



Citizens and Strangers (Part 2) – Kingdom Promised

JT English – March 11, 2018

[Video]

Female: The kingdom of God is as multifaceted and mysterious as our Creator, a kingdom we only see now through a glass darkly. Though we can't picture it fully, God's kingdom is the story told in Scripture, from the garden to the city, and in the middle of the story God chose to reveal his kingdom in a new way.

The gospel is not only Jesus coming and dying to save us from our sins; it's also the story of God establishing his dwelling, dominion, and dynasty in the world. We live as both citizens and strangers, prisoners of hope in this shadow kingdom, all while knowing it's not our true home, that something better is coming, that God's perfect kingdom *is* coming.

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Please open your Bible to Matthew 1:1. As you're opening there, allow me to briefly introduce myself. My name is JT English. I oversee The Village Church Institute here at The Village, so all of our adult education (like classes, training programs, residency) I have the opportunity to participate in, but today I get the opportunity to preach, which I'm really excited about, especially as we're in this sermon series on the kingdom of God, a concept that is dear to my heart and something I care deeply about.

I was reminded this week of the importance of promises. I have a little boy at home. He's 3 years old. His name is Thomas. Thomas is this incredible, fun-loving little boy who is just smiling everywhere he goes. If you've seen him before, you know that's true of him. The fun thing about us being parents right now is that we get to introduce him to fun ideas or shows or toys. What he loves right now is the movie *Cars* from 10 years ago.

He doesn't know there's a *Cars 2* or a *Cars 3* yet. That buys us some time to slowly launch and release those to him. But he loves that first movie *Cars*. He has a little Lightning McQueen, and he loves watching the show. Earlier this week, my wife and I had a lot of appointments at the beginning of the week. We had some errands to run and things to do, and we had to take Thomas with us because we weren't able to arrange for childcare for him.

So he was going to hang out with us for the whole day. What I did is I said, "Okay. Hey, buddy, we have a long day ahead of us. I'm going to need you to listen and obey. You have to listen to Mom and Dad, and at the end of the day, do you know what we're going to do, you and Dad? We're going to watch *Cars*." His face lights up. He gets so excited. "Are you serious, Dad? We get to watch *Cars*!" "Yeah, buddy. We're going to have a movie night. Dad is going to order pizza. You and me hanging out right here on the couch tonight. You and me watching *Cars*."

Do you know what my son did every five minutes for the rest of the day? "Dad, is it time to watch *Cars* yet? Is it time to watch *Cars* yet, Dad?" Tugging on my hand. You know, we're at the grocery store, we're running different errands, and every five minutes he's reminding his dad of the promise his dad made to him. "Hey, Daddy, is it time to watch *Cars* yet? I want to watch *Cars* so badly with you, Dad. Would you come and watch *Cars* with me?"

That night finally arrived, and Dad gets on the phone. I order pizza, and we have pizza delivered to the house. I put on *Cars*, and his eyes just light up because he realized Dad's promise had finally come true. Dad had been faithful to his promise. Dad had made a promise, but Dad had also been faithful to keep that promise. So we sat there watching *Cars*.

What was so fun for me is I could look down at my little boy sitting right next to me with his little head, eating his pizza, and he had just experienced the faithfulness of a dad who had promised something to him and had kept it, but also I was looking at the world through *my* lens and thinking about the joy of seeing a son trust in the promise of his father, the joy of seeing a little child trust in their parent so deeply they would believe and trust, only to see it come to fruition.

I know promises can really make or break a lot of our earthly experience. For some of you, you've been on the receiving end of beautiful, wonderful promises, where somebody has promised something to you or obligated themselves to you in some way, and through thick and thin they were there for you. They stuck by your side and fulfilled the promise they had made to you.

Perhaps that's *you*. You made a promise to somebody, and regardless of what was coming you were going to remain faithful to that promise. How life-giving is that to see a promise made and a promise kept? But also how life-stealing is it to see a promise given that *isn't* kept? I know you and I have been on the receiving end of *that* kind of a promise before, where somebody obligated themselves to us, gave their word to us, and did not fulfill their obligations.

I know you and I have also been a people weak and needy and broken who have obligated ourselves or made promises to the kinds of things we were not able to fulfill. Promises have the promise to bring life or the ability to bring death. Promises can bring life or death. So as we're thinking about this sermon series, week two of the kingdom of God, *Citizens and Strangers*, what does it look like to have the kingdom promised to us?

If you were with us last week, you know we talked about *The Kingdom Made and Lost*. Let me catch you up really quickly. First, we talked about the *kingdom made* in Genesis 1 and 2. God in creation was establishing his kingdom among us in our presence. This world was meant to be God's kingdom forever. He was going to reign and rule forever.

If you remember, Matt used three terms, three *D* words, to talk about God's kingdom: *dwelling*, *dominion*, and *dynasty*. God was going to dwell in our presence. In our very midst we were going to enjoy the fullness of life of relationship with God. He was walking with us in the coolness of day. We had access to him. We didn't have to go search for him, but he was with us because he dwelt there.

You and I were made as royal image bearers, vice-regents, as God's dynasty. You and I were made for a purpose: to make much of God's fame and God's glory among his creation. You, above any other part of God's creation, were meant for a purpose, to reign as an image bearer on God's behalf. The work you and I were supposed to give ourselves to was to take dominion over every single part of God's creation.

We weren't supposed to just stay in Eden, but we were going to push God's presence, as his image bearers, over every single part of his creation. But you and I know the story doesn't end there in Genesis, chapter 2. We turn to Genesis, chapter 3, and move from a kingdom that has been made to a *kingdom lost*. Rather than reflecting God, we rebel against God. Rather than reflecting God, we try to rival God and become gods unto ourselves. We talk about this as being *sin*, that we separated ourselves from God in the garden of Eden.

There's a verse at the end of Genesis 3 that haunts me every single time I read it. It says as a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God, God drove them out. Just think of that imagery with me for a minute. Here you have image bearers reigning and ruling on God's behalf, but now they're rebels, traitors, treacherous, rebellious against the one true God, and God comes to them and drives them out of his presence. A picture of the kingdom lost.

When I think of that image in my mind, I think of their nails digging into the last pieces of the dirt of Eden as they're being driven out of God's presence, perhaps never to enter it again. Genesis, chapters 4-11, then tell this incredible story of a downward spiral of humanity into murder, chaos, idolatry, and paganism that ultimately ends in us trying to build our own kingdom.

We continue wanting to rival God and rebel against God, and we build this tower of Babel to say, "We don't even need you anymore, God. See? We'll make a kingdom for ourselves." We realize this story of Genesis 3-11 of rebellion is not simply a story recorded for us in the Bible but a story of our everyday existence. We are here trying to build kingdoms to ourselves because we have lost the actual kingdom of God.

We're living in exile, desperate for God's presence. You might not know this, but the thing you are most desperate for is the presence of God. The thing you need most in your life, more than anything else...more than fame, more than money, more than relationship with human beings...is the presence of God to move powerfully in your life, but Genesis 4-11 tells us we are in exile, separated from God. This is your experience and my experience.

So when we move from Genesis 3-11, seeing this story of this downward fall of humanity, this is the question that must be asked of the biblical text...*Will God ever restore his kingdom?* Will God ever return to rule over us as our King, our dynasty? Will we ever take dominion over the entire world, and, perhaps most importantly, will God dwell with us again? Will we ever live in his presence again or are we without his presence forever?

This is the question of the kingdom made, the kingdom lost, and the kingdom promised. I want you to look at Matthew 1:1. It says, "**The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**" Matthew 1:1 is this incredibly important verse, because here's what this verse does, if you haven't seen this before. It stands in the gap between God's promises fulfilled and God's promises made.

You and I spend a lot of time thinking about how for Matthew, moving forward, God's promises were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but we haven't spent a lot of time thinking about the promises that were made before Jesus Christ that he would come and fulfill. What Matthew is trying to do is he's trying to clue you into this idea that God is both a covenant maker and a covenant keeper, that God gives us promises and he is faithful to keep his promises.

If this is the first time you've ever opened your Bible or you're still really unfamiliar with your Bible, you can look for Matthew 1:1. Everything moving to the right from there is a record of God's promises kept. Everything on the other side of that, Genesis all the way to Malachi, is a record of God's promises made, and this verse stands in the gap, trying to connect for us God's promises made and God's promises kept.

So the question from Genesis 3 moving onward is...*Is God going to restore his kingdom?* Will we live in Eden ever again? Will we be his image bearers, a dynasty reigning on behalf of the one true King, or is Babel our future forever? Will we continue building kingdoms unto ourselves, for our fame, for our glory, for our sake, and for our name, or will God return? Will he promise to bring his kingdom back?

I want to show you today that God has promised exactly that. God has promised to bring his kingdom back through Jesus Christ. In order to do that, we're going to spend some time in the Old Testament. I want you to flip your Bibles to Genesis 12:1-3. Again, the question of the Old Testament is...*Will God restore his kingdom to the world?* That's the question we're faced with as we open Genesis 12:1-3.

"Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

I don't want you to miss this. Theologians have called these three verses the most pivotal, important text in all of Scripture. These are the most pivotal three verses that frame the rest of the Bible moving forward. God, in this text, has promised to reestablish his kingdom. You see, Abram and his family emerge within the story of the Bible as the answer to all that was lost in Genesis 3. God is going to restore his kingdom in our midst.

Before I show you that, I want to think about two things quickly. First, when does God come to Abraham? It's in the midst of his rebellion. I want you to realize Abraham was a part of all that was going on in Genesis 11 moving forward. Abraham was no different than any other nomad farmer in the desert that day, but God's grace and love invaded the least likely person on the face of the planet, and that's really good news for me.

What you see here is it's in the midst of your rebellion, in the midst of your disobedience that God's grace and mercy break forward. While Abraham was in rebellion against God, God came to him. You see, Abraham and his wife were weak. They were old. They were barren. In their desperation, it was there that God came to them.

It reminds me that those of us who feel alone, isolated, abandoned, weak, old, those of us who are idolaters, addicts, the abused, the marginalized, to such belongs the kingdom of God. The kingdom did not come to those who were in power in that day. The kingdom might as well have come to a king if it were up to you and me. It might as well come to someone who could have had influence and power and changed the world for God's sake.

If God's kingdom only would have gone to those who were in power, maybe it would have gone faster, but that's not the way God works. Who does God bring his kingdom to? To the least likely, to the broken and the barren. Sarai is old, Abram is old, and God's grace and mercy in the midst of their brokenness invades their lives. I want you to look at chapter 12, verse 1. Here's what God says to this nomad wandering in the desert.

"I want you to go from your country..." Look at this language. "...to the land I will show you." Do you see it? Do you see God promising his kingdom? "Go to the land I'm going to show you. You've been living in exile, separated from my presence, but we're going to move back in together. Go to this land, and I'm going to move in *with* you. I'm going to move back into the neighborhood, back into the house, Abram, because I love you. I have selected you and picked you. I've set my affections upon you. Though you've been living in exile, I want to move back in with you."

Look at verse 2. "Here's what I want to do among you, Abram. I want to make you a great nation." What a weird promise to give to a nomad wandering in the desert. God says, "Abram, when we move back in together, when you're no longer in exile, you will represent me. You will be my image

bearer, my dynasty. You will represent me to all people, no longer living in shame or isolation, Abram. You are going to live in my kingdom, and you will be my representative to all people."

Look at verse 3. "All families shall be blessed through you." "This kingdom, me dwelling among you and you reigning as king, will take dominion over all families, and through you I'm going to bless the world." Isn't God's plan shocking? Would you do it this way or would you go to somebody who's in power, with influence, who has might and money, perhaps economic force, military force? God's plan doesn't work that way. God's plan is shocking.

He sees an elderly, childless couple in exile and says, "I'm going to promise to bring my kingdom back to the world through them." They are the launchpad of the whole mission of the cosmic redemption of the world. God's plan of gospel-centered multiplication begins with this nomad. But if you know the rest of this story, you know there is one major problem. "Wait. You think I'm going to be a father of a nation? I don't even have one son. How in the world are your promises going to come true to me when I don't even have one son?"

Look at Genesis 15:1. **"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' But Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless...'"** Abram is almost calling God out. "You promised me the kingdom, and I don't even have a son yet." **"...and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, 'Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.'"**

"How can you promise such things, God? How could you promise to bring your kingdom through me? I don't even have a son." **"And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: 'This man [Eliezer] shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.'"** This promise coming to an old, broken, and barren couple. "You shall have a son."

God then took Abram outside, and look at what he says. "Look up, Abram. Look to the heavens. Do you see how many stars there are? Can you even count them? So shall your descendants be. You're not just going to have one son; you're going to have so many descendants you can't even count them." Then Abram believes the Lord, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

So you have Abram saying to God, "How can you say your kingdom is going to come through me? I don't even have a son." Have you ever felt God's promises feel thin? Have you ever felt God's

promises weren't for you or there was no way for God's promise in your life to come forward or be true? This is exactly what is happening for Abram. Abraham is certainly a beautiful picture of faith for us, but Abraham also sometimes responds with doubt, with fear, with self-protection.

But it's in the midst of Abraham's fear, doubt, and questioning faith that God enters in. It's in the midst of God's promise feeling thin, feeling like it could never come true or that it's too good to be true that Abraham says, "How can I know?" and God says, "Look up. You have no idea how committed I am to bringing my kingdom through you. You have no idea how committed I am to restoring my reign and rule on this earth through your family."

Abraham has a weak faith in the promises of God, but a weak faith in the promises of God is better than a strong faith in anything else. Abraham has a weak faith in the promises of God, but look at the text. A weak faith in the promises of God is better than a strong faith in anything else. Look down at verse 8 with me.

Abraham is still demonstrating a faith, but a weak faith. He says, "Lord, how shall I know I'm supposed to possess it? How will I know you're going to bring me into this kingdom? How will I know you've given me this land? How will I know I'm supposed to have this son?"

Do you know what it's like? It's almost like a little boy going to his dad and saying, "Hey, is it time yet? Is it time to watch *Cars*? Is it movie night yet? How am I supposed to know? Are we going to do this? When's it coming?" "I'm so desperate for your promises to be true, Lord. When's it going to happen? How can I know this is going to be true?" God says to him in verse 9:

"Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him."

Look down to verse 17. **"When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land...'"** If you've never read Genesis 15 before, you might be asking yourself a question. "What in the world is going on?" Unless you're from Denton, because that just described Saturday for you. Right?

This is a strange ceremony. It feels weird. "Abram, you want to know how true my promises are for you? Cut these animals in half, set them up, create a pool of blood." God says at the end of verse 18, "I'm going to make a covenant with you." It's really, really important that you understand what that term means. *Covenant* does not mean contract. *Covenant* means a one-way obligation, that God is obligating himself to his people.

Here is the definition of a covenant: a *covenant* is a promise in which God obligates himself to his people. That is really, really important language. God is promising himself, obligating himself. Through divine initiative, God is breaking into human history to reveal himself and to enter relationship in the terms of an oath with his people.

You and I think this is a really, really strange ceremony. It's weird, right? Cutting animals in half, setting up a big aisle, and ultimately allowing the pool of blood from the animals to stream down into the middle. But this was far from a strange ceremony in Abram's day. This is something they would have been very familiar with: entering into a covenantal relationship. What was being done in such a strange, odd ceremony to our ears? Let me tell you.

What is happening is that Abram and God (or anybody in the Old Testament) would have been entering into the kind of covenant commitment and ceremony where what they're saying is, "I'm going to keep my end of the deal." Maybe we're talking about land or possessions or money or food. "I'm going to enter into an agreement with you, a promise with you, and if I don't keep my end of the bargain, may what happened to these animals happen to me." Don't miss that.

"If I don't keep my end of the deal, I want death to come upon me. May my body be just like these animals: ripped apart. May my blood pour out just like these animals if I do not keep my promise." This is something they would have been very familiar with in the ancient Near East. But what is odd about this text is not what you and I think is odd about this text. What *is* strange about this story? What happens in verse 17?

In verse 12 we're told Abram is asleep, and then in verse 17 we see God Almighty, in the form of a firepot and a flaming torch, walk down the aisle by himself. What is odd about this is not that God walks down the aisle but that he walks down by himself. What he is trying to say is, "Abram, I will be faithful to keep my promises to you, and not *if* but *when* you or your descendants are unfaithful to keep your end of the promise I will suffer the consequences for you."

Please do not miss this. What God is saying is, "I'm going to be the covenant maker, but I'm also the covenant keeper. I will keep my promises, and when you fail to keep your promises I will suffer the consequences. I will be the one who makes covenant with you, and I will also be the one who *keeps* covenant and keeps *your* end of the covenant."

So what is God promising to Abraham? He's saying, "Through your son I'm going to bring blessing to all nations. He will reign as a king. I will establish his kingdom on the earth, and it's through this son my kingdom will go forward." Well, if you know some of your Old Testament history, you know Abram does have a son, and then *he* has a son...Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Eventually, this family is the family of Israel, which ends up down in Egypt in exile under oppression from Pharaoh and his oppressive regime.

After 400 years of oppression, they go through the exodus and inherit the promise that was given to Abraham. They inherit this land God had promised to them. Then they set up a kingdom for themselves, and they put a king on the throne named David. I don't want you to miss this. What's going on when we think about this story of the Old Testament is you have dwelling, dominion, and dynasty. God is dwelling with his people in a tabernacle, God's king (a dynasty), David, is reigning on the throne, and they are taking dominion over all nations.

So what do you have here in the Old Testament? You have a picture of the fulfillment of God on its cusp. God's promise to Abraham is almost at its fruition. It's almost at its fulfillment. It's almost as if the kingdom of God is right there to see and to taste, that we would no longer be in exile but God's kingdom would come back on this earth. So what does David, the king, want to do? If you know the story, here's what he says in 2 Samuel 7.

"God, this is too good to be true. Your promises to Abraham have come true for my family and me. I'm reigning as king. Here you are living in a temporary home, and I'm living in a palace. Here's what I want to do for you, God, because your kingdom promises are too good to be true. Can I build a house for you to live in forever? Can I build a temple so we could enjoy each other's presence for eternity?"

God's response to David is absolutely shocking. If you have a Bible, look at 2 Samuel, chapter 7, verses 12-13. Here is God's response to David. "**When your days are fulfilled...**" In other words,

"David, when you die." "**...and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring [a son] after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.**"

Don't miss that language. "I will establish the kingdom of your son." "**He shall build a house for my name...**" In other words, "David, you're not going to build a house for my name; your son will build a house for my name." "**...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**" He will have an eternal kingdom, an eternal dominion, and he will reign as king forever.

It's as if God is flipping the script on David. "David, you're not going to build a house for the Lord; your son will, and I will establish his kingdom and his throne forever." Did you catch the similar language here to the promise that was just made to Abraham? "It's through your son I'm going to accomplish these things. You will be a father to many nations, and, David, your son will rule forever."

I don't want you to miss this. It's as if God is placing all of his marbles on one person. It's as if God is putting all marbles in on one descendant. Think back to Genesis, chapter 3. This descendant must be born of the woman, and he will crush the head of the Serpent. Think of Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. "It will be through the son of Abraham I will bring my kingdom, and he will also be the son of David."

Then 2 Samuel 7:13 says it will be that descendant, that son... "He will build my house forever, and I will never leave his presence. I will establish his throne forever. He will take dominion over the world, and he will be my king, my dynasty." You can't understand the promises kept in the New Testament until you understand the promises made in the Old Testament. God promises to bring his kingdom through one person, and this person will be the son of Abraham, the son of David.

I know some of you know the story of what happens immediately after this. Of course, David and his sons... Rather than reflecting God, what do they do? They rebel against God, and the kingdom is lost again. The northern and the southern tribes are sent into exile in Babylon east of the kingdom, east of the garden, for 70 years, and eventually they return to the land. This is the story of Ezra and Nehemiah. They inherit this land that was given to Abraham and his offspring once more.

The first thing they do is rebuild the temple, because what does the temple signify? The dwelling presence of God, that God might dwell in our midst again. They were well aware their most important need, the thing they needed more than anything else was to dwell in the midst of the

house of the Lord. After they build the temple, the most tragic thing happens. God does not come back. Then they endure 400 years of complete silence.

Just think about that with me for a minute. Think about how long 400 years would be. Days turn into weeks, weeks turn into months, months turn into years, years turn into decades, decades turn into generations, where there are entire generations living, wondering if God's promises are true. I wonder if you and I lived then what our questions would have been. I can imagine what they would be. They'd probably be something like this:

"God, are you faithful? Are you faithful to keep your promises to us? Do you even remember us? Do you remember what you said to Abraham? Do you remember what you said to David?" How about *this* question. "God, are we too wicked and dirty? Are we too sinful for you to ever restore your presence again? Are you too holy and righteous and are we too sinful and wicked? Can you not dwell with us? Will you ever come back? Do you even remember us, and do you remember your promises?"

Over the last few years, my wife and I have welcomed not only Thomas, who's almost 3, into the world but our little girl named Bailey. Bailey is 8 months old, and she is the light of my life. If you want to see me just light up, you bring my daughter into a room. I just think the lights went off when she walks in because her little smile and her cry. You understand what I'm talking about. She is just beautiful and gorgeous and wonderful. I already think she's the most incredible woman in the world other than her mom. I love my kids.

One thing they don't tell you... My wife and I were married for about 10 years before we had kids. One thing they don't tell you (when my wife got pregnant for the first time) is how long nine months is. Can I get an amen from some of the moms in here? That's a long time. That's almost a year, if you haven't looked at your calendar recently. It's a very long time. I thought it was going to be a much quicker experience. Like, you get pregnant and then you have a baby. It's like you have this promise of a child coming, and then quickly the baby comes.

But there's so much that goes into this process. You think about what's going on for the parents. We send out announcements. "We're having a boy." "We're having a girl." We have parties. We have showers. We have friends come over, and they bring gifts. We go and buy all the stuff ourselves and return and exchange. Oh my goodness, there was so much stuff. Diapers everywhere. We're baby-

proofing the house as if we're going to have a 4-year-old, not a 1-week-old, because we don't know what we're doing.

We have no idea what we're doing as parents, but we know preparations have to be made, that the stage has to be set for the arrival of this little baby. My wife also downloaded an app. I'm not sure if you know these apps exist. It's an app that will allow you to follow the progress of these babies so you can see them from being a 6-week-old to being a 12-week-old to being a 13-week-old, on and on and on.

We would sit there... I remember every Saturday morning we would watch the new video, and we'd be like, "Oh my gosh! It's like a lima bean. It's as big as a lima bean." Then the next week it was like, "Oh, it's a peanut! Oh my gosh! Look at how much they've grown." A little teary-eyed, crocodile tears, because we're just so proud. Every single stage of that development was absolutely essential and important. Though it felt long in our perspective, every single moment, every single second, every single day of that process was so important.

It's as if this Old Testament story is unfolding as the birth of the kingdom is coming to us. Though it feels slow, the stage had to be set. All the preparations had to be made. We open our Bible. After 400 years of silence, of God not speaking to his people, of God's people wondering whether God did keep his promises or whether he even remembered his promises... They're wondering, "God, are you ever going to bring the son of Abraham? Are you ever going to bring the son of David?"

Then we open our Bible to Matthew 1:1, and what does Matthew say? "This is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. He is the son of David. He is the son of Abraham. God has been at work before the foundation of the world to prepare this beautiful story of salvation for his people. He is the promised Son who will bring the kingdom."

He tells us, "This is the book of genealogy." That's a word I always passed over when I first started reading this passage, but I can't tell you how important that word is: *genealogy*. It doesn't just mean Ancestry.com or family tree. It's the same word used in Genesis 1 and 2 to talk about God's creation of the world. What Matthew is telling you is God is recreating the world through Jesus Christ. Your exile, your separation from God, the kingdom you lost is now being restored through this person.

He is here. God's kingdom is breaking forth on the world. It's as if he's saying, "The incarnation is the dawn of God's kingdom and the end of Satan's rule and reign. The kingdom of darkness' day is

gone, and the kingdom of light has finally shone forth. God's kingdom, God's promise will be true." Then he says, "He is also the son of Abraham." Think back with me for a second. What was promised to Abraham? That his son would bless the entire world and that he would reign with God forever.

The son of Abraham, through whom God is going to bring blessing to the world and reverse the effects of sin, Matthew tells us, is this person Jesus Christ. There's a passage and a scene most of us who are at The Village regularly are familiar with because we participate in Communion weekly. I want you to think of this scene in Matthew, chapter 26. Jesus has just come in in his triumphal entry with his disciples, his followers, his friends, and his enemies are after him because they want to kill him.

He sits down at a Passover meal, and there's bread and wine at this meal. Jesus takes the bread and breaks it. "This is going to be my body torn apart for you." Then he says, "This is the blood of the covenant. It's going to be shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Did you catch that word there? "This is the blood of the covenant."

What do you think his disciples heard? They heard Genesis 12:15. This is the covenant God entered into with Abraham. Abraham cut all of the animals perfectly in half. He set them up in this perfect aisle with blood flowing into a pool. He then falls asleep, and God walks through on his behalf. Almighty God drenching himself in a pool of blood. What was God saying there?

God was saying, "Abraham, I love you so much. I promise to bring my kingdom through you and your children. I will never break my commitment to love you. Regardless of what you do, regardless of your disobedience, regardless of your wickedness, regardless of your past, regardless of your future, regardless of where you're coming from, regardless of what your descendants do, I will never stop loving you, Abraham. I am committing myself to you completely, and when you are disobedient, Abraham, I will suffer the consequences. I will pay the price in blood."

What was God saying in Genesis 15? At that moment, God pronounced a death sentence on his Son Jesus Christ. At that moment, in Genesis 15, when God enters into a covenantal relationship with Abraham, he says, "I'm going to pay the price of your disobedience through the blood of my Son." The God who commits himself by an oath to Abraham, the same God who walks through the bloody carcasses is the same God who spills his blood on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins at Calvary.

I need you to see this. God's love for you does not begin at the cross; it culminates at the cross. God's love for you started way before that. It started in a dusty desert with a nomad named Abraham, and he placed his love and his affection upon you. He said, "Regardless of your disobedience, regardless of what your future holds, I am committing myself completely to you."

But Matthew doesn't stop there. As if that wasn't beautiful enough, he also says, "This is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David." Not only is he the son of Abraham who will bless all nations; he's also the son of David. What was promised to David? That this Son would establish God's kingdom and God's throne forever.

If you've read the gospel of Matthew recently, you know Jesus is continually referred to as the *son of David*. You have two blind men in Matthew 9 crying out to him. They cry out and say, "Have mercy on us, son of David!" In Matthew 12:23 they say, "This man cannot be the son of David, can he? Is he the one who's here to restore all things? Will he be the one to restore God's kingdom forever?"

Then I want you to think of Matthew 21, the triumphal entry. What does the crowd shout out at Jesus as he passes by? "Salvation belongs to the son of David! Salvation comes through David's son! Finally we are going to conquer through the son of David. Caesar will be overthrown. Pilate will be overthrown, and Jesus Christ will reign in Jerusalem forever. Let's go to war."

Then what does Matthew 27 say? Pilate, the governor, asks Jesus this question. "Are you the king of the Jews? Are you the one who has come to overthrow our kingdom and reign forever?" Then what happens immediately after that? They strip him of his clothes, they put a purple robe on him, they put a crown of thorns on his head, and they mock him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." They spit on him, they put a reed in his hand, and they chant, "Crucify!"

What's the sign above his head? "This is Jesus, King of the Jews." They weren't just trying to torture Jesus; they were trying to mock Jesus' claims of kingship, that he was coming as David's son to establish God's kingdom forever. What was meant to be his defeat, though, ends up being his ultimate victory, because what happens the moment they put him on the cross? Jesus is enthroned as King on David's throne forever. For Jesus, the throne is not just a device to kill him; it's actually the throne of grace from which he rules over the nations.

Jesus' throne for him is not a plush, comfy seat that normal kings sit on; it is the seat from which he blesses the nations as a king who rules with grace and mercy. "I will establish your kingdom

forever, David's son." Because God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. Our King doesn't reign from a palace in Rome but from the throne of a cross. What was meant to be his defeat is actually his ultimate victory. In Christ, God is demonstrating himself to be the covenant-making God and the covenant-keeping God.

Let me ask you this question. Do you know any other king who rules from a throne of grace and mercy? Do you know any other king who rather than inflicting violence on his enemies absorbs violence from his enemies? Do you know any other king who sits down with his enemies for a meal in order to make them friends? Do you know any other king who sits down with enemies and says, "You once were broken and barren, but I'm making you sons and daughters. You once had no inheritance, but I'm making you heirs of my kingdom."

You see, the kingdom of God was lost and the kingdom of God was promised through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the King who has come for us to dwell with us, to live with us, to give us purpose and reign and rule forever. I want to remind you of this: a weak faith in these promises is better than a strong faith in the promises of anything else. A weak faith in what we've just talked about is better than a strong faith in anything else.

I want you to ask yourself the question...*Are you trusting in the promises of the kingdom or are you still trying to build your own kingdom?* Are you living in the story of Genesis 11 or Genesis 12? Are you trying to build a kingdom for yourself to make your name great, to make yourself influential, to make yourself powerful or are you receiving the kingdom that was given to Abraham and his son? Are you still trying to gain influence?

Are you still trying to build a kingdom for yourself or are you resting in the kingship of Jesus Christ? One thing I've been praying for us this weekend is this: I would hope you would see the promises of God in Scripture, the promises of the kingdom, rescue us from our small conceptions of Christ. Jesus can no longer be a hobby. We either have to neglect him or worship him as the reigning and ruling Sovereign King over all things.

I've been praying for you that we could no longer settle for a small picture of salvation but, rather, we would see this cosmic picture of salvation, of what God is doing among the nations through Jesus Christ. Even a weak faith in these promises is better than a strong faith in the promises of anything else. I want to think about a few application points with us really quickly. They relate to dwelling, dominion, and dynasty, us being citizens of this kingdom, citizens and strangers, kingdom citizens.

First, I want you to see your King has come to dwell with you in Jesus Christ, and that is good news. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, Christ has come to end your exile and to invite you into a loving fellowship with him. He wants to cast your sins as far away from you as the east is from the west and invite you into a loving relationship with him, and Jesus wants to invite us to be the kinds of citizens who are asking him to bring his kingdom to come.

What's the first thing Jesus tells his disciples when he teaches them how to pray? "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Would we be the kinds of people, both as individuals and corporately, who are asking God to bring his kingdom in Flower Mound, in Dallas, in Plano, in Fort Worth, in Southlake, in East Dallas, in Richardson, in South Korea, in North Korea, in Asia, in India. Would we ask God's kingdom to come. Because what are we doing when we ask God's kingdom to come?

"Hey, Dad. Do you remember that promise? Do you remember what you said to us? You said you'd come. Would you please come and end this madness? We need your presence more than anything else. Would you please come and dwell with us forever?" I want you to think about dynasty. I want you to consider that God is about the business of establishing his kingdom on this earth amongst every tribe, every tongue, and every language.

How are you participating in this global mission of the kingship of Jesus Christ? Philippians tells us that one day every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is King. Do you want to be involved in a mission that has absolutely zero failure rate? Get involved in the Great Commission. God is not looking for you to be an observer in the Great Commission but a participant. He's tired of people sitting in pews when we could be participating in this Great Commission, proclaiming the kingship of Jesus Christ to all people. He does not want an audience; he wants participants.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly (at least where I am in my season of life right now), I want you to think about God's dynasty, that you are an image bearer and that God's covenantal love has been set upon you. I don't want you to think about the person sitting next to you. I don't want you to think about the person you came with. I don't want you to think about the person you want to hear this message. I don't want you to think about anybody else other than you.

You and I were just like Abraham, wandering, lost, in exile. Nothing about us was lovable, and God came to us. I want you to see he came to you not because you had somehow committed yourself to

do something for him but because he simply said, "I love you." "I love you, Abraham." That is God's message to you. Think of one of the most well-known Scripture verses in the Bible, John 3:16. I feel like some Christians read it this way: "For God was so agitated with us that he sent his Son so he could finally be at peace with us." Is that what it says?

"For God so loved you he sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life." The King comes to the broken, like you and me, and makes us sons and daughters. To be in Christ is to simply be a recipient of God's gracious and merciful kingship in Jesus Christ. God's love for you did not begin at the cross; it simply culminated at the cross, and if you are an heir of Jesus Christ, then you, too, are a son and a daughter of God. Let's pray.

Father, your grace and mercy for me this weekend has been too much to consider. The beauty of how the Bible lays out your covenantal love for Abraham's son and for David's son and for us and how that culminates in Jesus Christ is far more beautiful than we mere humans can grasp, but we confess that it's beautiful, and this weekend we confess the kingship and the grace and the mercy of Jesus Christ.

I pray for anybody who's hearing this right now who does not confess that Jesus Christ is King. Might they believe and repent and they would say, "Jesus Christ is Lord. He is sufficient to draw me into this kingdom of light." I pray for the brothers and sisters in the room who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Would you help us to live out the implications of Jesus' kingship in all facets of our lives? We ask it in our King's glorious, majestic, and beautiful name, amen.