

Jesus, the Heir to God's Kingdom

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- [0 : 0 0] Father, we again thank you for your word. We thank you that through your word we see the glory of your son Jesus. And so help us, Lord, as we read and as we think about it, that we might be able to see the glory of Jesus more and more clearly, that we might be changed more and more according to the glory of your son Jesus.
- In the name of Christ we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, a few weeks ago, I told you about how I became an Australian citizen.
- And moving citizenship from Indonesia to Australia meant that some things had to change. So I now have to pay taxes to the Australian government and not to the Indonesian one.
- And I now need to obey and follow a new government which expects different things from me. For example, like voting, which is mandatory here and not in Indonesia.
- It's the same with Christian living. Last week we saw that Jesus is king, our king. And in our passage today as well, we will see that he's the heir to God's kingdom.
- [1 : 1 6] Some people don't like that, like the leaders of Israel. And so they reject Jesus. But for those who accept him as king, and that means us, that means abiding by his rules and living the life that he expects us to live.
- So let's look at the story. In chapter 19, verse 45, Jesus entered the temple courtyard and began to drive merchants out.
- Now imagine the scene. In the previous passage, Jesus approached Jerusalem, the capital city of the kingdom during that time, riding a donkey like a peaceful king, being paraded by his followers.
- And then he entered the city and now he entered the temple, the symbol of God's authority in Jerusalem. And then he found some merchants who were selling in the courtyard and he began destroying their stalls.
- Jesus was making a statement. He's the king. And these economic practices in the temple were not part of the life of the kingdom of God that he expected.
- [2 : 3 5] Why not? Verse 46. It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.
- Now here Jesus quotes two Old Testament passages that clarify God's expectation for his kingdom. And when there are quotations of other parts of the Bible, it's usually helpful to look at them in their own contexts.
- So let's do that. The first one, my house will be a house of prayer, comes from Isaiah 56. And we'll read it in its context. This is what the Lord says.
- Maintain justice and do what is right or righteous. Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, the Lord will surely exclude me from his people.
- No. Foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord. These, these people, these foreigners, I will bring to my holy mountain.

[3 : 42] That's where the temple was. And give them joy in my house of prayer, meaning the temple. For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

That's the first thing that Jesus quoted. This is what God expected of his kingdom. To maintain righteousness and justice.

So that foreigners might be enticed to come to his temple. Those who don't know the name of God might be enticed to come and his temple would be called a house of prayer for all nations, not just Jews.

This is righteousness for the sake of mission. Now, that was what the temple courtyard was for. The Jews could enter, back then, the Jews could enter the temple itself to pray.

But the Gentiles, the non-Jews, had to stay in the courtyard to pray there. Now, here in our passage, Jesus came and found that the courtyard was filled with merchants.

[4 : 54] And so, instead of allowing space for the Gentiles to come and make the temple a house of prayer for all nations, these merchants filled the courtyard with trades.

And very likely, these trades included corrupt practices. Like it's mentioned in the Old Testament, you're using unbalanced scales, for example. And so, Jesus continued by quoting Jeremiah 7.

Again, we'll read it in its context. God says, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in Israel, in the temple.

But, will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, and then come and stand before me in this house, in this temple, which bears my name, and say, we are safe, safe to do all these detestable things?

Has this house, this temple, which bears my name, become a den of robbers to you? Again, God expects righteousness shown to those in need, foreigners, orphans, and widows.

[6 : 07] But instead, the Jews, during that time, practiced dodgy trading, that robbed people. And then, they thought, God's presence in the temple, would somehow, protect them, like, a den, for robbers.

And so here, King Jesus came, and reinforced, God's expectation. He reset the temple courtyard, to its intended purpose, to be a house, of prayer, for all nations.

This is the kind of God, that we worship, the kind of king, that we serve. He invites, and welcomes, and welcomes all, to enjoy his goodness.

He loves, justice, and fairness, and righteousness, and kindness. He hates, ethnocentricity, and racism, and corrupt practices.

And so, this is the kingdom life, that he expects, from his kingdom, from his people, to live, righteously, so that people, especially the foreigners, especially those, who don't know Jesus, who don't know God, might see the goodness, of God, and King, and come, and worship him.

[7 : 34] I have a friend, who comes, from a country, that's traditionally, quite ethnocentric.

Many, in that country, don't know Jesus, and so this friend, of mine, didn't know Jesus. But he's been, around the world, he's been, working in many, different countries, and he came, to Australia, and we got, to know each other.

And one night, as we were, having dinner together, I told him, about Jesus, and the difference, that Jesus made, to people's lives. He was thinking, about it, and then he told me, a story, of when he was, in America.

And he got to know, a white, Caucasian couple, who had, an African American, child. He was, so confused.

And, so he asked them, how? How? And they said, oh, we adopted him. And he got, even more confused.

[8 : 44] Because in his country, ethnocentricity, was so strong, that there's, very little room, for acceptance, of another race. Especially, someone, who comes from, a race, that is, historically, oppressed, in America.

And so he asked, why? And they just said, because we have tasted, the goodness, and the kindness, of Jesus. And this friend of mine, said to me, I didn't understand, that at the time.

But now that you've, told me about Jesus, it all makes sense. It all makes sense. Life of righteousness, righteousness, and love, and justice, is the fruit, that God expects, from his kingdom.

It doesn't get us the kingdom, we receive the kingdom, through faith only. But once we are, in the kingdom, it's the fruit, that God expects. Because people, can see the fruit.

And they might be enticed, to come and join, and taste, the goodness, of God. That's why Jesus, cleansed the temple here, to restore it, to that purpose.

[9 : 59] But the leaders, did not like it. In verse 47, to 48, the leaders, tried, to kill Jesus. So here, Jesus showed himself, as the king.

He reinforced, God's expectation, of the kingdom. But the leaders, rejected him. They did not want, to recognize him, as the king. And so, they tried to kill him.

But they could not, in verse 48, they could not, find any way, to do it. Because all the people, hung on his words. And so, they tried, to destroy his reputation.

instead, in chapter 20, verse 1 to 2. Here, while Jesus, was teaching, in front of the people, the leaders, asked him, wait a second, Jesus, who gave you, this authority?

We didn't, give it to you. We are the leaders, of Israel. We didn't, give the authority, to you. We did not, sanction your ministry, or your teaching, or your action, in destroying, those stalls, at the temple.

[11 : 11] The leaders, here, are trying, to flip, the situation around. Instead of them, paying tribute, to the king, with their righteous lives, they wanted, Jesus, the king, to be accountable, to them.

Jesus, however, responded, with a counter question, in verse 3 to 4. and asked them, what they thought, about John the Baptist.

In verse 4, John's baptism, was it from heaven, or of human origin? Now, this is because, John the Baptist's ministry, was closely linked, to Jesus.

John the Baptist, introduced, the coming of the Messiah, the coming of Jesus. And so, what they thought, about John the Baptist, would be the same, as what they thought, about Jesus.

But pay attention, to the response, in verse 5 to 7. They discussed it, among themselves, and said, if we say, from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him?

[12 : 15] But if we say, of human origin, all the people, will stone us. Because they are persuaded, that John was a prophet. And so they answered, we don't know.

We don't know, where it was from. Notice that the leaders, did not even care, about finding the truth. They just weighed, between the two answers, and tried to decide, which of the two, was more beneficial, for themselves.

And when none, of the two, was beneficial, they just answered, you don't know. They didn't care, whether Jesus came, from God or not. They didn't care, whether John's baptism, came from God or not.

They just wanted, to get rid of Jesus, or at least get Jesus, to be accountable, to them. After all, as a previous passage, indicates, and the story indicates, these people thought, they were self-sufficient, without Jesus.

They thought, they could gain, eternal life, only because of their, self-righteousness. But Jesus came, and demanded, humility, dependency, helplessness, receiving the kingdom, like a little child, giving tribute, to the king, with their self, with their righteous lives.

[13 : 42] Oh, their pride, did not allow that. And so, they did not care, about the truth. They just wanted, to get rid of Jesus, and so in verse 8, Jesus answered, well, okay then.

I'm not going to answer, your question either. Because the leaders, were not interested, were not interested, in finding the truth. And sadly, there are so many people, who are like this, aren't there?

They reject Jesus, because they feel, self-sufficient, self-righteous, independent. they don't feel, that they need, Jesus. Jesus, the king.

No, I'm the king, of my own life. For them, Jesus is just, someone who demands, them to, get rid of, their autonomy, and, sense of righteousness, and, to pay tribute, to him.

In fact, a recent survey, shows that, one of the biggest reasons, why people, become atheists, is because, they believe, that religion, is only a crutch, for the weak.

[14 : 51] And I would say, yes, it's true, but we are weak. But people, don't like that, do they? To feel, they like to feel, that they are strong, so, they don't, they don't need God, they think.

Because that realization, hurts, doesn't it? To realize, that we are weak, and so we need Jesus, who is strong. We are just, followers, and so we need a king.

We are just, sheep, and so we need a shepherd. We are just like, helpless children, so we need to, just receive, the kingdom, instead of, striving for it.

We don't like that, it's uncomfortable. And isn't that, why the leaders, rejected Jesus? Because they felt, they could run Israel, without the king. They could gain, eternal life, without the savior.

And isn't that, why, so many people today, reject Jesus as well, because they think, they can run, their own lives, without God, or better than God.

[16 : 01] And they can be, good, self-sufficient, people, without Jesus. But here is the thing, our lives, our lives, don't belong to us.

And so we can't live, without God. Just as the kingdom of God, did not belong, to these leaders. And so they could not run it, without the king.

And in verse 9, Jesus shows them that. Jesus shows them, who the kingdom, the kingdom belongs to. It doesn't belong, to them.

And he shows it, through a parable, a story, about a vineyard, and its owner. But before we get there, to look at the parable, let's look at the background, for this parable.

In Isaiah 5, our Old Testament reading. Isaiah 5 says, the vineyard of the Lord Almighty, is the nation of Israel.

[17 : 07] And on the bottom there, God looked for justice, that's the fruit, he's looking for, from the vineyard. But he saw bloodshed. And again, he looks for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

This is the same, as what Jesus has said before, when he cleansed the temple. God expected righteousness, so that foreigners, would see that shining light, that sweet fruit, and desire to come, and worship him.

But what happens? Well, in this parable, there's a vineyard owner, who entrusts his vineyard, to some tenants, some farmers.

And so, based on the background, of Isaiah 5, this is God, entrusting his kingdom, to the leaders of Israel. Now, when it's time for harvest, the owner sends his servants, to collect the fruit.

This is what happens, in Old Testament time. God sending prophets, to rebuke Israel, and its leaders, when they were being unrighteous. Because God demanded, to see the fruit, of righteousness.

[18 : 20] righteousness. But what happens? The prophets, got beaten up. And so, finally, in verse 13, the owner sends, his son, whom he loves.

This is unmistakably, Jesus, God's beloved son. But in verse 14, the tenants, kill him, because they want, the inheritance.

They want, the vineyard, to themselves. Again, this is so obvious, because the leaders of Israel, have been trying, to kill Jesus. Because they don't want him, as the king.

They want the kingdom, to themselves. The vineyard, to themselves. They want to run it, without the king. They think, the kingdom is theirs, just like so many people, today, think their lives, are theirs.

And so, they reject, the king. As a result, in verse 16, to 17, God, would do, three things.

[19 : 31] First, he would come, and judge, and kill them. That's a scary thought. Second, he would give, the vineyard, that is, the status, of the kingdom of God, to others.

I think this refers, to the book of Acts, where Gentiles, that is, non-Jews, we, are invited, into the kingdom of God, not through joining, ethnic Israel, but straight, through Jesus, the king.

And so, we are, the kingdom of God, through Jesus. And third, the stone, the builders rejected, has become, the cornerstone.

Meaning, God would make, Jesus, the one who's rejected, by the leaders, to be the cornerstone, of his kingdom. The, most important, stone.

He is now, the king, whom, all, those who want, to enter the kingdom, must go through. And, he will be a, judging king.

[20 : 39] In verse 18, everyone who falls, on that stone, will be broken, to pieces. Anyone, on whom it falls, will be crushed. This rejected, Jesus, will be the king, who crushes.

And, if we think about it, previously, Jesus came, into Jerusalem, on a donkey, peacefully. But, in Revelation 19, Jesus will come, on a white horse, destroying, his enemies.

Now, ironically, upon hearing this, the leaders, did not repent. They got, so offended, that Jesus, talked about them, as the villains, in this parable.

And so, immediately, it says there, immediately, they rushed, to fulfill, the parable, about themselves. themselves. They wanted, to seize, and kill Jesus.

They thought, the kingdom, belonged to them. So, they rejected, Jesus. They didn't want, to pay tribute, to the king. And so, they fulfilled, the parable, and they would, face judgment.

[21 : 51] And that's, the first, application point. Don't be, like the leaders, of Israel, in this story. If you haven't, accepted Jesus, as your king, do so.

Stop, rejecting, him. Friends, our lives, don't belong, to us. Even if we think, our lives belong, to us.

We know, that we are all, lousy kings, of our own lives, don't we? From children, teenagers, and even adults. We don't know, what's good, for ourselves.

We are lousy kings. We don't know, the kind of life, that's good, for us. If I allow, my kids, to decide, what's good, for them, oh, they will drink, bath water.

We don't know, the kind of life, that's good for us. Even adults, make mistake, after mistake, after mistake. We all need, a king, who knows, what's best, for us.

[23 : 05] And who fights, for what's best, for us. Even if, what's best, for us, includes, his own death. The king's death. He still gave himself up, for us, because he loves us.

That's the kind of king, that we need. Now, if you keep rejecting the king, like the text says, God will judge you.

And it's such a scary thought, when the God, who created the whole world, only with his words, judges you. So, accept Jesus, as your king.

Now, if you'd like to know more, about why I believe in Jesus, feel free to ask me, I'd be more than happy, to share, with you. Second application point, for those who have, already accepted Jesus, as your king, and that means, most of us, I think, let's bear fruit.

That's another thing, that we see here. God demands, a certain lifestyle, from his kingdom. What's the fruit? To live, righteously, so that other people, those people, who don't know Jesus yet, might see the goodness, of our God, and king, and might come, and worship him.

[24 : 31] I know some people, in our church, who would be the first ones, to offer a ride, to someone, who can't drive themselves.

I know some people, who have welcomed people, in need, to stay in their houses. I know some people, who have been considering, taking refugees, into their homes.

There's a friend of mine, in Perth, whose church members, many of them, in one church, take foster kids, into their homes, to the point, that the local council, sent the church, a thank you certificate.

People can see, the fruit. Now, the church, doesn't always, produce good fruit. Throughout, the history of the church, sometimes, we do badly.

And when we don't, produce fruit, and we do badly, we ought to admit it. We ought to acknowledge, that we fail, we are not doing, what our king, wants us to do.

[25 : 42] We ought to admit, that we are a community, of sick, helpless, sinful, people. And therefore, we need Jesus, the king.

We repent. But friends, when we do, produce fruit, we become, the lights of the world. Throughout, the history of the church, story after story, of, when we produce fruit, we change, the world.

we shine. It's the fruit, that God is looking for. And it's the light, that shines, to invite people, who don't know Jesus, to come and see, and taste, that the Lord, is good.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, we thank you, for this great reminder, that Jesus, is indeed king. And so, help us, Lord, every single day, to be reminded, and to recognize, his kingship, over our lives, in every single sphere, of our lives.

And help us, through your Holy Spirit, to produce, the fruit of righteousness, that you expect. So that when people, see our lives, our changed lives, they might see, your glory.

[27 : 11] In the name of Jesus, our King, we pray. Amen.