than King Hezekiah. He has broadened the walls so that you can fit inside. Even if you were a prostitute, a tax collector, a rebel, whatever, Jesus still wants you.

So, repent and believe this good news, the kingdom of heaven has come near. But if you have had a bad run in with authority, I want to show you one last thing today. I want to show you that. Any of you noticed that little sign that is nailed to the top of Jesus' cross? I-N-R-I. Any of you know what that means? It is a Latin abbreviation. In Latin it is Iesus Nazareus, Rex Iudaeorum. Which stands for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. That was the charge that Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor put above his head. They wanted the world to know that on the cross was the king. And in case you missed it, there is a crown of thorns. Crown like kings wear.

So, whatever your hesitation is about the kingdom of God, whether you think the authority will be misused or even abused. Whether you're nervous that maybe Jesus is a little bit like your dad or your boss or your pastor or your priest, the president, whoever. I want you to think about what kind of king is running the kingdom of God. It is stunning. Jesus is the king of compassion, and the king of love. He is the king who left behind his throne in heaven so that you could join him in heaven. He is the kind of king who serves. He is the kind of father who has all the authority in the world and he uses it to serve the little children that he loves. He is like the husband who would die for his bride. Give up anything for her. He is that kind of king.

And yes, he is Lord. But he is the kind of Lord that saves. He saved a man like me. And he saves people like you. Jesus went throughout Galilee proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Because when the one who was running the show is the same one who gave up his life, you never have to be afraid of having a king. And friends this is why the Lord's prayer is the most emotional prayer in the world. I want to show you the lyrics of the Lord's prayer just in case you do not know them. This is the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. And it is a prayer that some churches like ours pray week after week after week after week. And there is a danger in that you know. How many of you think that you can pray the entire Lord's prayer while at the same time thinking about what you are going to eat after church? It is pretty easy, right? Once you get to know it.

But actually, when you slow down and think about it this is the most emotional, humble, passionate, beautiful prayer ever prayed. Because if you look on some of the words you notice that two things that the Lord's prayer is about, authority and safety.

Let me prove it to you. Let me bold all the parts that are God's authority. We pray, God, hallowed be your name. We pray for your will God. We say yours is the power and yours is the glory. You literally cannot be proud and mean the Lord's prayer. That rebellious part of the human heart. Every time we pray it, we are going to war against it, and saying, 'God it is not about my truth it is about you. It is not about what I want, it is about you. It is not about my comfort; it is about you. It is not about my glory. It is about you. It is all you God.'

We are giving up all authority when we pray this prayer. And maybe that is why they call it the Lord's prayer. And yet, what are we asking Jesus for? Safety. Let me underline those words for you. We pray, forgive us God. If I had to stand before an army of all the things I have done wrong in my life, what would I do? I would be condemned, so forgive us. And lead us not into temptation. There are some things that if they would tempt you in this moment, you would collapse and crumble. That the tempter knows your name. He knows where the walls are brittle, so we say God protect us from that. And deliver us. This world is jacked up. Something in me is jacked up. Deliver us from this evil. I cannot escape it God. I cannot fix it, but you can. Keep me safe. And maybe that is why in this prayer there is a concept that shows up in two separate spots.

You see it now? The kingdom. Your kingdom come. Because yours is the kingdom. God, you take all the authority. But when I try to do life my way it does not end up great. So your will God. Your kingdom. Your name. But please open the gates. Open your arms that I could come and hide behind the beauty of Jesus. Because friends, if you and I pray that and if you and I believe that the worst that life gets is like a kid in a warm bed during a bad storm. And we fall asleep every night and we wake up every morning and the warmth of his peace, his joy and his uncontainable love. The Kingdom of God. What a concept. What a king.

So brothers, sisters, citizens of the kingdom, would you please stand with me. And let us pray not as robots thinking about dinner but as citizens who have been saved from a unspeakable danger by the mercy, compassion and love of the greatest king in the universe.

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.