



Glyfada Christian Center



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Preacher Brian Van Deventer; Stavros Antoniadis

Series The Church

Service Sunday Service

Passages Psalm 103:19-22; Matthew 24:14; Luke 19:12-27; Luke 11:20

The Kingdom of God and the Church – Part 1

Brian van Deventer prayer

Holy Spirit, we welcome You here today, we thank You that You have prepared the way. And Holy Spirit, You've gone before us. Lord, I believe that You have prepared hearts and minds today, here in this place and at home. Lord we just pray the covering of everything in this place, and we bless our name in this day. We are here with You, and we are here for You. We love You. Amen.

You can be seated for a moment. We welcome the students in group coming in this morning, and all the others that will be making their way in. Bless each of you for being out this morning. We're going to be talking today about 'The Kingdom of God.' And I'm excited about this morning. If you have your Bible with you this morning or if you don't there may be one at the end of your row. Turn with me to Psalm 103:19-22, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his

kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.”

It’s good to remind ourselves that the Lord rules overall. We’ll sing a song after a little bit, that says, ‘Over all the earth You reign on high’, but it is also important that we bring that ‘Over all’ into ‘Over us.’ And so, hopefully we’ll be able to plant that in our minds from the beginning today. ‘Lord reign in me.’ And then ‘Lord reign in us.’ And the ‘Lord reign over all.’ Can you say Amen?

I bring you greetings from pastor Gail who’s in the US today, doing some ministry and trying very hard to finish working on her book, and I know because I look at my phone every morning and there’s text messages from the middle of the night from her, which means she’s not sleeping, but she’s taking time in the night to send instructions. So, pray that she will find rest, and she will be productive.

We have so many people travelling right now. I won’t list all names, because I’ll forget people. But we do want to remember Billy and Eva-Lena who are in Sweden, as they continue to deal with the affairs of their family after the passing of her father. It’s their heart to be here with us, but it’s important to be home there with their family. We want to pray for Anton, who’s travelling to South Africa at the moment. I can never remember which way he’s going, it’s either South Africa or Australia, because he’s from both evidently. But we do want to keep him in our prayers.

Glad to have Lars and his family back, after taking care of their family in Denmark, after the passing of his father. And because they can’t be here today, we want to say hello to Chris and Mary at home. Happy to report that Mary is out of the hospital, her surgery went well, and we are to believe for complete and quick recovery. Now, for the others that are travelling, I’m sorry, I can’t think of you all at the moment, but we certainly miss you.

Summer is upon us. So, you never know who will be here and who won’t. But for those of us that are, let’s remind ourselves again, it’s good to be in the presence of the Lord. And it’s good to be with each other. Now, we have a lot of visitors with us this morning, and we don’t mean to make you uncomfortable, so, you don’t have to do this, but we like to take a moment to greet each other, wander around and say hello to someone you don’t know. Maybe give a hug and a kiss to somebody you do know. Well let’s just greet one another.

Brian van Deventer Main Message

You may be seated. It would be very rare to start a sermon like this, but as we talk about the Lord reigning in us, we take that to mean body, soul and spirit. So, I'm just going to ask, we know there are many out there today who are not feeling well. We've had those in the hospital. We have those that are home bound. We have some of us who have been struggling with something in the past few days and there is Cielo, she has a problem, she lost her voice.

You might have to bear with me this morning, I've been coughing endlessly for three days. Thank the Lord, I'm much better today than I have been. But if you or somebody you know needs a touch in their body, just raise your hand. We're going to pray for healing in just a moment.

But physical healing is not the only way God reigns in us. So, I'm not going to have you raise your hands with this. But if you or someone you know, has an emotional or mental scars that you know the Lord needs to heal. I want you today to fix that person in your mind. And Lord, as we have sung today that You reign over all the earth, and that You reign in us again, Lord, I bring to You every person in this fellowship or associated with us, those guests among us today, Lord, those that are at home, Lord, we pray a physical touch in Jesus' name.

We began, Holy Spirit singing that You are welcome here, and we say this again, Holy Spirit You are welcome here to minister in every way. Lord, touch those in body that need it. Touch those that need it in their spirit, God. Lord, those who are wounded in their souls today, Holy Spirit You are welcome to move. We invite You; we need You and we worship You. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship You. We lift these needs in Jesus' name.

We've been talking the past few weeks, about what it means for us to be a Church, not just what it means to be a Church, but what it means to us as Glyfada Christian Center to be a Church. Pastor Gail asked me to take today and then next week, to kind of put a parenthesis in here, to talk about what it means to be the Kingdom, and what it means to be the Church. A lot of believers have the perception that the Church and the Kingdom are the same thing. And it's true that in a sense there is a lot of overlap, but there are distinctions between the Kingdom and the Church. The Church is to be the proclaimer of the Kingdom, in fact I would say, that that is our primary task, along with to make disciples.

So, there is a Gospel of the Kingdom, the Bible says, and in fact it is one of the prominent themes of the Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew talks about the Kingdom of Heaven at least 55 times. So, there is a lot of mention of the Kingdom in the Gospels. As you move into the Epistles, it becomes much less and we'll talk about that next week.

But today I want to address 2 simple questions:

Number One, 'What is the Kingdom of God?' and

Number Two, 'Why is it so prominent in the Gospels?'

Why is it such a focus of the teaching of Jesus? I think the most important thing that I could get you to take home today, as kind of the first foundation point, is that the basic meaning of the Kingdom in the Bible, is that it references God's reign. Now, listen to these words carefully, the Kingdom is not about His realm, and it's not particularly about the people.

The Kingdom creates a realm, and the Kingdom creates a people. But at its most fundamental level, the Kingdom is simply where God reigns. And in the Gospels, that became focused upon the person who came to bring the Kingdom.

Take for example Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all." So, here you have the basic foundation of the word, 'Kingdom.' It means that God reigns or rules over all things. God sits on the throne of the universe. Or, I guess to be scientifically correct, we should say that 'He sits on the throne of all universes.'

He has Kingly rule over everything. In some sense He governs all things. Bringing it into the pages of the Bible, God's Kingly rule, His reign, is His action, His Lordship, His sovereignty over all things. Now, where that comes to us is this, God had a purpose in the world to save a people for Himself, and then to renew the world for those people. And so, in the Gospels the Kingdom references mostly God's saving activity. God made the point to us, that His Kingdom comes through One person and that person, Jesus, would redeem people to the Father Himself.

So, this is why the Kingdom of God is called 'Good News.' Matthew 24:14, 'And this Gospel of the Kingdom, this good news of the Kingdom, will be preached in all of the earth, and then the end will come.' So, in and through Jesus, God the King, comes into creation in a new way, He comes into the world to institute His saving rule.

This is the part that people couldn't understand. Those, in the pages of the Gospels, thought that the Messiah was coming to institute a physical Kingdom. We know the story. Jesus is constantly telling people, 'Don't make much of what I've done.' What I'm saying here is, 'Don't tell people; It's not time.' He had to do that, because He knew that in those times, people would try to bring Him to establish a physical Kingdom.

They wanted Jesus to start a rebellion against Rome and bring a physical Kingdom. But God Instead, sends a servant who ultimately has only as His task to renew the hearts of His people, and then give them the power to triumph over sin, to triumph over satan in life, and ultimately to triumph over death. This is the Good News of the Kingdom, that Jesus came to redeem you, and then to give you that power.

It's not of this world. And that is still hard for people to understand, that the Kingdom of God is still at this point in time, not of this world. And this is where we get into the tension of Scripture, because the Kingdom is both now and not yet.

So, walk through this picture with me, with Jesus for a moment. As Jesus unfolds the idea of the Kingdom, He constantly paints this picture of the Kingdom is now but it's not yet. A very simple example, what is one of our most famous prayers, 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come...' There's a recognition in that, this prayer that we should be saying every day, 'Your Kingdom come,' is telling us that it's not yet here. At least, not in the way that we want it to be.

So, we're saying, 'Lord, bring Your Kingdom into our lives. Bring Your reign, bring Your rule into my life and into the world around me.' And this is why our number one focus today, in this era of time, should always be focused on the risen Christ. Sounds simple enough. But a lot of believers want to focus on the Kingdom aspects of God's rule, that we want to be the after effects of receiving Christ.

We want healing; we want restoration; we want material blessing; we want good relationships; and all of that are part of God's reign. But in the now part of the Kingdom, the focus is not on those things but on the resurrected Christ who offers them. In Luke 19:12-27, we won't go through it, but Jesus told the people a parable, because the people were expecting Him to come into that physical Kingdom. But Jesus knew that it was not coming immediately. Yet constantly Jesus tells them, 'The Kingdom is at hand. Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand.'

In fact, He is even more explicit in Luke 11:20, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." So, Jesus is saying, 'Here it is, here's the Kingdom, it's come upon you.' Luke 17:21 says, "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (KJV). Or in some translations 'The Kingdom of God is in you.'

So, Jesus is constantly saying, 'the Kingdom of God is with you, it's come upon you, and it's in you, but it's not yet fully here.' So, how can that be true? How can the Kingdom be both now and not yet? And His answer is, 'Pray for it. Thy Kingdom come oh Father. Your will be done. Pray for it, it's coming, it's not going to be immediate, it's not already now, but it is present with you and in you.' Because the Kingdom is God's sovereign reign, which will be revealed in its fullest in the end, but in the now it is His sovereign action in the world, predominantly to redeem and deliver a people. And then at a future time, He will finish it. He will renew His people, and He will renew the universe completely.

So, this is the message of the Church. The Church is not the Kingdom, but it is part of the Kingdom, and as we will talk about next week, it's ultimately supposed to be 'in the world

reflection of the Kingdom.’ But our primary role at this point in time as the Church, is to declare that the Kingdom has come in the person of Jesus Christ. Church is not the end result. And sometimes when we go through series, like we’ve been doing, we kind of get the picture of what we are saying. It’s not the end result. It’s the vessel by which we get to the end result in preaching the Kingdom.

But we are going to go on from here, and I need you to listen carefully to this point Glyfada Christian Center, very unusual sermon for guests today, I know. But there are believers who want to be people of the Kingdom, and not people of the Church. I’m not saying that it’s any of us. So, George, don’t take it personally. Because, somehow, we have it in our minds that it is the same thing. I’m born again, I’m part of the Church. And we often speak about that in what we call ‘The Universal Church.’

But I think as we move on to next week, and I think we can bring this from the pages of the Bible, that there is a sense where people are living as Kingdom people, while resisting being Church people. Or, I like to use the phrase, ‘Worshipping Communities.’ Because, the word Church too often reflects in our minds a place or an organization. And as we constantly remind ourselves, the building is not the Church, the people are the Church. But it’s where people are gathered in worshipping communities, in a covenant sense.

The Church is reflected where people have committed themselves to God and to one another, but there are some people that want to be related to that relationship (Vertical – with God), and not to the earthly visible representation of that (Horizontal – people). And our contention is this, until we learn to live, (I’m going to use a bad phrase) as Church people, worshippers committed to God and one another, we will have neither the authority or influence or power to proclaim the Kingdom as we should. Because the Church is not the end result, the Kingdom is the end result. But the Church is meant to be the vessel to get the people there, until the coming of Christ, to fulfil it all again.

So, we really want to emphasize this, so I’ll say it again, the Church is not the end result. This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached. And if we preach the Kingdom, Jesus will build and strengthen His Church. So, everybody has got that? The Kingdom is the point. But to effectively preach the Kingdom, we must effectively be the Church. We’ll open up that door a little more next week.

But today I want to leave with this question. Are you a Kingdom person, truly? Is the resurrected Jesus, who lived, died and rose again, is He the center of your life, where His reign is evident in your life, so that you can effectively preach His Kingdom? This is why we were told, by the most important voice, “Seek first the Kingdom of God, seek first His rulership in your life, seek first the

willingness for Him to rule over your affairs, seek first for Him to have authority over your relationships, seek first for Him to be the number one consideration in your decisions, seek first the Kingdom and then all these other things will be added unto you.”

All that stuff I prayed for at the beginning of this sermon – health, wellbeing, blessing, all important things, Kingdom concerns – because God reigns in all things. But before we consider those things, we consider the One, at the center of it all. Where does He exist? Where is He positioned in your life? Because that’s going to be the first key, to any of us becoming what we are supposed to be individually, and then who we are supposed to be together, and who we are as a force in the world. We want to be a Church that preaches the Kingdom. And we trust that you will join us in that pursuit.

No more teaching and preaching today. But I don’t want it to be without freshness, without reflection. So, I’m going to ask you to just take a moment, if you’re willing, close your eyes. Not going to have a big alter call, but just where you sit, in a very honest way, ask yourself the question and let the Holy Spirit talk with you about the answer. Lord Jesus, do You reign in me? Is Your Kingdom first?

The Kingdom is upon you; the Kingdom is among you; the Kingdom is in you. But one day, the Lord will come, and the Kingdom will be complete, and you will be complete. Perfect, just like the One who saved you.