

Jesus, the Heir to God's Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Please keep your Bibles open to Luke chapter 19 on page 1053. Well, a few weeks ago I told you about how I became an Australian citizen.

Now, moving citizenship from Indonesia to Australia meant that some things had to change, right? So I now have to pay taxes to the Australian government instead of the Indonesian one.

I now need to obey and follow a new government which expects different things from me, like voting, for example, which is mandatory here, and it's not in Indonesia.

And 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 is the heir to God's kingdom.

Some people don't like that, like the leaders of Israel in the text, and so they reject Jesus. But for those who accept him as king, that means abiding by his rules and living the life that he expects us to live.

[1 : 15] 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, like Dorothy mentioned, Jesus entered Jerusalem, or approached Jerusalem, the capital city of the kingdom, during that time, riding a donkey like a peaceful king, paraded by his followers.

And now after he entered Jerusalem, 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 stores.

Jesus here 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.

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.

[2 : 32] Now here Jesus quotes two Old Testament passages that clarify God's expectation of the kingdom.

And usually when there are quotations of the Bible, or other parts of the Bible, it's usually beneficial to look at them in their own context.

So we'll do that. The first one, My house will be a house of prayer, is from Isaiah 56. And we'll read it in the 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 foreigners, these people, I will bring to my holy mountain, where the temple was, and give them joy in my house of prayer.

[3 : 36] That's the temple. For my house, the temple, 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.

And his temple would be called a house of prayer for all nations, not just Jews. And that was what the temple courtyard was for.

The Jews, during that time, could enter the temple itself to pray, but the Gentiles, the non-Jews, had to stay in the courtyard to pray there, at the courtyard.

Now here in our passage, Jesus came and found that the courtyard was filled with merchants. 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.

[4 : 47] And very likely, these trades would include corrupt practices. In some of Old Testament passages, it mentioned using unbalanced scales, for example.

And so Jesus continued by quoting Jeremiah 7. Again, we'll read it in its context. God says this, 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.

But instead, the Jews during that time practiced doji trading that robbed people, and then, they thought, God's presence in the temple would somehow protect them, like a den for robbers.

[6 : 10] And so here, King Jesus came, and reinforced God's expectation for the kingdom.

He reset the temple courtyard, to its intended purpose, to be a house of prayer, for all nations. Now, this is the kind of God that we worship.

This is the kind of king that we serve. He invites 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 people, to live righteously, so that people, especially the foreigners, especially those who don't know God, might see the goodness of God and King and come and worship Him.

Righteousness for the sake of mission. I have a friend who comes from a country that's traditionally quite ethnocentric.

[7 : 32] 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.

One night, as we were having dinner together, I told him about Jesus and the difference that Jesus makes in 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 in America 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. Because in his country, ethnocentricity was so strong that there's very little room for acceptance of another person, of another race.

Let alone someone from a race that's historically oppressed. And so he asked, why? And they just said, because we have tasted Jesus' love and goodness.

[8 : 57] And this friend of mine said to me, I didn't understand that at the time, but now that you've talked to me about Jesus, it all makes sense. Life of righteousness and love and justice is the fruit that God expects from his kingdom.

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

But the leaders did not like it. In verse 47 to 48, the leaders tried to kill Jesus. And Jesus showed himself as the king who reinforced God's expectation for the kingdom.

And the leaders rejected him. They didn't want to recognize him as the king. And so they tried to kill him, but they could not because the people followed Jesus.

And so, instead, they tried to destroy his reputation. In chapter 20, verse 1 to 2, while Jesus was teaching in front of the people, the leaders asked him, wait a second, Jesus, who gave you this authority?

[10 : 22] We didn't give it to you. We are the leaders of Israel. We didn't give it to you. We did not sanction your ministry or your teaching or your action in destroying those stalls at the temple.

Here, the leaders 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 he 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 Jesus. And so, what they thought about John the Baptist would have been the same as what they thought about Jesus. But pay attention to their response in verse 5 to 7.

[11 : 35] They discussed it among themselves and said, if we say from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him? But if we say of human origin, all the people will stone us because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.

so they answered, we don't know where it was from. Now, the leaders did not even care about finding the truth.

They just weighed between the two answers and tried to decide which one is like mini, mini, mini, mini, mo. Tried to decide which of the two was more beneficial for themselves.

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

They didn't care whether Jesus' authority came from God or not. They just wanted to get rid of him or at least get him to be accountable to them. After all, as a previous passage indicates, these leaders thought they were self-sufficient without Jesus.

[12 : 48] They thought they could gain eternal life only through their own righteousness. Now, Jesus came and demanded humility, dependency, helplessness like a little child and for them to bring tribute to the king with their righteous lives and for them Oh no, their pride did not allow that.

And so, they didn't care about the truth. They just wanted to get rid of Jesus. And so, in verse 8, Jesus said, well, okay then.

I'm not going to answer your question either because the leaders were not interested in finding the truth. 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 is just someone who demands them to get rid of their autonomy and sense of righteousness and to pay tribute to him.

[14 : 09] 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. I would say that is true and we are weak.

But people don't like that, do they? People like to feel that they are strong so they don't need God. Because that realization hurts, doesn't it?

To realize that we are weak 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 just receive the kingdom with faith, with helplessness. We don't like that.

And isn't that why the leaders rejected Jesus? Because they felt they could run Israel without the king and gain eternal life without the savior.

[15 : 19] And isn't that why so many people today reject Jesus as well? because they think they could run their own lives better than God. And they can be good, self-sufficient people without Jesus.

But here is the thing. 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. people without them. And in verse 9, Jesus shows them that. Jesus shows them who 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 into the parable, let's look at the background of this parable.

Israel. And it's Isaiah 5, our Old Testament reading. Isaiah 5, 7. It says, the vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel.

[16 : 29] And on the bottom, God looked for justice, that's the fruit that he's looking for, but saw bloodshed. and he looked for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Again, this is the same as what Jesus has said before when he cleansed the temple. God expected righteousness so that foreigners, those who don't know God, would see that shining light, that sweet fruit, and desire to come to worship God.

Now, in this parable, a vineyard owner, entrusts his vineyard to some tenants. And so, based on the background of Isaiah 5, we know that this is God entrusting his kingdom to Israel's leaders.

When it's time for the harvest, the owner sends his servants to collect the fruit. And this is what happens in Old Testament time.

God is sending prophets to rebuke Israel, and its leaders, when they were being unrighteous, because God demands to see the fruit of righteousness. But, the prophets got beaten up.

[17 : 54] And so, finally, in verse 13, the owner sends his beloved son. I will send my son, whom I love. this is unmistakably Jesus, God's beloved son.

But, in verse 4, 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, haven't they? they don't want him as the king, they want the kingdom to themselves 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.

First, he would come and judge and kill them. second, he would give the vineyard, that is the status as the kingdom of God, to others.

[19 : 07] Now this refers to the book of Acts, where Gentiles, non-Jews, us, we are invited into the kingdom of God, not through joining the ethnic Israel, but straight through Jesus.

We become the kingdom of God. God. And lastly, third, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. That is, God would make Jesus the one who is 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 this king will judge, in verse 18, everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

That is, people who reject Jesus will be crushed by him. Ironically, ironically, upon hearing this, the leaders did not repent.

They got so offended that Jesus talked about them as the villains in his parable, and so immediately, they rushed to fulfill the parable about themselves.

[20 : 28] 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, so they fulfilled the parable, and they would face judgment.

And that's the first application point. Don't be like the leaders of Israel in this story. And so if you haven't accepted Jesus as your king, I know that most of you have, but if you haven't, do so.

Stop rejecting him. Our lives don't belong to ourselves. Even if we think that 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. If I let my children do what they think is good for them, they would drink bath water with their pee in it.

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

[22 : 01] Even if what's best for us includes his own death, death, he still fought for it. He still gave himself up for us because he loves us.

That's the king that we need. We are not the king, the best king for our own lives. 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 with only his words judges you. If you'd like to know more about why I believe in Jesus, feel free to ask me.

I'd be happy to share. The second application, for those who have already accepted Jesus, and that's most of us, 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 who have not known God, might see the goodness of our God and king, and come and worship him.

[23 : 26] Righteousness for the sake of mission. God is a God 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 that. Now, the church doesn't always produce good fruit. Throughout our history, 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 the king wants us to do. We ought to admit that we are a community of sick people, helpless, and therefore we need Jesus the king.

[24 : 45] We repent. But friends, when we do produce fruit, we become the light of the world. story after story, throughout the history of the church, when the church produces good fruit, we change the world.

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 that he is good.

God is good. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this great reminder that Jesus is indeed king, and you have made him king because of his obedience unto death and his resurrection.

So, please help us to acknowledge that he is king every single day in our lives. And help us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of righteousness so that when people see our lives, they see your glory.

In the name of Jesus, our king, we pray. Amen.