

The Mapmaker's Guide to Joyful, Spirit-filled Ministry

Map 8 - The Gospel of the Kingdom

Spiritual Exercise

¹⁵ Therefore I also, ... making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power... Ephesians 1:15-19

Prayer

Father God, we believe in Your Son and we love His Body on Earth and in Heaven. Thank you for the gifts of faith and fellowship. We humbly pray that You would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You and your Son Jesus. We are blind without Your enlightenment. Enlighten the eyes of our understanding that we may know the hope of Your calling, our value as Your inheritance, and the power You have towards us for Your kingdom purposes. Have mercy and be gracious to us, O God. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

In America, we have grown up with the philosophies of a “democratic republic”. It has been a great political experiment. However, it has created a cultural mindset that makes it difficult to live in a healthy spiritual state in our relationship to God. In God’s kingdom, there is no “of the people, by the people, for the people”. The King has the only and final vote. He is the one that determines and executes mercy and justice. Our rights are what He determines them to be.

For the rebellious, this is an unacceptable situation. And that is exactly what got us into this mess. The first sin was not disobedience, it was outright rebellion. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they decided that they should determine what was best for them. They decided that they would become the captains of their ship. They mutinied, and all was lost (for a time).

But God has a plan - a plan to take back the throne of mankind’s heart. Re-establishing His reign is one of God’s greatest pursuits. The first step in the journey towards joyful, Spirit-filled ministry is our surrender to this, one of the three primary purposes of God.

Our surrender must be complete; for in it God re-establishes His reign in the hearts of men. From His position on the throne of our hearts, God reveals the desires He has placed there. In this surrendered state, we are positioned to receive all that God has purposed for our lives.

Definition

Kingdom (*basileia*): royal power, kingship, dominion, rule (not to be confused with an actual kingdom but rather the right or authority to rule over a kingdom; of the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah; of the royal power and dignity conferred on Christians in the Messiah's kingdom); [secondarily] a kingdom, the territory subject to the rule of a king; used in the N.T. to refer to the reign of the Messiah.

Outline of Biblical Usage, BlueLetterBible.org

Notice that the primary meaning of *basileia* is the power and right to rule over a kingdom. It is only secondarily the place or people of that rule. This will be a critical distinction as we explore the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus came to preach and establish.

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Surrender is easier when we understand the gospel of the kingdom, its place in God's story, and our place in it.

¹⁴ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
Mark 1:14-15

What gospel are we to believe? The gospel of the kingdom. This is the full gospel. It is more than the good news of Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Though it is of first importance, the good news that most have been taught is only a part of the good news; for the gospel of the kingdom is literally "the good news of God's reign".

Consequently, when Jesus preached, "Repent", He meant that we were to turn from self-rule to His kingdom rule. We are commanded to move from rebellion to surrender. This was the major theme of His preaching in all of Galilee and throughout Israel.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.
Matthew 4:23

⁴² Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; ⁴³ but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent."
Luke 4:42-43

Jesus was sent with a purpose: To preach the gospel of the kingdom everywhere He went. It was not just for private conversations with His disciples. It was the good news for everyone. As you might expect, the gospel of the kingdom continued to be preached after Jesus ascended to sit at His Father's right hand.

But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.
Acts 8:12

So when they had appointed him [Paul] a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.
Acts 28:23

For more references to the gospel of the kingdom, see Matthew 9:35; 10:7; 24:14; Luke 8:1; 9:2, 6, 11; 10:9; and Acts 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25.

I have three points to make before we go on: First, Jesus began preaching the gospel - and had the disciples do the same - well before He discussed His death, burial and resurrection. Second, it is more about Him than it is about us - His good news, His kingdom, His reign. Therefore, and thirdly, the gospel is much bigger than most have been taught.

The One Who Reigns

It is also important to note that Jesus Christ is the One Who reigns over His Father's kingdom:

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 1Corinthians 15:24-25

²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:22-23

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" Revelation 11:15

This Jesus - our Savior - is the Christ, the Anointed Lord of the kingdom of God.

A New Creation

Furthermore, Scripture tells us that this kingdom is an entirely new creation.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2Corinthians 5:17

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. Galatians 6:15

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2Peter 3:13

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Revelation 21: 1-2, 5

These verses beg the question, "Has the Kingdom come, or is it coming?" It is both. Christ came to establish the spiritual beginnings of the physical kingdom that He will eventually complete. This is good news for us in that we get to participate in the restoration of His kingdom. We are children of the kingdom, for the kingdom resides in us. We are kingdom warriors, for it has been given to us to be instruments (aka, weapons) of righteousness.

Those of us that are alive and in Christ at this time in history are truly blessed. These are exciting strategic times. It is critical that we understand the general purposes of the Kingdom of God, and find the specific ones (aka, our assignments) that He has given to each of us. It is in these assignments that the violent (that's us!) take the kingdom by force (Matthew 11:12).

This Kingdom's Purposes

Now that we understand this first of God's three principle purposes, let's look at a few passages that speak to the general purposes that flow out of it. As you read these, listen carefully to the Spirit. He may use one or two of them to identify the specific desire of your heart for this season of your life.

When you are ruled by a king, it is desirable to know what kind of king you have ruling over you. In something of an inaugural address, Jesus announced the purposes of His reign.

¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives*

*And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:17-21

Wow! What good news!! The kingdom is ruled by a good king!! He has come to heal, rescue, enlighten and protect His subjects. These purposes did not end with His ascension. He left specific instructions that we were to continue in them.

So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” John 20:21

Now, notice how God’s description of “The True Fast” parallels Christ’s inaugural address, and gives us more insight into our participation in His kingdom rule:

⁶ Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Isaiah 58:6-7

God is calling us to continue the fulfillment of Jesus Christ’s purposes here on Earth. As heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ we are called to the family business: The fulfillment of the gospel of the kingdom.

The Isaiah 58 passage goes on to describe the outcome of our participation in God’s purposes for His kingdom people:

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’

Isaiah 58:8-9

As we join Jesus in fulfilling the purposes of God, His life (“your light”) will break forth as He (“your righteousness”) goes before us. Healing (i.e., in our spheres of influence) will spring forth, and His glory will protect us; for He will be ever with us. Who could refuse such an awesome adventure!?!

This is the same adventure found in the Sermon on the Mount:

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

As one who delights in searching out the matters of God’s Word, it excites me to discover the connections that exist between the Old and New Testaments. It encourages me in the eternality of God, and in His purposes and promises for His children.

Moving on, we can also find a number of God’s kingdom purposes in the expected outcome of the five-fold ministry that Jesus left as gifts to the church:

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

We will cover this passage in more detail in a later lesson. For now, notice that the purposes of these very special gifts are:

1. The equipping the saints;
2. The work of ministry;
3. The edifying of His body;
4. Unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God;
5. Protection from deception;
6. Speaking the truth in love;
7. Growing into Him;
8. Effective working; and
9. Growth of the body.

These purposes, and others we have covered in this lesson, are examples of the general purposes of God. As you can see, they are eternal and for all of God's children. Additionally, they all support the primary purpose of God in the restoration of His kingdom.

Conclusion

God is establishing His kingdom as a new creation that is ruled by His Son, Jesus Christ. The good news is the power and character of our King. He is sovereign, He loves us, and He has a plan for us. To enjoy His reign, we must first surrender to Him as our king.

As King, Christ has shared His desires with His subjects. These connect our hearts with His. We can be sure that there is a desire in our hearts for every command of Christ. As we surrender to these general desires, they become purposes in our lives. Not just our purposes, but the purposes of God - and this makes all the difference.

In our surrender to God's desire to reign in our heart, and Jesus Christ's desire that we love Him by continuing His work here, we will discover the personal and specific desires God has put in our hearts. Our surrender to these desires begins the transformation process that culminates in our strategic assignment for His kingdom. It is in these assignments that we find joyful, Spirit-filled ministry.

Application

The gospel of the kingdom - the good news of Christ's reign over the hearts of mankind - is the solution for most of the problems facing the church in America. When leaders give up their reign for His, many will follow - thus creating a mass movement from the enemies' camp, into the kingdom. You have been given influence for such a movement. It is time to get moving.

Reckoning

His reign is better than my own.

Assignment

1. Review the Bible passages for this week. Share at least one of the concepts with someone you are discipling.
2. Each day this week, ask the Lord to show you the areas of your life where you are reigning. Repent of this rebellion and trust Him to forgive you and lead you into His reign (1John 1:9).
3. Consider Christ's announcement of the good news of His reign (Luke 4:16-21). As His bondservant and steward, ask Him how He wants you to represent Him. Be careful to record His answers.

Devotion

Sin and Culture

John Eldredge

Guys are unanimously embarrassed by their emptiness and woundedness; it is for most of us a tremendous source of shame, as I've said. But it need not be. From the very beginning, back before the Fall and the assault, ours was meant to be a desperately dependent existence. It's like a tree and its branches, explains Christ. You are the branches, I am the trunk. From me you draw your life; that's how it was meant to be. In fact, he goes on to say, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He's not berating us or mocking us or even saying it with a sigh, all the while thinking, I wish they'd pull it together and stop needing me so much. Not at all. We are made to depend on God; we are made for union with him, and nothing about us works right without it. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other."

This is where our sin and our culture have come together to keep us in bondage and brokenness, to prevent the healing of our wound. Our sin is that stubborn part inside that wants, above all else, to be independent. There's a part of us fiercely committed to living in a way where we do not have to depend on anyone-especially God. Then culture comes along with figures like John Wayne and James Bond and all those other "real men," and the one thing they have in common is that they are loners; they don't need anyone. We come to believe deep in our hearts that needing anyone for anything is a sort of weakness, a handicap.

([*Wild at Heart*](#), 121-122)