

Acts 1:3 Why the Kingdom of God?

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This morning we are going to take a look at the Kingdom of God and why is it so important for us as believers to have a good grasp of this key teaching of Jesus.

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Acts 1:3

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:42-43

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them,

43 but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”

If it was Jesus’ purpose to preach or proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God then we must take it seriously also and so I want to ask a series of questions this morning that will provide a framework for us in how we understand and live together in the kingdom of God.

1) What is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is simply that place where God is king and he is the one who rules and reigns in the lives of his citizens.

It’s a place where people who believe - belong to the king and share a common citizenship with all those who believe, both now, down through the ages and on into eternity.

The kingdom of God is a growing thing that is ever increasing in its influence and its ability to provide a place of safety for people as Jesus said in these two parables.

Matthew 13:31-33

31 He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

33 He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

The kingdom of God is continually expanding throughout the world reaching deep into villages and people groups that have never ever heard of Jesus, and it's also a place where people are not only restored relationally to God but also receive physical healing.

Luke 10:9

Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Our message is the good news of the kingdom of God that when correctly understood and applied, brings people back to the king and into restored eternal relationships with each other.

2) Where is the kingdom of God?

Luke 17:20-21

20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Or as some translations say 'within you')

As Jesus said we won't be able to see it as a physical entity in other words it is not restricted to any geographical region. It's a bit like the church in this regard, where we often mistakenly say that the building is the church instead of the gathering of God's people. That is the place where the church is.

The kingdom is in our midst, among us and within us. It is a kingdom that begins in the heart of individuals and works its way out of us so that people are touched by it.

3) How do you enter the kingdom of God?

John 3:1-6

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

As Jesus said to see it or enter we need a new birth a second birth a spiritual birth to not only see it, but to enter and understand it and it is only those who are willing to humbly submit to Jesus as king in their lives who will ever enter in as he said in regard to children.

Mark 10:13-16

13 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Why did Jesus say that the kingdom of God belongs to children?

It is because they receive it with a sense of humility and dependency and he encourages us to also do the same.

As an aside - from this scripture I firmly believe that all children who have ever died at birth or have been aborted or have died at a young age will be with Jesus in his kingdom for it belongs to such as these.

4) How much does it cost to be part of the kingdom of God?

Luke 9:57-62

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”

62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Jesus did not peddle a soft gospel where there were no trials, no temptations, no cost and no work required on our part.

While our justification is free and unearned, Jesus challenges that all that look back once having began are not fit for the kingdom.

For us we need to at times put the kingdom of God above our earthly relationships. Or should I say that we need to be prepared to, when he calls leave family and countries and work and social networks as we live and work in his kingdom.

The kingdom of God is not for the fainthearted and as Jesus said it does come with cost. Are we prepared for this cost?

5) The relationship between church and the kingdom of God

Now what about the church? Where does this fit in because this is also equally important to Jesus as it says in Ephesians that Jesus gave life for the church and she is called his bride?

Simply put the church is or should be the visible expression of the kingdom of God. It should be like a microcosm of what life in the kingdom should be - our relationships with Jesus - our relationships with each other and our relationship with the world at large.

People should be able to come in among us and say there is something different about that group of people. The kingdom of God should come near them.

Thank you for making my mate and his friend welcome last week. I didn't say much to him at work this week as we were all very busy, but three of his friends came to me and mentioned that he had told them where he had been on Sunday.

To me this was a great encouragement that he didn't feel awkward or embarrassed to tell his workmates. The kingdom of God should be like that.

6) Why the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is essentially the progressive and eventual restoration of what Adam & Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden before they fell from that place of privilege and position with God and plunged the whole world into a state of rebellion along with them.

The kingdom of God is the overarching story of God's answer to man's problem and it is the thing that should excite us that there is a place for whosoever will believe and put their trust in Jesus.

It is in his kingdom that we find our restoration back to God and our relationships within his kingdom should reflect this redemptive restorative quality in everything we do.

One day history will culminate with the return of Jesus and when all those who call on his name with a pure and sincere heart will dine with him at the celebration to end all celebrations.

Luke 22:14-18

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.

15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

Finishing up, how does this apply to us both this morning and into the future?

1. If it was the purpose for which Jesus was sent then it should also be our purpose that we proclaim and live as its citizens of his marvellous kingdom. People are watching us and will they say of us that we truly reflect the king and his kingdom in the way we treat each other and the way we treat them?
2. We need to recognise the difference between the church and the kingdom and that they both must work together.
When the kingdom advances - churches are planted.
It is what we see in the book of Acts and it is what we need to continually see in our day.
Also each church needs to be connected to what God is doing in his kingdom around the world.
3. For us that takes place in our primary relationship with the NCMI team but it shouldn't stop there.
I believe that we need to take an interest in what is happening in other parts of God's kingdom. We should never have an exclusive attitude and at the same time we should never so divide our attentions that the local church suffers. We need both but not at the expense of each other.
Practically - visiting churches in our locality on some Sunday nights as summer approaches to see what God is doing. Not in a competitive way but in a supportive way. I want us as a church to be praying for the churches in our area as we are all part of the kingdom of God. Let's pray.