

Ryan McMaster
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A Kingdom In Us

This morning I want to talk about the Lord establishing His Kingdom in us. For a little over a year now, the Lord has started to work the reality of the Cross in my heart. And the reality of the Cross means so much, it means everything really. Our whole existence is dependent on seeing this reality, of seeing Truth and having His Kingdom established in us. And the truth that is being made known to me is the reality that there is a separation between light and darkness. A reality that the Lord is establishing a Kingdom of light where there was a Kingdom of darkness.

The establishing of His Kingdom doesn't come without a cost. And that cost, that battle, is the Light of Christ displacing the Darkness that is ME. Or you could put that several different ways... the Life that Christ is, is being made known to me, and as a result, I am seeing my death in Him. The cost is me. That's a battle that my heart HAS to see. That is a reality that the Lord actually WANTS to show me. So regardless of how little of it I have seen, the important part is that the Lord is increasing whenever He is known, and we are decreasing.

So I'm gonna stick try to stick with a point, I hope, and that being that I am, and WE all are, recipients of new Life. A Kingdom that is ACTUALLY being established IN us.

Now I don't claim to know a whole lot about anything anymore, and actually, as time continues on and the Lord continues to take more room in my heart, I feel like I know less and less. But I do see some things in scripture that have become very real to me and I'll try to share some of that reality this morning.

Jesus says in Matthew 9:10,

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as in heaven"

The Kingdom that He is talking about has come, on earth as it is in heaven. The reality is the same here on earth as it is in Heaven, because the reality is that the Kingdom is NOW.

Paul says in Colossians 1:12 and 13, ***“giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He HAS delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”***

We HAVE BEEN delivered from the Kingdom of darkness, not “we’re going to be delivered someday.” And we have been conveyed (and I looked that word up to and found “to be carried or taken to”) into HIM. We have been delivered to HIS heavenly dwelling place, HIS house, HIS Life. We have been brought to Light and Life. We have been brought out of darkness and into Light.

Revelation 21:22, ***“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (23)The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb “IS” its light.”***

The Lamb that is the very light of the city is the same Lamb that we partake of. HE is the Life that sustains us in THIS Kingdom. And THAT Kingdom is IN us. And We are sustained BECAUSE He is the Life. HE is the Life. In the Kingdom that God has planted in us, the life and the light are the Lamb.

If someone would have asked me about a year ago, what I thought the Kingdom of God was, I don’t know if I would have had an answer to that. But I’m sure I imagined heaven as this place in the future where I was exalted. I wouldn’t have said it that way. I would never have said that I would be exalted, but I ALWAYS, ALWAYS imagined myself as the recipient of a new life in the Kingdom. But that new life I imagined in the Kingdom was just me. Honestly. And I imagine there are a lot of people out there that believe that same thing. I thought by participating in Christianity as I knew it, that it would ultimately lead to a better version of this reality in Heaven. It would just be a better version of Me in a better place, with better things.

I’m going to steal something from Sparks here. He’s talking about this verse, Isaiah 48:10:

“See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:10). “

And Sparks says about the furnace: that it is “not for the removal of the bad out of us so as to leave the good that is in us, and secure it! Then what is its purpose? Is it to refine Christ in us? We need not discuss that! Christ needs no refining! What is it for? It is to divide between what is us in fallen nature, and what is Christ, and to get rid of the one in order to give full place to the other! The furnace of affliction is the application of the Cross to the getting rid of you and me, in order to leave the whole place for Christ. It is the measure of Christ that God is after, not to cut in between the good and bad in us, but to cut in between what is Christ, and what is ourselves. That is what the Lord is doing. He is after increasing Christ, and in order to do that He has to displace self, the old creation.

When I read that this week I thought of the Pharisees when Jesus says in Matthew 23,

“You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”

You see, my understanding for so long led me down this path. It was a path that focused on my cleansing. And all I knew how to do was clean the outside. I always struggled with the cleansing of the inside, but the outside was always something I could control. We can so easily put on so many masks that show whatever qualities we think other people want to see. But the work isn't ours. And this is where I think so many Christians get it wrong, and that's where I get it wrong, still. It is my effort to be the refiner, or to be the cleanser. We attempt to mold and shape ourselves without realizing that the fire is actually destroying us.

We attempt to discipline ourselves into doing things and acting certain ways that we believe are “Christ-like.” But “Christ-like” is just another mask. It isn't actually expressing the life that is in us, it is just expressing a darkened imagination of what is right and wrong. If we could turn our hearts and see what the Lord has done, to see the reality of the cross and all that it separates, we would actually express life. But we wouldn't

express a life that is out from our imagination. We would express the reality of what the Lord is showing us. And this work, in His view, is finished. The work of the Cross is finished, Jesus says those very words while He is on the Cross, "It is Finished!" But the establishing of the Kingdom IS the refining of the fire. The removal of us, the separation of us, to leave only that which the Father desires, the life of His Son. The refining in the fire is a process. It's a process of removal.

This work, this establishing of the Kingdom, the opening of our eyes, all these ways of saying the same thing, is just the reality of Christ living and reigning in us. And this work is the work of the Spirit. And that is something it seems that I can't be shown enough times. It's something I feel like I come back to time and time again. We have to come to see that we are the vessel, and the life that is being made known to us, the life that is in us, is entirely the work of the Lord. HE is the author and finisher of all of it.

I've got some more verses I want to read:

Phil 2:13

"For it is GOD WHO WORKS in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

You see, God is working for HIS pleasure, to refine and cut between what is Christ and what is ourselves, to establish the Kingdom in us.

And Jesus says in John 14:12

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works THAT I DO he will do also.

John 14:16

16 And I will pray the Father, and HE WILL GIVE YOU another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. 19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps

them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

And I think we can take this last part and just really make a mess of it.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”

We can so easily look at keeping His commandments as a list of “things” that are “christ-like.” But Jesus has just said that when we see Him, when He lives in us, that we will know that we are IN Him. And in that knowing He says that He will manifest Himself to us. And this manifestation is the knowing, the appearing of Him that leads to understanding and expressing the Life that is His that we come to know. Expressing His life is not following rules, it is living.

I looked up the word manifest and got this:

“It is a display or show by one’s acts or appearance.” And I like the idea that manifesting Himself is a show by HIS acts. That the Lord is being made known to us by His acts, not our acts. His appearing is all by Him. The blind man that is healed in John 9 never makes any claim that he was righteous or worthy of being healed. He doesn’t claim anything other than the work that Jesus did. He does not claim to know anything at all other than this: ***“One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”*** And that is exactly how the Lord works in us. HE works, HE provides the light that gives us the ability to see, because He IS the light, not because He turns a light on. If we see Him, we see light. And in the light, is all the understanding of everything that is Christ. He manifests Himself to us, He makes known to us the life that He has given. He appears to us, and that is necessary for the establishment of His Kingdom in us. In fact, His APPEARING is the establishment of that Kingdom. His appearing in us is so many things that are said in so many ways in our bible. His appearing shows us the reality of the Cross and all that it separates. It’s so amazing! His appearing is what wipes away all the ideas and imaginations about who God is, what He’s doing, how He’s doing it, and where He is doing it.

Rabon was talking about that on Wednesday. He talked about how in the past He was being tugged and pulled in different directions regarding a certain “theological point of view.” But in the appearing of Jesus, in the

understanding that is brought by Him, in the seeing of the Cross and all that it separates, theology was thrown right out the window. It was no longer a matter of what sounded right to his mind, or what was more correct in some intellectual way, it was that the issue was done away with completely. Because the issue doesn't even exist past the Cross. The Cross doesn't divide theologies, it divides life and death. And Christ is life and light. He says that. And if He is light and life, that leaves a lot that is just death and darkness. In fact, it leaves us. The fire is separating the death that we are, and the darkness that we are, from God. The fire is giving room for life to come forth.

You see, the establishment of the Kingdom in us is not the establishment of new doctrines or theologies. It's not God coming to us and giving us more bible knowledge, or a better way to think about Him. The establishment of the Kingdom in us is the ACTUAL reality of knowing a new life. It is the understanding that the life we once thought God was trying to make better has actually been destroyed in the fire.

Jesus says "HE IS LIFE," what does that leave for US? Why does Paul say time and time again that He has died? Because Paul is seeing the reality of the Cross. He is seeing the separation of the Cross. He is seeing that what God has done is put away everything that is not life. Everything that is not Christ. Just think about what we do in the natural world with the dead. We have to put them away. We have to bury them. And we leave them in the ground.

And the same has happened to all of us in the reality of the Cross. We have been judged and buried. The nature that is of the first man, the nature that we are born into, has been put away from God.

But WE, those of us that have accepted the Lord, have been born again, and we have been born of a new life, one that is not our own. A seed has been planted in the soil. A seed that will bear fruit. But we HAVE to see that we are simply the soil, or the vessel, or the pot. We're the land in which the Kingdom will be established.

I was thinking about the picture of growth in the natural world.

Christ is:

1. Light
2. Living Water
3. The Seed.

And out from those three “ingredients,” comes the growth of the tree, or the vine, and then the fruit. So what part are we playing in this relationship? We’re the soil in which His seed is planted. What work does the soil DO in this relationship? It gives the seed opportunity to grow. It gives the seed room to grow, to plant roots and spread into the land. There isn’t anything for the soil TO DO. It just gives the seed a place to grow.

John 12:24,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” I just love that truth.

I remember Ben talking about that a while back, about how the best soil is totally dead. There are no weeds in it, no remnants of leaves, no life that is trying to crowd out the seed. The best environment for the growth of the seed is completely decomposed, dead earth. That makes for a perfect condition for life to come out. A perfect condition for the seed to grow.

It just makes me realize the necessity of seeing ourselves as dead. And when I think about our death, I think about John saying this in Revelation (1:17), ***“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.”***

I fell at His feet as dead. HE is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He’s the Author and Finisher, the Light and the Life, the Lamb, The Living Water, the Tree of Life, the Seed, the King, the High Priest, The Head.

What can we claim if Christ is all of those things?

We don’t need to claim anything!

We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We are recipients of all that He is. If it seems like Christ gets everything and we get nothing, then we aren't even understanding the point. It's not a matter of who gets what in this. It is a matter of fact that He IS Everything and we ARE nothing. Not He GETS everything and we GET nothing.

That's just the fact. Christ is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End. Our confusion about this reality comes from our lack of knowing Him. Our desire to hold onto ourself is what keeps us from experiencing the awesomeness of His life and the reality that He is IN us! It does come at a loss, but don't be fooled, it's a loss that is so over trumped by GAIN! The gaining of Life is the important part! The Life that He is IS the very spiritual blessing that Paul says we have received. We aren't trading ourselves in for more stuff, or better stuff, we're counting ourselves as dead and laying hold of the only thing that is real, the LIFE OF CHRIST.

I hope we can see that! I hope we can see that we are not just getting out of something here! It isn't a matter of getting out of something, it is a matter of life and death. We either chose to love and live in darkness, which is a confusing mess of a place. Or we enter into Life. We allow the Lord to show us something so much greater than we can express in words or put on paper. We turn our hearts to see Jesus, a Person! This whole thing, the establishing of His Kingdom in us, is not a loss! It's a gain. What is being lost is just a dead weight.

I don't know if you guys remember that analogy that Jared Henderson used during the conference, but he was talking about what we're carrying around when we are living our own life. It's kind of gross, but obviously effective because I remembered it and I'm going to use it! But he was describing our existence when we're living in the flesh and living in darkness. He described it like we're walking around with, and I'm not sure exactly how he put it, but we're walking around with a dead corpse on our back. It's right arm tied to our right arm, and left arm tied to our left arm, and it's legs tied the same way. And we have this rotten corpse tied to us. That's what we are calling life when we aren't abiding in Christ, when He isn't manifesting Himself, when He isn't being known, we are just dragging around this gross, smelly, decomposing body of sin and death and flesh.

And that's what we call life, and for some crazy reason, we want to hold onto it. And we hold onto it because we have no understanding that the Cross has put it all away. The Cross has buried that body. The Cross has separated that death from life. It has cut those bindings that are attaching that body of death. And if we turn to see the Lord, He will show us that WE were the death we were carrying around and HE will free us from it and show us that He is life.

I see the furnace, the fire of affliction that Isaiah is talking about, doing that same thing. The furnace that is refining is separating what is Life (or Christ), and what is Death (or us). It's like that fire is just burning away that whole body that we're carrying around. The fire is leaving ONLY the body of Christ, the body that we all share, the body that we have been made members of.

Hebrews 12:28-29,

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, (29) for our "God is a consuming fire."

Amen