



“We Are Citizens of Another Kingdom”

Various Scriptures

November 26th, 2018

It is time for the concluding message of our five part series, “Timeless Truths from the Early Church.” It’s been our desire to see God’s vision for each and every local church. This morning’s message is one that reminds us of what we are now, and what we shall be forevermore. This week we recognize God’s desire that “We are citizens of another Kingdom.” And that should not make us aloof to the people of this earth, but should make it so that our presence benefits them all the more.

During the early years of WW 2, Britain produced a series of war time posters. They were intended to boost the morale of the people in the case of a German attack. There were three posters produced by the British Ministry of Information. The last one was never released. But it was going to be their final attempt to stabilize British citizens. They wanted the people to subdue their fear and to carry on with the British way of life. The German army never attacked mainland England on the ground, so this poster was never published and it was almost forgotten. It was gone for 50-60 years. People forgot about it. And it was not rediscovered until the 1990s. But in recent times it has really resonated with people even all the way across the Atlantic here in the USA. That poster reads, “Keep Calm and Carry On.” That was a wonderful phrase. Hey, “Chill Out and Live Life.” “Stay Composed and Keep on Keeping On.”

If that was a battle cry for the people of Great Britain, how much more is it a wonderful call upon the Christian church in the world that we are living in? Christians are called to keep their heads in all situations and to have steady endurance. They are to be agents of peace in a world suffering in sin. This is all the more the case for us because we now that this world is passing away, and the Kingdom of God is unshakable and everlasting. We are citizens of that eternal kingdom. God has us on this earth to live as ambassadors for King Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We should be stable and steady, hearts filled with worship, seeking to point the people of this earth to a greater King.

We are living in what has been titled, “An age of outrage.” Everybody gets so offended, and so upset, and so intense, and freaked out about everything. The ability of just go on an internet Facebook rant just adds fuel to it all. They had 2.5 million to put up all over the UK. That poster would not only boost morale, but encourage citizens to continue living life. That poster was lost, but it seems needed today so badly! But you oh church, are citizens of another Kingdom. This is something early church had to learn and they did learn.

The Christians in Jerusalem were under the corrupt reign of the Herod family. Then at the apex of Rome was this line of Caesars, Caesar being more a title than a name. Caesar Tiberius, the Caligula, then Claudius, then Nero himself. But they had a greater King and they were part of a greater Kingdom and they represented King Jesus so very well. The surrounded society took note of their peace, their love, their high ethical standard and their joy even under persecution. These things called the kingdom to expand.

This morning I want to remind you that we are citizens of another Kingdom. Our hope is not in princes, or in kings, or in presidents. Whoever is elected president, Jesus is King. This morning I want to share with you three aspects of our calling as a colony of heaven here on earth. Let's learn from the example of the early church.

1. We proclaim the excellencies of the King (I Peter 2:9-17).

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In this passage that language alluding to Israel gets piled up in the text. It uses the phrases "chosen race," "royal priesthood" and "holy nation." This indicates to us that in this present age of grace, God has chosen a new race of people called Christians. In Christ we obtain membership in this chosen race not by physical descent from Abraham, but by faith like Abraham in the Messiah that has come. We are now grafted in to the promises of God given to the patriarchs. We are part of the everlasting Kingdom of God. We are part of the Jewish tree. We are those who carry out God's purposes of filling the earth with the glorious of His Name.

The text says, "We declare the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his glorious light." That's about Jesus. He has done for us spiritually what he did for Lazarus physically. He declared the call of salvation, and out of the darkness of the tomb of spiritual death we have been brought into the glorious light of life!

That is now our calling on the earth as citizens of heaven. We are to declare his excellencies. I love how that word kept getting a red squiggly underline in MS Word. Evidently, it's not in our system so it's marked by spell check. We're making up our own word. We are to declare the perfection of who he is and what he is doing that God's grace might be praised, that other believers might be built up, and that more people are reached and come to life in Christ. This is how more people are brought into the Kingdom of Jesus!!!!

Grudem: "This purpose of redemption is too often thwarted by our silence or pride, but even brief association with a Christian whose speech fulfills this purpose refreshes our spirits." Amen. The cat has too many of our tongues. But some of you are so free in your expression of God's glorious grace. And that is a beautiful thing.

In order to have your tongue let loose, you need to be in the word and the word needs to be in you. Then the Holy Spirit triggers what you've taken into your heart. Be in the word. Read and contemplate and study your Bible. Read good books that explain the Bible. What I do is blast sermons 4-5 nights a week washing dishes. I love how my wife is always blasting theologically rich praise music filled with life giving doctrine. As you let the word dwell in you, you'll be able to carry this out.

Last Sunday I went to my friend's 50th birthday party. Pastor Bill March. We started talking about our Sunday sermons and he said so many things I would have loved to include in last week's sermon, but also something for right now. He was encouraging his church in this issue of

abiding in Christ and having the word of Christ abiding in you. He stated it in such a simple way. Is your time with the Lord the exception or the norm? Is your time taking in the Bible personally, the usual thing, or unusual thing? I should not be the exception, it should be the norm? If it is the exception, you'll struggle to declare the greatness of who he is. Your heart will resonate when you hear it from others, but I don't see how you'll be able to ever declare it yourself. And that's God's desire for each of us, at some level. Immerse yourself in the doctrine of God!

2. We soothe political tension on the earth (Titus 3:1-11).

We have a calming influence in the storm as we are known as our hearts are fixed on the greater reality of the reign of the Messiah. That's what the early church was like and that's how we are to be too.

To have this point made, I could stay right here in I Peter 2, because that's where Peter goes next. He calls the church to be gracious, have good deeds, to honor the emperor. But it's on my heart to go once again to the Island of Crete. There were all kinds of crazy, uncouth, crass people living on that Island, but the a portion of the early church was there too. The Christians were to be distinct, even in relation to the frustration so many people would have experienced in relation to the powers that be.

We will find in this in Titus 3:1-2. But I want to really get into the flow of the context. This teaching about having a gracious calming influence under civil authority flows out of what we learned a few weeks back about God's training grace. Remember that? We are trained in godliness by the appearance of the grace of God. That paragraph taught that by God's grace, we are those who renounce worldly passions and are zealous for good works. And then right after that, he goes straight into our conduct in relation to the government. Isn't that classic?

We think of worldly passions in terms of sexual immorality, and there is certainly an element of that. But there are worldly passions, released in the form of demeaning insulting speech, every day on CNN, MSNBC, and FOX. And we are to be distinct.

This point is made in Titus 3:1-2, but I want to read a lot of verses, the whole surrounding context for you to see the flow. I will try to read with exhortative inflection in my voice to really see if we can highlight the spirit of all this.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

3 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one

another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Do you see the beauty of what's there? We are to be distinct swept up in the beauty of God's grace. Christians are to have a submissive, obedient posture in life toward all authorities from the national to local level. Additionally, we are to show a peaceful inclination, consideration and humility to all men. We are to behave this way toward all we encounter who do not know Christ.

Now if we were living in Utopia, that would not be such a hard thing, would it? If all leaders were upright and all the people around us were kind-hearted, this would be a piece of cake. Remember, Nero was the emperor of Rome. Herod was on the throne in Judea. And remember what the people of Crete were like? Epimenides: Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." Someone else said, "Liars ever, men of Crete, Nasty brutes that live to eat."

Likewise, we will find that our leaders, on both sides of the aisle, are flawed people. The people around us may or may not be fine upstanding citizens. One way or the other, here is how healthy Christians are to interact with the people in the world around them.

If a ruler or authority requires you to sin, that's when civil disobedience is in order. We see that in the Bible. They told Peter and John to stop preaching Jesus, and they kept preaching Jesus. They told the women in Egypt to kill all the babies, and Moses family said "No" and tried to spare his life by floating him down the Nile. There are times for civil disobedience. But even then, it remains civil. We are not only to be submissive, but courteous.

But verses 1-2 reveal God's will for you in the midst of all that. We are to be courteous.

We are in a day that I think this speaks more to our online interaction with people than our personal interaction with people. Facebook and Twitter have created wildfires of people fighting. You see it the comment sections of videos and articles too. It's crazy. I've seen Christians start to resemble Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. You have a person that can be singing the praises of the Lamb and then spewing venom upon people they disagree with. The person behind the avatar or the profile picture is an image bearer of God blinded in Satan's deception and caught in the trap of their own sin. And your ever tempted, remember, your insults won't help get them out of it. God's will: Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, that you might know how to answer everyone, even when your using your fingertips to type.

Now I know some of you are struggling. I can even detect it in your countenance. You're thinking, "But this world is going to hell in the handbasket, and I ticked at those who are hastening its demise." If that's how you feel, I know how that feels, believe me I feel it too. Now we come to point three. But right now, I persist in what we've read and received this morning. This is God's will for us. And until you've got points 1 and point 2, you can't do point 3. But point 3 is a vitally important function of the church of God on the earth.

First, we proclaim the excellencies of the King. We are filled with Gospel glory! Some Christians are so much more fluent in political controversy than they are Gospel truth and that's shame. Second, we sooth political tension on the earth. We calm the inflammation instead of inciting it or fueling it or contributing to it.

3. We restrain the moral decay our society (Matthew 5:13-16).

We opened this series, "Time Truths from the Early Church," not in a letter to one of those early churches, but with the teaching of Jesus himself. Remember way back? He taught we are the family of God. Now I will finish up this series with the teaching of Jesus again, and his vision for his church. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That comes in Matthew 5:13-16. But to emphasize the biblical point once again that character comes first, I will read in Matthew 5:1-16.

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^[a] of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.** **12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**
13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.
14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.** **16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[b] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

They used salt in those days to keep meat from getting spoiled. Let me ask you this question. Let's say you went out on a weekend getaway, and you came back to find that you left a piece of delicious beef out on the countertop all weekend long. Would you be willing to eat that piece of meat? If you would, you'd be doing something foolish. Not only would it be starting to smell bad, you would get sick from harmful bacteria and germs collecting on the meat. But if we put it in the fridge, the meat is fine. It does not spoil. Did they have refrigerators in Jesus' day? The way they would keep meat from rotting is by packing it in salt. Salt has the ability to preserve meat and keeping it from spoiling.

Likewise, in the best case scenario we as Christians are those who help preserve righteousness in a society. At the very least, we can slow down the process of moral decay on the earth. There is a difference between the two, and in the end, Bible prophecy indicates a very corrupt world at the 2nd Coming of Jesus. But in the meantime, we are here for the good of the world to slow down that process.

In order to be salt, and to preserve righteousness in society, we need to remain salty ourselves. That's talking about church life. We need to retain that strong flavor and saltiness in our own worship, teaching, and fellowship. So many churches dumb things down to appeal to people in the world. Then what good are they in the world. They become bland and useless. That's exactly what has happened to countless liberal mainline denominational churches where their properties are like museums and you can hear the echoes their services are so empty.

We have got to remain salty ourselves. Then as we permeated society and neighborhoods with gracious character they will detect something different about us. Society is preserved. We have are living in an age losing the guardrails of sensibility and morality. But it must come with grace, and love.

Rosaria Butterfield. A lesbian feminist activist who headed up women's studies at Syracuse University. She was taken into the loving, humble, gracious hospitality of a Biblically faith pastor and his wife. She came to faith in Jesus. She is now a pastor's wife full on the Holy Spirit. It was love, and respect, kindness in the conversation that God used as he told her the truth in the context of relationship. She wrote this great book that I think the whole church should read called "The Gospel Comes with A House Key." It is such a doctrinally rich discussion of the Christian life, dripping with grace, truth and love and strength.

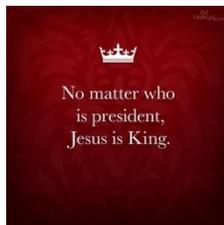
She said, "The strength of our words should correspond to the strength of our relationships."

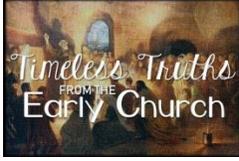
We do so by proclaiming and hold fast the exhortations found in God's Word. When we live the life and stand for the life of purity described in God's Word, we will incur judgment. Jesus says that those who do not act as the salt of the earth are worthless.

How? How you vote. How you speak. How you type.

Keep Calm and Carry On. Why? No matter who is president, Jesus Christ is King.

CH Spurgeon said that every man or woman redeemed by Christ carries around a book with three simple pages in it. That book is something of a biography. There is a black page, and red page and white page. The black page speaks of his past sinfulness. The red page reminds us of the shed blood and speaks of all Christ has done for us. The white page looks at our present situation! That purity should be evident in the way we conduct ourselves, even those we might consider enemies.





“We Are Citizens of Another Kingdom”

Various Scriptures

November 26th, 2018

Questions for Application and Fellowship

MY STORY

QUICK REVIEW

Was any point in this weekend’s message particularly challenging, encouraging or helpful for you?

Why did God want you to hear this message now?

DIGGING DEEPER