

The Kingdom of God
Ephesians 1:19-23

Sermon

Hobart, December 14th, 2014

Devonport, December 6th, 2014

Launceston, October 12th, 2014

Ephesians 1:19-23

¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. ¹

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Eph 1:19-23). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. ADVENT;

A. WE ARE IN THE SEASON OF ADVENT

1. Focuses on God's overall plan and purpose in Christ
2. Joe Tkach;

The word "advent" is from *adventus* (Latin), meaning "coming" or "arrival." Advent celebrates Jesus' three "comings" (typically in reverse order): future (Jesus' return), present (in the Spirit) and past (Jesus' incarnation/birth).²

B. TODAY WE ARE FOCUSING ON ONE OF THE MOST CENTRAL WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THAT PLAN

1. The Kingdom of God

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A. MANY FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS FOCUS ON THE FUTURE KINGDOM BEING THE CENTRE OF THE GOSPEL

1. Some say the gospel Jesus brought wasn't about him, but about the future kingdom he was going to bring that was prophesied in the OT

A. SO LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS

1. Is it the future return and reign of Jesus Christ to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords?
2. Or is it the church on earth today as some might say?
3. And how does this teaching impact us and our day to day Christian lives?

B. PRAYER

² Joseph Tkach, GCI Weekly Update, November 26, 2014

BODY:

A. IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT JESUS PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News.* ¹⁵ "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

III. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

A. KINGDOM:

Kingdom" (*basileia*) means "kingship" or "royal rule." Involved in the term is the sovereign authority of a ruler, the activity of ruling, and the realm of rule including its benefits³

1. Harpers Commentary;

"Kingdom" designates not simply the realm or place where God reigns, but better the "active ruling of God."⁴

B. GARY DEDDO;

the biblical revelation, in no uncertain terms, identifies the kingdom of God with the person and mission of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself embodies and brings the kingdom of God. Why? Because he is the King of all creation. His ministry as mediator between God and creation involves kingship as well as priestly and prophetic elements. The kingdom of God is real and actual in and through Jesus Christ, since he reigns wherever he is.

The kingdom of God is his kingdom. ⁵

* Some manuscripts read *the Good News of the Kingdom of God*.

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., s.v. "*basileia*," 1:579-80.

⁴ Mays, J. L., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1988). *Harper's Bible commentary* (Mk 1:16). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

⁵ Gary Deddo, *The Kingdom of God*, Grace Communion International, 2014, <https://www.smashwords.com/extreader/read/420127/1/the-kingdom-of-god>

Luke 22:29-30

²⁹ And just as my Father has granted me a Kingdom, I now grant you the right ³⁰ to eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom. ⁶

John 18:36-37

³⁶ Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

³⁷ Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

1. So the kingdom of God cannot be understood apart from who Jesus is and what his entire mission is about.

2. Deddo;

A reading of the New Testament along with the Old Testament ... makes clear that the kingdom of God is God's possession, God's gift, God's achievement—not ours! Abraham sought a city "whose architect and builder is God" ([Hebrews 11:10](#)).

It belongs in the first place to the eternal Son of God, incarnate.

Jesus identifies it as "my kingdom" ([John 18:36](#)).

He announces it as his work—his accomplishment. He brings it; he sustains it.

When he returns, he will bring the full extent of his saving work to completion.

Jesus brings with him the actual presence of the kingdom, not just a message about the kingdom. The kingdom of God is operating wherever Jesus is—because he is the King. The kingdom of God has its reality in the living presence and activity of King Jesus.⁷

C. SO TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE, OPERATION, STANDARDS, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE KINGDOM WE LOOK TO JESUS

⁶Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Lk 22:28-30). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁷ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

1. Because he is God with us
 - a) He is the head, the King of the Kingdom
2. He is the ruler, the one the Father sent to bring his loving way of life, to announce it, to bring it into our broken world

D. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE USAGE OF THE WORD "KINGDOM" IN THE BIBLE IS A METAPHOR

1. So the kingdom of God is only like physical kingdoms on earth in some ways
2. It is the sphere and realm of God
 - a) All that is his and subject to him
3. It isn't of this world, it is of God, of heaven, of Jesus and the Spirit
 - a) But this world will eventually become part of God's kingdom when it is reconciled and transformed and renewed

E. HOW DOES THAT TRANSFORMATION AND RECONCILIATION TAKE PLACE?

1. Through Jesus? --How does it happen through Jesus?
 - a) In his incarnation; bringing God to be with us
 - b) In his death; defeating all that stands against God and brings suffering and destruction to life and our world
 - c) In his resurrection; lifting us out of our temporary, mortal lives into the life of God, free of sin and death
 - d) In his incarnation; sitting at God's right hand, Jesus works with us in our daily lives, transforming us through the Spirit he has sent, through his written word, and through the body, his church, through prayer, through fellowship with God and one another

Ephesians 1:19-23

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²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

2. Gary Deddo sums this up

Wherever Christ's lordship is operating according to his will and purpose, there is found the kingdom of God.

More particularly, his kingdom must have to do with his redemptive purposes and so be bound up with his incarnation, vicarious life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and return for us, and for our salvation. That is, his rule as King cannot be understood apart from his revelatory and mediating ministry of also being Prophet and Priest. All three of these Old Testament offices, represented by Moses, Aaron and David are uniquely combined and fulfilled in him.

The purpose of his rule and will is to bring his creation into and under his gracious protection and beneficence, that is, into fellowship, communion and participation with him by reconciling us to God through his self-offering. The ultimate result of being under his rule is for us to share in his rule and experience all the benefits of his kingdom. And this rule will be characterized by God's own love for us in Christ and worked out in us by the Spirit. Love of God and love of neighbor in the way Jesus embodied it will be marks of participating in his kingdom. The kingdom of God is a fellowship, a people, a community in communion with God through Jesus Christ and so with each other in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

But such love in fellowship, as shared in Christ, will emanate from a lived trust (faith/belief) in the redeeming, living God and his rule being continually exercised by Christ. So faith or belief in Jesus Christ will necessarily bring about involvement in his kingdom. This is because Jesus not only proclaims the nearness of the kingdom of God as he draws near, but he also calls for the response of belief (trust/faith) in its presence accompanying him.⁸

⁸ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

IV. PRESENT AND FUTURE; YET AND NOT YET

A. MUCH EMPHASIS IS PLACED BY FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS ON THE KINGDOM BEING THE FUTURE MILLENNIUM

1. The time when Jesus returns
2. The focus tends to be that we are to keep separate from the world, and focus all our attention on preaching the good news of Jesus' return
 - a) In the meantime we keep pure and separate, preach a warning message, and wait

B. BUT THAT IGNORES SO MUCH OF WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT MESSAGE IS ALL ABOUT

1. The emphasis on how we are to live as God's people, as citizens of God's kingdom in this age
 - a) The kingdom is not confined to Jesus' return, it is operating right now

C. THE KINGDOM'S PRESENCE IN TWO PHASES

1. As Gary Deddo writes;

Biblical revelation conveys two things that are hard to put together: that the kingdom is present but also that it is future. Biblical scholars and theologians have often seized on one of these two aspects, giving either one or the other prominence.⁹
2. Jesus taught that the kingdom was near, and active in his life and ministry
 - a) He called people to follow him, and be part of the kingdom and its operation, part of the life and mission of Jesus
3. Just as Jesus was with us as a non-glorified human, and is now in heaven, away from us, not yet fully present with us in his glorified form,
4. But he has promised to return in full glory and power, to be with us face to face and to complete his mission

⁹ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

D. CAN YOU SEE HOW THIS HELPS US UNDERSTAND THAT THE KINGDOM IS ALSO PRESENT TODAY, BUT NOT FULLY?

1. As with Jesus, his Kingdom is with us in a limited form, but not fully present in its complete and final form
 - a) But when he returns, the kingdoms of this world will become fully the kingdoms of our God
2. So we can see that the Kingdom and Jesus are inseparable
 - a) Because the Kingdom is God's realm, his rule, the acceptance of his ways
3. In other words faith and trust in God is what includes a person in the Kingdom
 - a) Because that means we put ourselves in his hands, and submit to his authority, and rule
4. To switch metaphors, it is accepting God's love as our Father, accepting the gracious and merciful help and salvation that he has for us through his Son, and the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit
 - a) It means being adopted as members of his family

E. GARY DEDDO:

So faith in the kingdom includes hope for the coming of the fullness of the kingdom as well. The kingdom was already present in Jesus and continues to be present by his Spirit. But its completion is not yet. This is often summarized by saying the kingdom of God is already, but not yet.

The present age is not in tension with the future coming age. Rather, we are called to live in this already-fulfilled-but-not-yet-consummated situation. We are situated now in a state of hope. ...We live securely now in confident possession of our inheritance, even though we don't have access to the assets we will one day fully benefit from.

The biblical understanding clearly distinguishes between two times, two ages...: the "present evil age" and what is called "the age to come."

We currently live in the “present evil age.” We live in hope of “the age to come,” but we do not yet live in that age. We are still, in biblical perspective, in the present evil age.

So we live between the times.¹⁰

V. IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

A. SO, IF WE IN THE CHURCH TODAY LIVE IN THE “ALREADY, BUT NOT YET” STAGE OF THE KINGDOM, IS THE CHURCH THE KINGDOM?

Ephesians 1:19-23

¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.

²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

B. JESUS IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR US

1. God’s power in Christ, is for us who believe
2. V 19 We who have placed ourselves under his headship
3. V 20 He is our head, who sits beside the Father in heaven
4. V 21. He is the chief ruler over all, now and in the world to come
5. V 22. His authority over all things is for the benefit of the church
6. V23 We are his body, and we are made complete by him

¹⁰ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

a) But note, it adds “who fills all things everywhere with himself.”

C. THE KINGDOM IS BIGGER THAN THE CHURCH

1. The church is made up of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, and who are led by the Spirit of God to live in relationship with God, living and sharing his ways, the ways of the Kingdom

2. But God’s plan is to fill all things everywhere with himself

a) In other words, all of creation will eventually be part of God’s Kingdom

3. Also, the Church isn’t the authority, Jesus is

a) The Church is imperfectly submitted to God

b) None of us fully live the kingdom life, fully complete in Christ, totally led by the Spirit in every aspect and moment of our lives

D. DEDDO:

Paul points out that “what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” ([2 Corinthians 4:5 ESV](#)).

The message and ministry of the church should point away from itself to the reign of the Triune God, the source of its hope—because God will establish his reign throughout creation, a reign inaugurated by Christ in his earthly ministry and in the coming of the Spirit, but yet to be consummated.

The church gathered around Christ looks back to his finished work and forward to the completion of his continuing work. Those are the proper objects of its focus.

In the New Testament, persons can receive, enter and inherit the kingdom, but they cannot destroy it or bring it to earth. They can do things for the sake of the kingdom, but the kingdom is never subject to human agency.

The church itself, the fellowship of people gathered around Jesus Christ with his gospel and mission, does not escape the problems and limits of still living under fallen conditions subject to sin and death. Thus the church needs continual renewal and refreshment. It needs continuously to abide or remain

in fellowship with Christ, living under his Word, being continually nourished, renewed and restored by his gracious Spirit.¹¹

1. Theologian, George Eldon Ladd has provided much helpful insight into the nature of the Kingdom of God

E. LADD SUMMARIZED THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM IN FIVE POINTS:

1. The church is not the kingdom.
2. The kingdom creates the church—the church does not create the kingdom.
3. The church witnesses to the kingdom.
4. The church is the instrument of the kingdom.
5. The church is the custodian of the kingdom.

F. GARY DEDDO;

In sum, we can say that the kingdom of God includes the people of God, but not all those who gather with the church at any given time are necessarily submitting to the kingdom-reign of Christ. The people of God are those who have entered the kingdom and are submitting to the rule and reign of Christ, but some of those associated with the church at any given time may not manifest very much of the character of the present and coming kingdom. Some may still be resisting God's grace offered to them by Christ in and through the church's ministry.

So we see that the kingdom and the church are inseparable, though not identical. When the kingdom comes in its fullness with Christ's return, the people of God will all come fully under his rule and reign, and their lives together will perfectly manifest that truth.¹²

¹¹ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

¹² Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

VI. WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN THE KINGDOM?

A. WHAT DO YOU THINK OUR ROLE IS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD TODAY?

1. As members of Christ's body, we are to work with our head, to participate in his ongoing Kingdom activity
2. What is that activity?
 - a) To continue on what Jesus did when he was on earth.
 - b) By sharing in and living God's way of love and grace, thus being lights and examples of the Kingdom of God
 - c) Witnesses and signs of the coming kingdom
3. Deddo;

we are called to live hope-filled lives that embody real signs of the coming kingdom....But signs do point beyond themselves to what is coming. They make a real difference here and now, even though they do not make all the difference.

Christian action is participation in the continuing ministry of Jesus through the Spirit. By the Spirit we actually join with the King in what he is doing here and now even within this present evil age—an age that is passing away! The God of the coming kingdom can break into the present and use the partial, provisional and temporary witness of the church.

Light from the coming kingdom reaches us and lights our path in this dark world. Like starlight piercing the darkness of the night, the church's spoken and enacted signs point to the coming kingdom in full noonday sunlight.

These pinpoints of light make a real difference, even if only partial, provisional and temporary. By the gracious action of God, our signs and witness are used by God's Word and Spirit to put people into contact with Christ and his coming kingdom.

God is at work even now before the kingdom reaches its consummation. We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)). Every simple cup of water given in Christ's name will not go unrewarded ([Matthew 10:42](#)).

Christ joins our sign-work to his—using our witness to draw people into relationship with himself, then to come under his lordship, where they experience his joy, peace and hope in his final reign.¹³

CONCLUSION:

I. SO WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE KINGDOM?

- A. IT IS WHERE GOD IS WORSHIPPED AND TRUSTED AND LOVED AND FOLLOWED
- B. JESUS IS THE ONE IN WHOM THE KINGDOM LIVES AND OPERATES ON EARTH, AND IN THE CHURCH
- C. THE CHURCH ISN'T THE KINGDOM, BUT IS CHRIST'S BODY PARTICIPATING IN HIS ONGOING KINGDOM MINISTRY
- D. THE KINGDOM IS ALREADY HERE THROUGH JESUS WORKING WITH HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. It is only in part, incomplete, and imperfect as we don't fully trust or follow God in this life
2. But the imperfect, incomplete part that we as members of Christ's body play is an important sign and witness of the fullness of the Kingdom that is yet to come.¹⁴
3. It helps others get a glimpse of our Triune, loving, saving God, and get a taste of the kingdom

¹³ Deddo, *Kingdom of God*

¹⁴ Joseph Tkach writes; Advent is also spoken of in terms of our salvation, which the New Testament refers to in three tenses: past, present and future. The past tense is our finished salvation. It is what Jesus accomplished in his first coming—through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. The present tense is what we have now—Jesus living in us and inviting us to participate in his kingdom work. The future tense is the fullness of salvation, which we will experience when Jesus visibly returns and God is all in all. (GCI Weekly Update, November 26, 2014)

4. It hopefully attracts some to want to know him and trust in him too
5. And the more we share in Jesus' kingdom life as members of his body, the more we encourage each other, and are in turn given hope and encouragement to live that life more and more diligently, for ourselves and those around us, and to express our worship and gratitude to our Triune God for his Kingdom

E.PRAYER
