

## 1. Humanity Has a Great Need to be Brought Together

- a. The World was created “good” and man “very good”
  - i. Gen 1:31
  - ii. Man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26; James 3:9)
- b. Man Chose to Not Believe God and to Rule Itself
  - i. Sin set the world into discord: creation into chaos and depravity, humanity into self-centered enmity with God and each other, even ourselves in four main spheres:
- c. Four Spheres of Alienation (why we need to be brought together in Christ):
  - i. Alienation from God (judgment, wrath, b/c of sin, the Fall)
    1. **Gen 3:8, 10**, Adam and Eve hid from God
    2. Eph 2:12, separate from Christ and without God, i.e. no hope in the world
    3. Col 1:13, 21, in the domain of darkness, alienated and hostile in mind
  - ii. Alienation from Ourselves (broken identity and self-judgment, pride, self-interest)
    1. **Gen 3:7**, A & E realized *shame*
      - a. Shame and guilt are different
      - b. Guilt is fear/sorrow over *what one has done*
      - c. Shame is fear/sorrow over *who one is*
  - iii. Alienation from Each Other (hatred, unkindness, broken relationships)
    1. **Gen 3:7**, they hid from each other, transparency/vulnerability was broken
    2. Gen 3:12-13, blameshifting, self-righteousness, Adam throws Eve under the bus
  - iv. Alienation from Nature (broken world, entropy, groaning creation, destruction)
    1. **Gen 3:17-19**, God curses the earth and creates dissension between nature and man
    2. Man toils with the earth all the days of his life, and in the end, the dirt wins “to dust you shall return”
- d. This truth leads to three options: despair, hypocritical bravado, or hope
  - i. Despair – Albert Camus: “The only true philosophical question is whether or not to commit suicide.”
    1. Hemingway, moved from bravado and escapism ultimately to despair
    2. Kurt Cobain – lyrics from “Smells Like Teen Spirit”

“And I forget just why I taste  
Oh yeah, I guess it makes me smile  
I found it hard, it was hard to find  
Oh well, whatever, nevermind”
  - ii. Hypocritical Bravado – Albert Camus: “He who despairs of the human condition is a coward, but he who has hope for it is a fool.”
  - iii. Hope of Salvation – All Things Brought Together In Jesus, promise of restoration and renewal to make things right

## 2. God is Bringing All Things Together Under Christ

- a. Where Jesus is worshiped as King and Savior, God is bringing all things together in Him
  - i. All by God’s grace: the more that it is recognized as God’s grace alone that restores and sets right, the greater the degree of reconciliation that is lived out
  - ii. We need a Savior who restores, heals, and reconciles
  - iii. Colossians 1:17-20
- b. Four Spheres of Reconciliation in Christ (what God is bringing together in Christ):
  - i. God: God reconciles us to Himself through Jesus in the Gospel
    1. Eph 1:5,7
    2. Rom 5:1-2, 10-11
  - ii. Psychological: Brings Harmony With Ourselves: Reveals the gospel to our hearts; TRUTH of sin and salvation; He tells us who we really are (Wisdom and Insight)

1. Only in Jesus do we see the reality that we are sinners (truth of *my* blame in this fallenness) AND we see the truth that we are saints (Jesus took my blame and gave me His righteousness). Humble boldness of the Gospel of Jesus!
2. John 1:12-13
3. 1 John 2:12; 3:1
4. Not self-esteem, but rather Christ-esteem (who I am in Jesus, b/c of Jesus, for Jesus)
- iii. Social: Bringing Harmony Among Us: Fruit of the Spirit (summing up)
  1. Eph 4:32-5:1
  2. Gal 5:22-23
  3. 1 Cor 13
- iv. Natural: Bringing Harmony with Nature: Brings the Promise that we are God's children, i.e. hope (Romans 8:23)
  1. God's curse for Adam's sin was placed upon the ground (Gen 3:17; 5:29, Noah sounds like the Hebrew word "rest")
  2. Romans 8:19-25, Nature is subjected to futility until the sons of God are revealed in glory (redeemed, sanctified, glorified)
  3. Future restoration of Creation (Is 65-66; 2 Pe 3:13;

### 3. The Kingdom of the Great King

#### a. The prediction of the kingdom

- i. The world was created as a place of complete flourishing and harmony under the rule of God.
- ii. Sin, resistance to God's authority, led to the unraveling of creation.
- iii. Relationships with God, other races and classes, individuals and physical nature itself disintegrate where God is not acknowledged as King.
- iv. But God reveals that redemption will ultimately entail the complete healing of creation, including social justice, the reunification of all humanity and the end of physical decay and death (Is 11:1-10).

#### b. The definition of the kingdom

- i. The kingdom of God, then, is the renewal of all creation by the re-entry of God's ruling power through Christ's death and resurrection.
- ii. Hearts, relationships, communities, and practices are healed and rewoven with one another to the degree that they come under the authority of Jesus, through his Word and by His Spirit (Ps 72; Col 1:16-20 and Eph 1:9-10).

#### c. Entering the kingdom

- i. The kingdom is entered by repentance and faith (Mark 1:15), forgiveness (Col 1:13-14) and the new birth (John 3:3, 5).
- ii. The King begins to renovate our heart-character into goodness, peace and joy (Rom 14:17) as we come to a deeper heart knowledge of the gospel of grace in Jesus.

#### d. "Thinking" the kingdom

- i. Things in the world are only properly understood when viewed through an understanding of the kingdom.
- ii. We only understand a thing properly if we realize:
  1. it was created originally good in itself
  2. it is fallen and marred by sin
  3. it can eventually be redeemed under Christ the healing king

#### e. Living the kingdom means:

##### i. *Grace and Freedom*

1. The alternative to Christ's kingdom in my personal life is slavery to personal idols.
  - a. Anything more important than Christ for happiness (e.g. successful career or happy family) becomes a master because it is a savior.
2. When Jesus is Savior and Lord, his kingdom liberates from the power of false masters (e.g. from drivenness over work, excessive anxiety over children.)

ii. *Peace and Justice*

1. The alternative to Christ's kingdom in social relationships is slavery to social idols.
  - a. The world-system attaches high value to power, comfort, success and recognition.
  - b. But God's kingdom is won not through strength and accomplishment but through the cross.
    - i. It is entered not by the strong but by those who admit their weakness and need for grace.
  - c. This completely changes our attitude toward the poor, the powerless and the marginal.
2. Working toward the peace and social justice God will eventually bring is a sign of the kingdom.
3. Humility is the primary mark of a heart being transformed by Jesus

iii. *Work and Witness*

1. The alternative to Christ's kingdom in your vocation and work is to be controlled by cultural idols — ideologies.
  - a. Every field of human endeavor puts forth something other than God — financial profit, individual rights or happiness, human reason, group power, moral and philosophical relativism— as the ultimate value and goal.
2. Thus when we do our work with kingdom values, it will be distinctive from the work carried on under the power of ideologies.

f. **The stages of the kingdom**

- i. The Bible tells us the kingdom has arrived (Lk 17:20-21; Mt 12:28) but not fully (Mt 6:10; 25:34).
  1. Like a seed it is nearly hidden, but will grow into fullness (Mt 13:31-42).
  2. It is already, but not yet, here.
    - a. Daniel 2:25-45, the stone that crushed the kingdoms of the world and grew into a huge mountain, interpreted as the Kingdom of God
- ii. We must keep this "already, but not yet" in mind to avoid either over-optimism or over-pessimism in our ministry.

#### 4. What Does This Look Like Among Us?

This teaching leads the people of God to be a full service community.

- a) As we have seen, the church must do evangelism in order to bring people into the kingdom.
  1. Colossians 1:13-14 tells us we are brought into the kingdom when we are forgiven, when we are converted (cf. John 3:5).
  2. So kingdom ministry entails first of all a ministry of proclaiming the gospel, bringing people to find Christ through repentance and faith.
- b) But if the purpose of the kingdom of God is to heal all the results of sin — spiritual, psychological, social and physical — then Christians must also intentionally use their gifts and resources to fight disintegration in every area.
  1. This means that to fight disease and hunger, to provide help for the sick and physically afflicted is a sign of the kingdom to come.
    - a. This means that working to lift the poor out of poverty is a sign of the kingdom.

- b. This means that when we bring people together within the church — people of different races and classes that cannot get along outside of the church — it is a sign of the kingdom.
- c) It also means that when we do our “secular” jobs with excellence, with integrity, love and with an eye to help others around us, it is also a sign of the kingdom.
  - 1. Jesus’ miracles were called “signs” of the kingdom. When John the Baptist asked if he really was the “Christ,” the king, he pointed to the signs of his ministry. *“The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news preached to them.”* (Matt 11:4-5.) Jesus healed, cleansed, and fed people miraculously.
  - 2. Often it is said that a miracle is a violation of the natural order. That may be true in a sense, but it would be more true to say that Jesus’ miracles were *restorations* of the natural order.
    - a. God did not originally design us to be sick, diseased, hungry, poor and excluded (lepers).
    - b. So Jesus used his miraculous power to give people a foretaste of the salvation that was coming, the restoration of all creation by the ruling power of God.
- d) We may not have miraculous power, but our deeds must also be foretastes of the restoration of all creation.

Conclusion:

J.R.R. Tolkien says in his book, *The Return of the King*, that “the hands of the King are healing hands, and thus shall the rightful King be known.” Our King is restoring what we have broken, healing what we have destroyed. In our arrogant self-centered sin we attempted to rule ourselves, in utter disregard for the Kingship of the Almighty God. We, like the psalmist says in Psalm 2, rage and plot in vain, taking counsel to throw off the rule of God. How gracious of God! What could have been only wrath and fury against a rebellious creation was instead grace and mercy to those who place their humble faith in Jesus Christ! God is bringing His reconciliation through Jesus, having reconciled us to Himself by complete and sheer grace! He made His enemies His sons! And now, as His people, to the degree that we worship Him as King and Savior, is the degree to which we see the healing of our minds and our social relationships. My friends, it is the church of Jesus Christ, the redeemed from every corner of the earth, that have been brought near to God by the blood of Jesus. As we comprehend this truth and the Holy Spirit works within our hearts we are being brought together and inner despair becomes the strength of hope. As we see the work of Jesus in bringing us to God, by sheer grace, we can forgive each other, healing our relationships, we can love our enemies as we Christ loving His enemies (us), and we can work within our culture by losing our power as we see Jesus working within our culture by giving up His power.

As we reflect this next two weeks on the incarnation of Jesus, this simple truth that God entered into our world, giving up His power so that we would be saved and reconciled and restored, let us also remember that the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to do the same. You are in the Kingdom of the Healing King, and our lives are wrapped up in His glory. Let our worship be preeminent, our humility rule our relationships, and let the truth that Jesus is the King over all be our cry. For when we are being brought together in unity under the Kingship of Jesus Christ, we see the healing of the nations and the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bruce Milne quote on what the Kingdom of Christ has done to the kingdoms of the world over the last 2,000 years:

“The Gospel of Christ has transformed communities, rebuilt societies, toppled tyrannies, liberated captives, inspired reformers, established justice, restored dignity, fathered integrity, promoted purity, renewed marriages, united families, reconciled enemies, stimulated enquiry, awakened creativity; brought liberation to the afflicted, peace to the anxious, hope to the despairing, comfort to the dying, love to the lonely, forgiveness to the guilty, and salvation to the lost.”