

The Gospel and the Kingdom

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Preacher: Guest: Eric Ickes

[0 : 00] Thank you, Brother Greg. It's good to be back here with you. Let me just scan the crowd here this morning.

I'm seeing a few faces that are familiar to me, but most that I don't think I've ever seen you before or met you before. So I'm a visitor with many of you. I know many of you are visiting today.

So welcome to Grace Church of Williamsburg. It is really good to be with you. And I'm very thankful, of course, that my wife of 32 years, Jalen, is with me here, and our son Elijah came to be with us this morning as well.

One of the reasons I asked Greg to keep the introduction simple is I did just come from the Philippines and in their culture, when they introduce a speaker, a teacher, a professor, if you've been there, if you know the culture at all, they want, I mean, they're going to go five or ten minutes, it seems, because of all the bio, and it just, it's, to me, it's very awkward, because we don't do that here in this culture, and it's like, enough of that already.

So keeping it simple. Thank you, Greg, for doing this. Obviously, you're not here because of me. I don't want you to be here because of me. Anything that good comes out of me, it's only from God anyway.

[1 : 21] So we want to look into His Word this morning. Hopefully, you've already picked up on the theme of today, perhaps, through our songs and the Scripture reading this morning from Psalm 145.

I want to introduce sort of a two-part series to you this morning. So, if I would ask you, what is the gospel of Jesus Christ?

I wonder how many different answers might be given, or what slightly different emphases each one of us may put on the gospel or in our presentations of the gospel.

It's a difficult question to answer, perhaps, because you can go different ways with it. There's different things you can include or not include. Some may more strongly emphasize the theme of God's holiness or mankind's sinfulness, Christ's righteousness, His sacrificial death and resurrection, the forgiveness of sins, the sure hope of having an entrance into heaven forever, or repentance, grace, faith, and the list could go on and on.

Theologically speaking, there are some truths that we would say are absolutely essential, prerequisite, foundational, and they're necessary to substantiate true saving faith.

[2 : 54] They're saying these are the absolute minimum truths about the gospel that a person needs to understand to express repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

And then there are other truths you'd say, well, not, aren't necessarily as foundational meaning. Simply, if you don't know them or understanding them, they're not going to keep you out of heaven. Nevertheless, they are vitally important.

And they are true statements, true doctrinal things about the gospel of Jesus Christ. So they're no less important to God.

They're no less important to us. But we might just say, it's not going to keep you out of heaven if you don't know them or fully understand them. And so as a result, those kind of truths, we don't often recite them in our presentations of the gospel or when we talk to believers about the gospel. We don't often review them. And maybe we don't even take much time to consider them, much less how they should impact our lives. And so some of those details you may consider, well, they're finer details of the doctrine of salvation.

[4 : 01] Others are more big picture ideas. Okay. And so over these next two weeks, as I have the privilege, I want to challenge you and help you meditate on a couple of the more big picture concepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because those are the kind of things we don't often think about. But we are supposed to live in light of or according to those truths. Some of those big picture concepts of the gospel are supposed to have an impact on our lives.

So they will change how we live. They'll change our perspective of life. They'll also help us to see what God is doing over the grand, in his grand story, but also what he's doing in our lives today, what he's doing in our world today.

And so these two big picture items or aspects of the gospel are God's kingdom and God's glory. And as a theme verse, I would offer the following.

1 Thessalonians 2, verse 12, where it says, or the Apostle Paul wrote, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

[5 : 18] that you would walk worthy of God who calls you, each and every one of us, into his kingdom and glory. Of course, especially those who are believers in Christ, we have been brought in.

And this is our, the goal in the end, the fulfillment, the culmination. But there is a call of the gospel that goes out, that should go out to all.

So, let's take a moment and just pray and ask God's help as we study God's kingdom this morning. Father in heaven, you are the king of kings.

You are creator. We are but creatures originally made from dust. This is not our world, it's your world. God, we only have life because you have breath.

You've put breath into us. You made us alive. You've created us. And you've created us for your glory. And so you own us.

[6 : 22] Our purpose, the purpose of our lives can only be found in you. And of course, our ultimate eternal destination must be found in you as well.

God, we need your help this morning. Your Bible, it's your word. You've given it to us. You've preserved it for us so that we might know you and understand you and find the greatest love of all in you that we would worship you.

That you would become our treasure. God, we ask for your help. Please teach us today, Holy Spirit, your precious word. And use it as may be necessary to renew our minds and transform us into the image of Christ.

And God, as we reflect on this gospel, the good news, Lord, there may be someone here today that is not yet saved and not yet fully understand, is not yet turned from their own efforts to maybe live right, to gain heaven.

Maybe they've just been actually not even trying, but for some reason they're here today, still lost, bound in their sins. God, I pray that today might become their day of salvation.

[7 : 47] And for all of us who are already believers, people who have placed our faith in you, Lord, help us to see you more clearly as you are the King of Kings and help us to understand your kingdom and how we should live in light of it.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So the Bible presents the grand record of the history and the future of God's created world.

So Genesis 1-11, what does it say? In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. So that's the bookend number one. It ends Revelation chapter 21 and 22 with the description of the promised new creation.

So we have the original creation and then Revelation 21 and 22 the description of the new creation where God is going to recreate the heavens and the earth. And it includes what's called the new Jerusalem which is the holy city descending out of heaven from God.

And this is what Revelation 22 verses 3-5 say. This is just a little bit of the description. As I read this and as you follow along, pay attention to anything that may sound kingdom-like.

[9 : 00] Okay? And there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads.

There shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun for the Lord God gives them light and they shall reign forever and ever. So between these two great events, the original creation, Genesis 1, and recreation, the new creation, and Revelation 21-22, they comprise the Holy Spirit-directed record of the plan, the will, the ways, and the work of God.

Especially as it relates to mankind and even the rest of creation. And we, scholars will call this grand story the meta-narrative. So what's a narrator do?

He tells a story. What is a narrative? It's a story. The meta meaning the greatest. Okay? The meta-narrative, the grand story of God, oftentimes we refer to it as the story of redemption. Now what is that? Why is there a need for redemption or salvation? Redemption is the concept of some, for some reason, someone or something needs to be delivered.

[10:17] Maybe it's in slavery, maybe it's in bondage, maybe there is, it's in indebtedness. Okay? You may have a coupon or a gift card and you go to the store and you turn in the gift card or the coupon to redeem, okay, to pay a price to acquire ownership of whatever you're trying to buy.

Okay? So why does mankind, why does creation need this redemption and this salvation? Well, you don't get very far in the story, right? You get to Genesis chapter 3.

Genesis 1, the first account of creation, which is an expanded, more detailed, in chapter 2 of Genesis, specifically zeroing in on mankind.

And then Genesis 3, we realize man messes it all up. Okay? So the serpent comes and deceives the first woman, Eve, and then she takes, she disobeys God, she takes of the tree, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Okay? That was prohibited, the forbidden fruit. And then it says that she gave it to her husband who was with her. So Adam was there as a bystander. Apparently, we don't know all he heard or what he saw, but he was there.

[11:31] And Adam then takes and eats as well. And because God had designed his created world that Adam, the first person that he created, was going to be represented for mankind.

When Adam sinned, we sinned. Okay? When Adam became a sinner, we were doomed to all be born as sinners.

So Adam messed it up. Okay? This perfect creation, living in innocence, he sinned. And that was direct rebellion against God's rule and law.

The king of kings made a perfect creation, said the man and woman in a perfect garden, everything they needed, just don't eat of that tree. But Satan tempted.

Satan deceived. Oh, you will be like God. So Adam directly rebelled against God's rule and law. What were the results?

[12:36] Well, God promised him, in the day you eat of it, you will surely die. And he didn't physically die in that moment, although the curse of death came upon him, but spiritually he died in that moment.

What is that? Spiritual death, it's a separation of man from God. We are meant to be spiritual beings because God is spirit.

If we are going to have a relationship with God who is spirit, we need to be spiritually alive. Okay? Well, spiritual death came upon mankind.

No longer able to have that relational fellowship that Adam and Eve first enjoyed in the garden. So the separation from God. Again, the curse against all mankind and even upon the earth, the ground. Now it's going to, instead of being fruitful, it's going to produce weeds. Okay? So the earth is cursed and even all the animals are cursed as well. Romans chapter 8 talks about, especially in verse 22, but in that section talks about how the curse that came upon mankind affected the entire earth.

[13:46] And it says, all of creation groans as if it's in labor, longing to finally be set free from the bondage of corruption. And it will be set free when mankind is finally set free from the curse, when God makes everything new.

So even the ground, the animals, just look around at all the death. We recently came from the Philippines and it was just a regular reminder every time, not even, I didn't even have to leave our campus.

I just see the stray dogs and cats that would wander through. You go down the streets and just emaciated animals. I can't tell you the number of times I saw a dog standing in the road looking like it was the last breath.

like they were just rocking back and forth. And I just looked at that as just a reminder of the fall, of the curse and how mankind's sinfulness affected the earth.

And of course, you know, there may be some vegetarians here, but, you know, generally, we are finding nourishment through death.

[15:05] And that's, I believe that's okay biblically, certainly, but it's just another reminder. Creation is groaning. And the display of God's glory that was in the original creation has been marred.

You look at this world, you have to say, isn't it supposed to be better than this? Yes, it is. You look at yourself and your own sinfulness and say, shouldn't I be able to be better than this?

Yeah, it's not the way it was and hence our need of redemption. And so the gospel or good news is that God has provided a perfect salvation through which all that was originally lost due to sin will eventually be restored and made new.

You know, usually when we think of the gospel, we primarily think merely of how it affects us or other people, meaning how can a person be saved? How can a person be saved?

How can a person get to heaven? And we lose sight of the bigger picture. We often minimize the gospel to just that man-centered approach of how can I get to heaven?

[16:17] And so again, I want to help you challenge, or I want to challenge and help you to think of the gospel in a bigger, fuller, and richer way. So please join me in considering the kingdom of God.

Now how should we define the kingdom of God? Well, what does a kingdom have? What is, well, a kingdom has a king, obviously. There is a realm of dominion in which the king owns everything.

It's all the king's land. and over which he rules. He has power. He has authority over the dominion. There are laws for life in his kingdom.

There are citizens who ideally should be subject and submit to the king and also be stewards of, again, his resources. If he owns everything, that means if we were citizens, we wouldn't own it.

It's his, so we need to be stewards of his stuff. The king also has heralds or ambassadors, people who go forth on his mission to proclaim his messages to others.

[17:20] Oftentimes he has an army. Oftentimes he has a multitude of servants. Perhaps the king has a queen or a bride. And usually, there's also a religion associated with the kingdom in which there are priests and instructions for worship.

God's kingdom has all of those. Every one of those aspects, God's kingdom has. And although God has always been the king, the most high ruler overall, the expressions of his rule have taken many forms and to many differing degrees throughout human history.

There are aspects of God's kingdom that we should be able to see today that are noticeable. And then there are other aspects that are prophesied for the future. They're coming, but we can't see them yet.

But make no mistake about it. God is still God. And I would, if this helps, I would challenge you to think of God in capital letters.

Okay? So many people in this world have a very small concept when they think of the word God. We have, we should have a capital letter concept of God.

[18:35] bold font, you know, 128 font, you know, print and so forth. Okay? Because God is God, he's the king of kings, he's the lord of lords, he's the master of all masters, and he will continue his plan to eventually bring all of creation back into subjection under his feet.

1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 24 through 26. If you know 1 Corinthians 15, you know this is sort of like the resurrection chapter. So normally every Easter Sunday in church, there's some arrow going to go to 1 Corinthians 15.

Well, in this context about the resurrection, this is what God's word says, 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, for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.

That's subjection. And the last enemy that will be destroyed is death. And of course, Christ, by virtue of his resurrection, has destroyed death and set us free from the one who had the power of death, which is the devil.

That's what Hebrews chapter 2, 5 through 9 talk about. That all things eventually will be put into subjection under Christ, but he says, but we don't not, we don't see everything under subjection to Christ now, but what do we see?

[20:02] And then you have that quote where you see, for a while, God made you little lower than the angels. Why? For suffering and death. Christ was made as a man.

He came to the earth, took on flesh. Why? So that as a man, he could perfectly live according to the Father's righteous standards. Okay? Absolutely no sin. So he has a perfect righteousness, and then he died on the cross on our behalf as a sacrifice for our sins to die the perfect death.

The only one with a perfect life who could die the perfect death. Because his death, in his death, all the sins of the world were placed upon him so that he could pay for them.

If you and I tried to die for someone else, it would have no effect on the other person. It might keep them alive, but it couldn't save them eternally. Only Christ, the Son of God, with perfect righteousness, could die the perfect death.

And he did that to set us free. Through his sacrificial death and resurrection, it says, and Hebrews says, thereby destroying the one who had the power of the death, that is, the devil.

[21 : 12] And so it is certain that Christ will have the preeminence over all things, for he is the one who created all things, and he created all things for himself. Colossians chapter 1, verses 16 through 18.

Would you turn with me to Daniel chapter 4? Daniel 4. There's this verse, I forgot to put it in my notes, and I would have put it on the screen here for you, but as you turn there, the context here in Daniel 4 is, of course, Daniel was taken off into captivity under the domination of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar.

Okay? And so Daniel is found to be one whom the Spirit of God is in, and King Nebuchadnezzar used him to interpret dreams on occasion. And God, by his grace and mercy towards King Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar would give Daniel the interpretation of the dream.

And so this is a context we see here in Daniel chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar's had a couple more dreams, and they're bothering him. And what it is, it was a foreshadowing of God's judgment upon King Nebuchadnezzar because he was so lifted up in his pride in arrogance because he was like the king of the earth.

When it concerned the whole Middle East, there had no one been before a king like Nebuchadnezzar. He was a king of kings on an earthly kind of plane.

[22 : 38] And so as Daniel was giving the interpretation, I want you to just look at verse 25. And I want you to reflect upon this, even what's happened in their country over this past week. Okay?

And in preparation for today, of course, I had no idea how the election was going to turn out. Okay? And I'm not going to get political this morning because it doesn't matter who was elected.

This verse is still going to be true. It just may not be as comfortable depending on how you voted.

Okay? So, so verse 25, at the beginning, it's talking about the judgment of God.

Then, they shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven and seven times shall pass over you.

Note here. Until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses.

[23 : 37] Okay? So, thinking back, the kingdom of God, God is king and he is in the process of putting everything on this earth into subjection under his feet. Now, we don't always see it.

Okay? We can't see all that God knows but this is a good reminder here that who rules? Well, God does. He's the Most High. He rules even in the kingdom of men in ways that we don't see and he gives that authority to whomever he chooses.

So, those of us who had the privilege of voting this week and hopefully you took it, you voted, and we think and we hear, oh, the voters decided. Well, yes and no.

God decided. Okay? So, again, it didn't matter who was elected that this was going to be true. God decides. But, when we think about the kingdom of God is in this process of putting everything into subjection under his feet and eventually everything will submit to Christ and then he will turn it all. He's going to make an end to all other rule and power and he's going to turn it back over to the Father that God may be all in all as the scriptures say. So, that is coming. But, what is the gospel's connection to God's kingdom?

[24 : 56] That's how I opened it, right? What is the gospel? The subjection of all things, even death unto God as king, is not only good news, it is part of the good news, the gospel.

So much so that the message preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles was occasionally referred to as the gospel of the kingdom. Now, just think about it.

The last time you shared the gospel and hopefully all of us are praying for opportunities. Hopefully, we're seeking an opportunity to share the gospel when praying, God, give me boldness, give me courage, give me grace, give me love for people so I have an opportunity to share the gospel with someone.

But I wonder, have you presented Jesus as king? Have you framed the gospel in this kingdom concept at all?

Oftentimes, we don't, right? Because we're more focused on those, really, those absolutely necessary things a person needs to understand to turn from sin and put their faith in Christ.

[26 : 07] And there are certainly scholars, there are a lot of people that debate kingdom concepts and the gospel and this is fresh on my mind because when we were in the Philippines, there were some issues that came up about what is the gospel.

gospel. And oftentimes, I think a lot of, a lot of weak gospel presentations will become strong if we actually preach more about God than how someone can get to heaven.

Okay? I think oftentimes we have more of a man-centered presentation of the gospel than a Jesus-centered presentation of the gospel. And, yes, Jesus came to be a servant his first time when he came here so he could suffer and die for us.

But he was still God. He was still the king. Okay? And there is a command by God to repent and put faith in Christ versus a presentation of, oh, like God is a heavenly Santa Claus, don't you want his gift?

Can't I persuade you to just take his free gift? Okay? So, let me show you what I, some proof of this statement here this morning that the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom.

[27 : 35] First, John the Baptist, Matthew 3, 2. What was he preaching? Saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus, in Mark 1, verse 14, now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

And notice the imperatives, the commands, repent and believe in the gospel. Matthew 4, 23, also about Jesus. He 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.

Okay, now those of you who may be interested in theology or thought about the kingdom a little bit more, maybe you're thinking, yeah, but those, maybe that ministry was primarily to Jews and you're thinking of the kingdom in the prophesied sense that eventually there will be a literal reign of Christ on the earth as I understand it.

The kingdom that was promised to Israel or one of David's sons or descendants would reign on his throne from Jerusalem over Israel when all of Israel's enemies will be put down.

Okay? And I can understand, yes, Jesus came, he primarily came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And of course, the forerunner, John the Baptist, was going around Israel trying to prepare the way for Christ to reveal himself, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[29 : 10] But also note that the apostles, as they were going from town to town evangelizing both Jews and Gentiles, were also referring to the kingdom of God. Acts 8, verse 12, this is Philip going into Samaria and preaching.

Then the Samaritans were sort of the half-Jews. But when they believed Philip, as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Turn to Acts 17 if you'd like. I'm going to be there before you because I have it marked. But in this context, the apostle Paul preaching in the city of Thessalonica, he's there for a few weeks.

It says in verse 2, and there was a synagogue of the Jews there. And so then Paul, as his custom was, went into them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead and saying, this Jesus whom I preached to you is the Christ.

That is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah. Both of them mean the anointed one. This is the one prophesied to be anointed by the Spirit of God, to make things new, to bring Israel back to God, to be their king.

[30 : 31] So that is really a royal title. He's preaching Jesus as the Christ. And of course, the Jews are upset about it. Some people believe other people did not. The Jews stir up all this strife and so forth.

And notice in verse, end of verse 6, he says, These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying, There is another king, Jesus.

So for three weeks, the Apostle Paul was teaching them from the Scriptures about how the Messiah had to suffer and die and rise from the dead.

And when they summarize it, trying to bring an official civil charge against Paul and his companions, this is their summary. What was Paul saying?

He's saying there's another king besides Caesar. that shows us an emphasis they took from his preaching. Acts chapter 19, verse 8, And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months.

[31 : 41] This is another town. So three months he's preaching there, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. And then ultimately, Acts chapter 28, Paul's in prison.

He's going to give a defense, but he has some Liberty people to come and talk to them. So it says, So when they had appointed him 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.

So the kingdom of God. And there are so many other references to the kingdom and some of which concern the expression of God's rule in this present age and many which speak of his future kingdom.

As I've mentioned, that millennial kingdom, the thousand year reign of Christ, you find that in Revelation chapter 20. And although that millennial kingdom will be amazing, it will still pale in comparison to the eternal state during which God will reign over all creation in which righteousness dwells, in which it will never be defiled again.

But we must also recognize that as spiritually born again believers in Jesus Christ, if you're in Christ today, if you're a believer in Christ, you have already been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and placed in the kingdom of God's Son.

[33 : 07] Colossians 1.13. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. He's taken us out of one kingdom, snatched us, saved us, placed us in the kingdom of His Son.

That is a present state for us. And there's a whole lot more that we could talk about about the kingdom and all of its different dynamics and certainly scholars want to debate some of those things.

But we must at least understand this, that God at present time is the King of Kings and we are in the kingdom of His Son.

Yes, there are future dynamics, future expressions, but right now those things are true for us and they should have an effect upon our perspective of life.

And so that's what I want to get to this morning. So, in light of the fact that we are citizens of God's kingdom, how then should we live? Would you turn with me to Matthew chapter 21? Matthew 21.

[34 : 13] The compelling theme of Matthew's account, of his whole gospel account, which is really his account of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The theme of his gospel account is Jesus as the Messiah or Jesus as the prophesied King.

Chapter 21 contains many royal references and images. So, if you follow along, I'm not going to read all this to you, okay, for the sake of time. I just want you to pick up on some of the kingly or kingdom-like aspects that are mentioned here.

So, it begins with the triumphal entry of Christ riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey in fulfillment of prophecy, okay? But this was a royal parade.

This was very typical of the kind of royal parade that would happen in that time and in those cultures where a conquering king would ride into the city that he had just conquered, or perhaps riding back to his home as the conquering king.

And so, it was a parade kind of atmosphere. That's why you see people laying palm branches on the street or even laying their own clothes, taking off their cloaks and laying them on the road for either him to walk on, in this case, to ride over on the back of this donkey.

[35 : 35] It was a royal parade. It was a fulfillment of Zechariah 9, concerning the eventual entrance of the king of Israel into Jerusalem, that very specifically he would be riding on the foal of a donkey.

Now, that's not usually what they used to ride on, right? It would have been a great steed, a great horse, all right? But we see even the humility of Christ in that, but a direct fulfillment of prophecy about the king and the Messiah.

Jesus here is praised as Lord, which means master and son of David. That's another royal reference because David's descendant was supposed to sit on the throne. They even called out to him to deliver them. The word Hosanna means save us, save us, save us. So they're calling out for some sort of deliverance or rescue.

Jesus then calls the people to repentance, especially in light of John the Baptist message, who is the promised forerunner and who announced the coming Messiah. Jesus questions the religious leaders about John's ministry.

[36 : 45] And he also warns those subjects who might reject his authority and eventually be judged and punished for their failure to live as stewards. And that's what we see in the parable of what my text is, the wicked vine dressers.

The vineyard, the vineyard owner, and the wicked vine dressers. Now, that was just a very cursory skimming across Matthew 21, but if you're following closely, you may have noticed that I missed something there.

I failed to mention the fig tree that Jesus cursed in verses 18 through 22. I didn't mention it earlier because his connection to Jesus' kingship is not quite as clear or explicit.

In fact, if you just read verses 20 through 22, you may conclude that Jesus caused the fig tree to wither simply because he wanted to teach his disciples about prayer and faith.

And absolutely, that is a very clear lesson that is declared here. But also, in the context, the greater context of Matthew 21 and even surrounding chapters, I think there's a little bit more that's going on here.

[37 : 54] The fig tree was cursed, if you remember, because Jesus didn't find any fruit on it. It was a very clear, physical, visible example and illustration of fruitlessness.

And so then Jesus curses it that fruit never grow on you again and it says that it withered from the roots and then died. this concept of fruitlessness, fruitfulness is very much connected to the concept of kingdom here in Matthew 21.

Now I want to begin reading in verse 28. There's two parables here, the parable of the two sons and then the parable of the vineyard and the vine dressers. So if you follow, I want to read verses 28 through 46.

And Jesus is speaking here. He says, But what do you think? A man had two sons and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not. But afterward he regretted it and went.

Then he came to the second and said, Likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir. But he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? And they said to him, The first. Jesus said to them, Assuredly I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

[39 : 19] For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him. But tax collectors and harlots believed him. And when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

Here another parable. There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

Now when the vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, stoned another. And again, he sent other servants more than the first and they did likewise to them.

Then last of all, he sent his son to them saying, They will respect my son. But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.

So they took him, cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? And they said to him, He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.

[40 : 29] And he said to them, Have you never read in the scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

See the fruitfulness there? I'm going to take it from you because you didn't bear fruit. I'm going to give it to a different people who will bear the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parable, as they perceived that he was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitudes because they took him for a prophet. So, the parable of two sons serves as a sort of bridge from what was spoken earlier in chapter 21 to the parable of the vinedressers.

There's a theme, there's like, you picture a bridge having four pillars, or at least four pillars. Here are four of them. There's a theme of Jesus' authority, which they questioned because he cleansed the temple, claiming it for his own.

[41 : 40] So, Jesus' authority, the theme of John the Baptist as the forerunning servant of the king, and Jesus questioned them, okay, was his ministry from God or from man?

And they didn't want to answer because they're just like that, okay? They didn't want to give in, and they realized, you know, if we say from God, he's going to say, why didn't you believe it? Well, it was from God, and they didn't believe it.

So, Jesus said, you're not going to answer about John? I'm not going to give you an answer where my authority comes from. So, it's authority, it's about the ministry of John the Baptist as a forerunner, which was prophesied in the book of Malachi, okay?

And then, the theme of repentance, why didn't you repent? There was a son who said, I'm not going to go, but then he repented and went and did what his father told him to do, okay?

And the theme of fruitlessness as well, moving from that, the fig tree and the authority of Christ coming into the parable of two sons, go out and work for me.

[42 : 38] And the one who did repent did the work of his father, produced the fruit of what his father wanted him to do. And so, this is how we move through here. So, the parable of the two sons expresses two types of fruit that Jesus had a right to expect from the religious leaders.

Repentance and faith. Repentance and faith. Those are two fruits that God expects of all mankind. That's why he commands them. Repent and trust.

These are also, again, implied in Jesus' interaction, again, concerning the John and the Baptist's ministry. When you think of repentance, repentance is not only prerequisite.

Let me back up. What is repentance? Fundamentally, at the core, repentance means a change of mind. Now, what that does is your thinking has changed and it's because your thinking has changed, now there's a change of direction.

And I like to illustrate it like I'm going in this direction and I realize, oh, this is the wrong way. No matter what the GPS says, I need to go back this way. Okay? I need to make an adjustment when I realize I'm doing what's wrong, I need to make an adjustment.

[43 : 50] Okay, I confess, admit, I'm doing the wrong thing. I need to make a turn. It's not works. Okay? It's a change of mind that corresponds to a new direction.

All right? So, repentance is not only prerequisite to expressing faith, saving faith in Christ, it is inseparable from any kind of confession of sin. You have to admit that you've sinned.

You have to confess you've sinned. So, you have to realize, I'm doing what's wrong. That's, I need to do what's right. And so, repentance is something that believers, all of us, should be characterized by.

When God points out to us that we've been doing something wrong, we should realize that and accept it, confess it, and have a change of thinking in that regard. Jesus expected the religious leaders to humbly admit that they were still sinners.

Unless a person admits that he's a sinner, he will not realize his need for salvation, forgiveness, and for a righteousness that he can never earn for himself. See, that's what salvation's about.

[44 : 54] It's, try as much as you can to please God or do what's right. You're never going to merit God's favor. We're born sinners. We naturally do what our sin nature wants us to do.

We're naturally selfish. Okay? How many of you have had little infants in your home? Okay?

Self-consumed. We all are. Now, hopefully we grow out of it in some of our maturity.

Not grow out of it. We grow to hide it better. Okay? We don't often scream, you know, as much. But, that's who we are. Okay?

So, what are we going to do with our sin? If you say, well, I'm not going to sin today. Well, great. If you can get through a day without sin, hallelujah. Okay? I don't think I can.

Unfortunately, it's, you know, because I think there's so much sin that's resident with me at times I don't even realize the motivations. It may not be as much of the outer expressions that is the thoughts or the motivations, the pride, and all the other mess that we have going on in our sin nature.

[46 : 01] And by the way, when you think about what it means to be sanctified or grow in Christ, you're not reforming the old nature. Ephesians 4 tells us the old man is growing more and more corrupt.

It's not getting better. Okay? Okay? Sanctification is you becoming, you and I becoming more and more dependent and walking in step with the Holy Spirit of God according to the Word of God. Okay? It's moment by moment holding on to the hand of the Father, doing what He's telling us to do by His power. Okay? The religious leaders, why didn't they repent?

Because they refused to admit that they were sinners. How about you? Do you know that you need a Savior? Savior. Jesus' kingdom is one of true, perfect righteousness.

The new heavens and new earth are described as where righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3.13 True believers, true citizens of Jesus' kingdom understand that although we have been graciously given the positional status of righteousness, meaning justification, we have been declared righteous by God through Christ, we know that we still sin.

[47 : 14] And we are in need of full, complete sanctification. We long to be made fully, perfectly, righteous, free from temptations of sin.

Don't you wish you could get rid of your sin nature today? We've been set free from the power, the enslavement of sin. One day we will be set free from even the presence of sin.

No more temptation. And just as faith is the key to justification, it's also the key to sanctification. So, moving on from the parable of the two sons to the parable of the vinedressers and the landowner and vineyard.

Some of these metaphors or symbols are very easy to pick up. Who's the landowner? God. It's speaking about the kingdom of God. He's the landowner. What is the vineyard?

Well, it could be, it could refer to Israel as a nation. It could refer to all of humanity. It could refer to some aspect of his kingdom. Specifically, there is probably as he addressed the religious leaders of Israel, they would have been thinking, they realized he's speaking this parable about them.

[48 : 25] So, it probably would refer to the nation of Israel primarily in their minds in that moment. And so, the vinedressers were the religious leaders. The landowner servants that were sent ahead of time and it seems like repeatedly over and over again God is sending servants to the nation of Israel to receive some of his fruit.

And you just imagine all the prophets that God sent. All those who testified of the truth of God. All those who called for the nation of Israel to turn from their sins and to do the commands that God had told them to do.

Well, as a perfect landowner, God did everything necessary to make it possible for the vinedressers to produce and gain a harvest.

Everything necessary for fruitful labor. He planted a hedge to keep out wild animals and perhaps robbers. He dug a wine press that was right there so that the workers could take the grapes, press the juice out of the grapes right there.

He built a tower which normally could have served as a lookout tower, a place for storing farming tools, even perhaps living quarters for some of the workers. and then he entrusted it to the care and stewardship of the vinedressers.

[49 : 35] The religious leaders were supposed to serve God as stewards and should have given him the landowner's share of the harvest. And God had every right to expect a harvest, a return on his investment.

Similarly, for us, God has also done everything necessary for us to produce the fruits of righteousness. 2 Peter 1.3 says that he's given us everything that pertains to life and godliness. He's given us his very own spirit, the Holy Spirit, to indwell, not just to be with us, but even in us. And he's given us the Word of God. And the Spirit uses the truth of the Word of God as we learn it, understand it, meditate on it.

He reminds us. He directs us. He says, this is the way. Walk in it. So we have no excuse. The religious leaders had no excuse to not produce spiritual fruit.

What do they have to show? Jesus came to a people who had been led to obey God's law just on the outside and to live as hypocrites.

[50 : 48] Jesus condemned the religious leaders. He called them whitewashed tombs. They look good on the outside, but he said, inside, you're full of dead men's bones.

So it really doesn't matter even for us how much we try to dress up the outside. You know, we're still, we have that sin nature on the inside. We need a salvation that brings about a reformation, a whole new kind of life.

Okay? And so, they did not produce spiritual fruit. How about us? They had no excuse. Neither do we.

Well, verse 34 says that there was a time of reckoning. It was accountability time for the stewards. And so, he sent servants to receive his share. And again, this could portray the Old Testament prophets, certainly would have included John the Baptist.

he was there to be the forerunner, preparing the way of the Lord, meaning he was going to the people saying, the Messiah is coming. The King is coming. You better get ready.

[51 : 55] You better get ready. And the way they were going to get ready is to repent. To make sure that they were, they had turned away from sin. They were turning back to God because their King was coming and His kingdom was going to be a kingdom of righteousness.

Okay? Now, we can't get into all the details of God's plan and why, you know, what could have happened. We know that Jesus came first to provide salvation.

But He is coming again. Okay? He's coming again for His church. And according to the Old Testament prophecies, even mentioned in the New Testament as well, there will be a kingdom when He comes to Israel again.

And there will be a day of reckoning for them. Daniel's 70th week, the prophecy of Daniel's 70th week will come to fruition and that will be, as I understand it, the tribulation period.

It's a time of Jacob's trouble and it will be a time of great punishment and discipline against Israel first and then against all humanity after which Jesus will return physically to earth, as I understand it, and establish His 1,000 year reign or His millennial kingdom on the earth.

[53 : 13] Well, Israel wasn't ready. Most of the religious leaders were self-seeking hypocrites and in general, the nation of Israel was characterized by biblical ignorance, outward, empty religion, and worldly concerns.

Despite all of God's faithful efforts to send them messengers, they were not a people prepared to meet their God. But God the Son came anyway. So, how do we apply this?

Some applications here. First, are you prepared to meet God? Are you prepared to meet God, the King, overall? So, there's aspects to unbelievers and to believers.

I just want to take a moment here. Let me think about the gospel. And I've gone through this again about what God did through His Son to provide salvation for us.

God is seeking to put everything and everyone into subjection under His authority and rule, not because He's a taskmaster that wants to crush.

[54 : 29] Okay? That subjection comes through a salvation, a deliverance from the punishment of our sins. The wrath of God hangs over humanity.

Okay? Because we're sinners. We sang this morning, maybe in the first song, we sang about empty-handed we come.

Okay? I'm going to talk about that in relation to being fruitful. But that song talks about we have no merit to bring to God.

Okay? We have nothing good that we could say before God justifiably and say, God, didn't I do all these things for you? As a warning, read Matthew 7 sometime this week where there will be people who say, Lord, Lord, didn't we do this in your name?

Didn't we cast out demons and do miracles in your name? And Jesus will say, depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you. How could that happen? I don't understand how that can happen, but Jesus is saying, I don't have a relationship with you.

[55 : 35] Okay? What is God doing in His great meta-narrative, the grand story of redemption? Adam and Eve had originally had that privilege of intimate fellowship with God.

God spoke to Adam as if man face-to-face. No separation, no distance, perfect relationship because there's no sin to break it up. God wants to restore that.

He wants to restore us into that kind of relationship and that only comes when we turn from our sins realizing, I have messed up. I have nothing good before God, but God, you sent your son to die for me to pay for all my sins and God says, I will give you the gift of my son's righteousness. I'll take your sin. I'll give you his righteousness. I'll make you my own. I'll bring you back into my family. I'll call you my son and you will be a co-heir and God says, I'm not ashamed to call you. Christ says, I'm not ashamed to call you my brother. Why? Because when God does that work of salvation and you bow the knee and you understand that He is Lord and you say, I need you, Savior.

[56 : 41] I put my trust, all my faith in you. I have nothing else to bring. Save me, Lord. God keeps His promise. He says, you bow to me.

You've trusted in my program of salvation, in what I have done for you, in my great love and great grace that is unimaginable.

It's more than you can ask or think or imagine, but it certainly does this. All the sin that we had, it's super bounds to cover all of them. Okay? God's love is that great.

It's a perfect love of acceptance. It says, you were separated from me and you're mine. I brought you back. Okay? That's the only way we can be fully, ready, prepared to meet God.

God will either see a person through the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ, or He will see a person who's still bound in their sin.

[57 : 45] That is the difference. And that's why God commands, repent, put your faith in Christ. It's not of works.

It's not of self-improvement. It's not coming to church or being baptized or anything else. It's Christ alone. God takes you out of the kingdom of darkness, puts you in Christ, and He puts the Spirit of Christ in you.

He claims you. Okay? So are you prepared to meet God? And Christians, in regards to stewardship, and as the parable of the vine dressers, they were not ready for the vineyard owner to come.

They didn't have the right perspective. are you living as a faithful steward for your king, seeking to produce a harvest for your master?

As the master over all creation, everything and everyone is accountable to God to do whatever God has designed you to do. In other words, to fulfill the stewardship that God has entrusted to you.

[58 : 55] The fig tree was supposed to produce figs. what does God want you to do? What is how He designs you? Are you being faithful to invest your time in the spiritual disciplines?

Scripture meditation, prayer, private worship, corporate worship. that is evidence of fruitfulness.

Okay? Don't think just primarily fruitfulness is something you produce outside of you.

But what God is producing in you. This is, my wife and I, 15 months there, we're in the Philippines.

We went there with a prayer that God would make us fruitful.

and we don't have time for the story but it didn't turn out anywhere close to how we anticipated it.

And the reason we came back is because it seemed like our opportunities for ministry instead of expanding to what was originally told to us, there were factors that were causing it to shrink.

And we began to feel it. We were not being good stewards of all those who had been supporting us.

And at times we wanted to look at like we're not seeing much fruit.

[60 : 24] But God was reminding us of what He was trying to do in us. And we had to conclude that God sent us there for that time. Perhaps more, it was more about what He was trying to do in us than through us.

And I knew that when I was a pastor was also that it was at least just a matter of about as much as what God was trying to do in me about anything that could come out of my ministry, what God would do.

But first, when you think about fruitfulness, look inwardly. Are you walking in the Spirit? Are you living in accordance with His Word?

How is God changing you on the inside? Remember, it's not about the outward display. That's what the Pharisees thought. Okay? God wants to change us, transform us from the inside out.

And so, He's going to work on us in the areas of our pride. God hates. He's going to fight every bit of pride we have. Patience. Okay? Those things that in us anger, contentment.

[61 : 36] Yeah, they have outward displays, but it begins in the heart, right? On the inside. So, let's think first about fruitfulness on the inside. But are you seeking to be a good steward?

Because the only way the fruit inwardly is going to develop is if you're faithful to walk according to the Spirit and in the spiritual disciplines. Coming to church and learning, that's one thing. That's part of it. There's also the worship, the corporate worship, another one of the spiritual disciplines. Fruitfulness is also in accordance with the law of sowing and reaping. Galatians 6 reminds us of that. So, are you sowing the kind of seeds that you're supposed to sow? We will reap what we sow. What kind of harvest does God want? Are you sowing intentionally in that direction? Are you faithful in the labors that will eventually result in the spiritual fruit that God desires? Thirdly, are you seeking God's kingdom? [62 : 32] and invest in yourself and your resources and the service and expansion of God's kingdom? It's first about prayer. Matthew 6, verse 13.

I don't know how many of you regularly pray what we call the Lord's Prayer. But in that prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, Thy kingdom come. Are we even praying that? Are we, you know, if you just think about even the kingdom of God right now as the expression of God's rule in the lives of individuals spiritually?

Evangelism are the efforts we make to take the good news to lost people so that they will be brought into the kingdom of God and it will expand into that life and to that life and to that life as they get saved and they begin to learn what it means to walk in Christ.

Are we praying that for our nation? Are we praying that for the nations around the world? Matthew 6, verse 33. It's in the context of don't worry, don't be anxious about what you will eat, what you will wear, what you will drink.

[63 : 50] The Gentiles run after all those kind of things. Your Father in Heaven, He knows everything you need. So seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

All those things will be added to you. So are you praying for God's kingdom? Are you seeking it? And fourth, are you praying for our world leaders and other earthly authorities, including our president-elect?

Crime would stop in our nation if every person would submit to the lordship of Christ and the second commandment of the love your neighbor as yourself.

No more civil strife. No bigotry. No prejudice. Love your neighbor as yourself. Or as the golden rule puts it, do to others what you would have them do to you.

Okay? All that stuff ends when people submit even to just that one commandment. to love your neighbor as yourself. Think of justice in our nation.

[64 : 51] That was a major theme in our country right now. Different standards of justice. Corrupt justice system. Corrupt judges, attorneys, whatever.

Again, all that gets cleaned up if they will do their job and see their job as part or as stewards of God's kingdom. That they will fulfill fulfill their duties in this world in light that the king, the vineyard owner, expects a fruit from that.

What's your job? how can you do your duties of your job this week in light of the vineyard owner has placed you there in that position with those responsibilities in that sphere of influence with those people, with those customers so that as you do it, you are doing it as a steward of God and that, just the way you do it will be fruitfulness if you're doing it for the honor and glory of God.

If you're plumbing a sink for the glory of God, you are bearing fruit of worship to Him in plumbing that sink. If you're a student, the way you approach your studies, 1 Corinthians 10.31 says, whether you eat, drink, whatever you do in life, do it all for the glory of God, for the King of Kings.

You're a steward. There may be some children here who are not very far in school, not in school at all, but the way you listen to your parents, understand that God is your King and He has placed you there in that situation of life to bear fruit for Him, to be that child the way a child ought to be for the Lord.

[66 : 43] Not to, again, bring anything that would merit favor, but to bear fruit, say, God, this is what you created me to do. Just as the bird sings its song. And each bird has a different song, right?

Different kinds of birds have different songs. God created that bird, that type of bird, to sing that song, bringing praise and glory to Him. So we need to pray for our world leaders.

This world's a mess. You know? So, anyway, we need to close. Let me close with one more verse and then a prayer here.

In Colossians chapter 1, Colossians is the letter of Paul to the Colossian believers, of course, highlighting, or a major theme of that is Christ as the head overall, especially the head of the

church.

Colossians chapter 1 talks about the preeminence of Christ. Again, that Christ may have preeminence in all things. In verse 10, as Paul was praying for the Colossian believers, this is part of his prayer, is that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, and being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

[67 : 59] That's what God wants for us. To be fruitful. Every good work. Whatever He's called you to do, do it for His glory. Bear that fruit. From the inside out. Honor.

Bring an honor and glory to our King. Let's pray. Father in heaven, can we thank you for your word, and perhaps many of us haven't thought much about you being King, but today, as we've considered it, you challenge our perspective, and we could frame it in different terms, like you being our Lord or our Master.

But the concept of King and Kingdom has some slightly different connotations to us. that we are your citizens.

We thank you for conquering us. Thank you for conquering our foe and conquering our sin. Thank you for bringing us into the kingdom of your Son, and as it says, the Son of your love.

That we are welcomed in by your love. But you own us. Lord, we are your citizens, your people, your subjects.

[69 : 25] Lord, I'm reminded that every bit of sin that's in me and in each one here, you are seeking to conquer very practically, to put down every bit of pride, to cause every desire we have to be submitted to your Lordship, to your will, to your ways.

All that we own, God, is really nothing that we own. It's, you own it all. And we are but stewards. The breath that's in our lungs right now is your gift.

The clothes that we wear, they come from you. You own it all. You own our talents, our abilities, our interests, our passions, things that you've given to us.

They point us in a direction to understand your will for our lives. You place us in different communities, houses, neighborhoods, schools, jobs, spheres of influence, that we might serve you there in those places, in those ways, with those people, that we might bear fruit for you.

And you are coming again and we will give an account. And Lord, that's not something you want us to fear, but actually to rejoice in Him because if we will walk in you, if we will abide in Christ, if we will be filled with the Spirit, we will indeed bear fruit.

[70 : 54] The fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of righteousness, doing the things that we can only do by your power, according to your will and your word. And so God, I pray that you'd help us to rejoice today.

Maybe there's some conviction of sin that you're bringing to us right now because in ways we haven't been faithful and we just ask for forgiveness, Lord. None of us have been as faithful as we ought to have been.

God, we pray that you forgive us and you would cleanse us and that you would lead us according to the path of righteousness for your namesake. And God, that we would try to be mindful and you would help us to be mindful, to live with this right perspective.

But also, Lord, to rejoice because there is perfect forgiveness, perfect love, superbounding grace found in Christ. And we can go and we can be faithful to do what you've called us to do.

Lord, the results of our efforts are in your hands just as we are in your hands. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for saving us. And Lord, again, there's someone here that's not yet your child, that's not yet bowed the knee, that's not yet repented and trusted in the work of Christ for their salvation.

[72 : 12] Oh, Lord, please woo them, draw them, convince them by your amazing love, the riches of Christ, that they would run to you, that they would be reconciled to you, that they would be saved.

I thank you for your word today. Thank you for my brothers and sisters in Christ. You are our king. We would pray for our nation and for our newly elected leader and all the other newly elected ones but currently elected ones as well.

Oh, God, that you would bring salvation to them, that they would be mindful, that they have been placed in positions of authority not for themselves to do their own will but as your representatives. and they will one day give an account of how they rule and how they lead. I pray especially for those who will be our incoming leaders as they look ahead to years of service that you would bring them to this perspective.

God, I pray for even our president-elect who has mentioned a number of times recently that people have told him that God spared his life for a reason.

[73 : 25] God, I don't know how much that has really gripped him but I do believe that that would really grip his heart and mind that he would want to wholly submit himself to you to do your will and not his own and not to please even people in this world but ultimately to please you as your representative.

And we pray around the world that you would raise up godly leaders. We pray that your churches would be faithful, that pastors will be faithful to your word, that people will be submitting themselves to your word.

God, help us to do that as well. Help us to love you with all that we are and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. in that you will be glorified and we will have even more reason to rejoice.

So this is your day. We thank you for it. Help us to be fruitful for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.