

Citizens & Strangers (Part 11) – The Kingdom Remade

Matt Chandler – May 13, 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.

[End of video]

Good evening. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Revelation, chapter 21. It's hard to believe we're almost done with our series on the kingdom. In fact, there's this weekend and next weekend, and then our 12-week series on the kingdom will come to an end. If you've just joined us, let me recap quickly so you can understand where we're going.

In week one, we set up how to think rightly about the kingdom. We said that Genesis 1-3 was a picture of the plotline of the kingdom of God; namely, that God the Creator created a space in which his dwelling was present and unfettered and unhindered and that our souls were designed for him and he was present in the way our souls were designed for him to be present.

We talked about the fact that God had given us dominion. He had given us the cultural mandate. "Fill the earth and subdue it." The promise was we were his people, and he was our God. The Bible

said the man and the woman were naked and unashamed. So, right relationship with God, right relationship with one another, right relationship with creation.

In this kingdom, one law. That's not complex. We have more rules than that in *my* house. God had one. "Everything you can have. Just don't touch *this* one. Leave *this* one alone. Everything else is yours." Yet Satan begins to tempt and twist, and Adam and Eve fall, and the fall wreaks havoc on the kingdom of God. We saw the kingdom established, and then we saw the kingdom fall. Then we get this promise woven throughout the Scriptures that God is going to remake the kingdom, reestablish his kingdom.

We've shown these last 10 weeks (this is week 11) the complexities of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is *here*, but it's also *there*. It is *now*, but it's also *then*. It is *inside* of us and it is *outside* of us. Over the last 10 weeks, we've dove into the complexities of this; namely, what it means to be a part of the kingdom, and then what it means to be citizens of the kingdom.

Just quickly, how gifted is Jamin Roller? That kid...sheesh! I can call him "kid." I think he's like 26 or something. (That's not true. He just looks like he's 26.) Just an incredibly gifted preacher and teacher. I got a chance to listen quickly to his message last week, and I found myself getting pumped up by him. I was like, "Go get 'em." How gracious is God to our church that so many of our young men and women here on staff are gifted teachers and preachers, Jamin being yet another example of that.

What I want to look at tonight is not so much the aspects of the kingdom that are here and now and in us, but I want us to look at the kingdom that will be here soon. If Jesus said it's soon, then I'm allowed to say it's soon. I want to talk about Christian hope. I want to lift up our eyes to what's coming, and I want to frame that around hope.

Here's why: Where you place your hope is imperative to your experience of joy. Where you place your hope is directly tied to joy, because if you put your ultimate hopes on things that cannot hold the weight of those hopes, you will more than likely be forced into anxiety and anger and will more than likely respond to anxiety and anger with control and manipulation, which, by the way, is not good for relationships. I don't think I need to flesh that out any more.

Anxiety and anger leading to control and manipulation is not the recipe for a good life, for deep relationships, for soul-satisfying experiences. Instead, it's the cause of conflict, heartbreak, and

destruction. If you place your hope in things that cannot bear the weight of them, the likelihood that your life is going to be marked by anxiety and anger leading to control and manipulation is really, really high. Let me lay before you three examples of that, the three places where we have a tendency to put our hopes that are always going to lead to anxiety and anger and control and manipulation.

The first is *marriage*. If you're a single person, you have a tendency to go, "Oh, if I could just get married. If I could just find that spouse..." You're putting a lot of hope on this person who's going to come in and "Jerry Maguire" your life. They're going to complete you. There's that perfect one who's going to make everything better. Look at me. No, they're not. They're going to make everything more difficult and a lot of things much harder. Don't agree too passionately, married folks.

There's a really beautiful gift there, but if you put your hope in that... First, if you're single and you put your hope there, you will paralyze yourself today, and God is not waiting for you to have a spouse to call you into something significant. You have to fight against that lie, especially in a church that's filled with young marrieds. Don't you dare wait to step into the significance God has called you into by waiting for some other person to come in and complete you.

If you're married and you bet your life on marriage being the thing that started helping you make sense of your existence, you have already begun to feel the weight of disappointment leading to anxiety and anger leading to control and manipulation. This is a place we get this wrong. Now, marriage is a good gift of God. The Bible says it is. He who finds a wife finds what is good.

I will also say Jesus and the apostle Paul would later add there's also a calling to singleness that is a beautiful call and one that is actually greater than the call to be married, who has given their whole life over to Christ and is undivided. That's Jesus and Paul going, "Well, you're kind of a divided person." "What do you mean I'm a divided...?" Well, you have a spouse, and you have to take care of that spouse. A single person isn't like that. A single person is just all in on Jesus.

This is a place that we can put a lot of hope, and it's misplaced hope. Nine times out of ten, conflict in marriage is due to unmet expectations because those expectations were unrealistic. Maybe that's our fault for how we talk about marriage. Marriage can be difficult. There are a lot of sinners in the house. But it can also be really, really beautiful. So it's just rightly placed hope, not ultimate hope.

The second place we have a tendency to put a lot of hope is in *our kids*. We're like, "Oh, our kids. We're going to be able to do it right. We're going to be able to erase the mistakes of our parents." Yet this is out of your control too. Kids make terrible gods. They're wild. Even the ones who are rule followers are just rebelling a different kind of way.

If you have that kid who came out of the womb reading *Hamlet* and smoking a pipe and his response to everything is "Yes, ma'am. No, sir. Yes, sir," that's just another kind of rebellion. If you're struggling with infertility... "If I just had a kid, then..." It's a good and right desire. It's just a terrible ultimate hope.

The third place is *work*. Tell me we don't put our hope for significance and meaning into work. "If I could just get to *this* level of success, if I could just get to *this* level of the organization, if I could just get into *this* inner circle, if I could just reach *this* tax bracket..." Right? C.S. Lewis' whole inner circle argument is so profoundly true. "If I could just be seen as a success..." Remember what we said. Thinking that, operating like that...

By the way, most of us actually tend to operate by thinking our hopes are in these places. We just move so fast we don't hardly realize we're doing it. We're so busy we can't breathe long enough to go, "Oh my gosh. This is why I'm so frustrated in my marriage. This is why I'm so frustrated in my singleness. This is why I'm so frustrated at work. This is why I'm so frustrated at home." Because you're placing hope on things that can't bear the weight of your hopes.

The Christian believes all of these things are beautiful gifts of God; they're just not where our ultimate hope is. The Christian would affirm that all of these things are good gifts from a good Father, but they are not where we place our ultimate hope. Our ultimate hope is in the kingdom *here* and the kingdom *there*.

Now, when I'm talking about the kingdom *there*, I am not simply talking about a disembodied heaven where you and I float around from cloud to cloud, singing. In Jesus' day and age, the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" would not have been interpreted, "How do I get to heaven?" That would have been a foreign concept. When you read in the New Testament questions about the future, it's always within the framework of the coming age.

Like, "How do I get into the coming age?" Not, "How do I get to heaven?" but "In the age to come, how do I get *there*? How do I get to that place where the world has been liberated from sin and

death and the enemies of God? How do I get *there*?" God help us. Modern evangelicals have zero concept, for the most part, of what the Bible talks about when it comes to eschatology. *Eschatology* is just the things that are coming, the future kingdom.

For us, even our testimony of the gospel has everything to do with personal conversion and not a remade heaven and earth. This is just how we describe the gospel. "God has saved me, and I'm going to stand in front of him, and he's either going to affirm my salvation in Christ and give me heaven or he's going to deny my salvation in Christ and send me to hell. That's the good news of the gospel. Won't you come to heaven?"

That is great, except it's so reductionistic. That is not how the Bible talks about your future or my future. Sure. Is there a heaven? Absolutely. Is there this period of time in which we might be disembodied spirits in the presence of God? Yes. But when all is said and done, is that your future and mine? No. No, it's not. Let's look at this together. Let's start in Revelation 21:1-7. Let me give you my outline: *a remade cosmos, a remade body, a remade reality*. There you go. Let's look at this.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.'"

What you're seeing in this text is the cosmos...earth, heaven, the expanse of the universe...remade as the kingdom in its fullness. What we see in this picture is a far cry from where we find ourselves now. I am fresh back from Belgrade, Serbia, and I am more encouraged than ever as how the gospel is spreading across the world. I'll talk more about that next week.

The world you and I live in doesn't look anything like this. The cosmos we are in now is a Genesis 3 cosmos. It is broken and busted. There is plenty of mourning. There's a lot of death. There's a ton of crying. There's a lot of anxiety. There's a lot of loss. It's the world we inhabit, and it's a world the Bible is honest about when it comes to our experience in it. In fact, the apostle Paul would try to help us understand this in Romans 8 when he talks about creation this way. Not you and me but the creative order.

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption..." Or even the Greek word there, *decay*. **"...and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves..."**

It's not until verse 23 that humankind shows up. This is talking about the creative order. This is talking about mountains and trees and wolves and whales. It's talking about creation, that it's subjected to futility, that it's broken, that it's groaning. The apostle Paul is saying, "Look. The world as it is is not the way it was designed to be, nor what it ultimately *will* be, and somehow creation knows it and groans. It aches. It wants to be set free, and it knows its freedom is wrapped up in the children of God, so it watches the children of God with eager expectation that it's one day going to be set free."

This is what Augustine meant when, looking out at creation, he said, "If these are the beauties afforded to sinful men, what does God have in store for those who love him?" What's on Augustine's heart is "This beauty I see is not what it was meant to be, and it's not what it *will* be, and if it's that beautiful now, how stunning is God?" I don't know how you've been able to travel. I don't know what parts of the world you've been able to see.

I don't know if you've been to those parts of the world that are so beautiful your soul aches. Augustine is going broken, and Paul is saying it's groaning. It's not what it was, and it's not what it's going to be. No matter how beautiful it is right now, it's not what it was, and it's not what it's going to be. Wherever you see beauty, you need to be reminded... Every time the sun sets and you see the sky pink and red and stunning and you feel that little ache in you, just remember that's not what it was and that's not what it's going to be.

How beautiful, how mighty, how incredible is God that the most stunning beauties of this present age are actually broken in the fall? Yet this is not the picture of what is to come for us. It's not just in Revelation we see this. We hear it prophesied about. Remember, the promise of the kingdom is through the whole Bible. The kingdom being remade is not just in Revelation. We don't have to go all the way to Revelation to find these promises.

God has, since the fall, been encouraging his people that the kingdom will be remade, that the fullness of the kingdom will be known, that it is *here*, but it's also coming. The prophet Isaiah explains it this way in Isaiah 11:6-9: **"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together..."**

I love that he threw the "fattened calf" in there. The lion is going to dwell with the fajita, and they will dine together. The fajita will not be afraid for his life. Like, why do you have to throw the fattened calf in there? We already have a calf there. He's going overboard and going, "The most delicious-looking temptation is right there, and the lion will not be interested even in the fattened calf." Why? Because it will be as it was meant to be. The kingdom remade. Let me keep reading.

"The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

Do you see what we have coming? This is what's coming. It's not disembodied, and it's not in the clouds. It's not some ethereal spiritual experience; it's children on the ground playing in the dirt with the cobras, and the cobras don't have their mouths glued shut. They're there, but they don't strike. This is what was meant to be. This is what is coming when all things are remade. This is what Christ's blood has purchased.

Thomas Rausch says it like this: "...the coming of God's kingdom in its fullness, the triumph of God's justice that would vindicate all those who suffered injustice or persecution, binding up their wounds, wiping the tears from their eyes, and raising them to life eternal with Christ. [All of creation will join in this celebration, participating] in Christ's victory over sin and death; there

would be a new heaven and a new earth, set free from corruption and slavery, subject finally to God, who would be all in all."

It's a *remade cosmos*. It's not you playing a harp with wings; it's all things remade. That's the remade cosmos. This little body you're wearing right now is totally inadequate. You will be under-dressed for this event in what you're wearing, so we have to do something about that. The good news is this is not what you will be wearing for this affair, because *this* has a different purpose. This is 1 Corinthians 15:35-44. This is a *remade body* for this remade cosmos.

"But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' You foolish person!" I'm just going to be honest. I don't know if he's having a tough day or what this is. I had this question. "Okay, what does a resurrected body look like? Are we in our prime or do we look completely different? When we are resurrected, are we resurrected as a 24-year-old? Are we resurrected as a 40-year-old? What are we resurrected as? What kind of body actually *is* this?" Those are good questions, and Paul's response to the question is, "You foolish person!" Whatever, Paul.

"What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish." I think Lewis would use this argument to even talk about how our animals will be in heaven. I disagree, but that's another sermon for another day.

"There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." I'm going to go down to verse 50.

"I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

I don't want to begrudge this point. I just want to make a couple of points. First, this body we have right now, this physical body, is perishable and is a seed that must go in the ground. We have been built for a fallen world at this point. My skin needs to keep out viruses and bad bacteria. My liver needs to filter my blood. I have all sorts of defense mechanisms for a fallen world. I have adrenaline for fight or flight. I have all sorts of responses that are built to keep me alive in a fallen world that I will not need in glory.

In fact, one of the things Augustine talks about in his book *The City of God*... If you wonder why I'm always quoting Augustine, he's my ancient friend. I think everybody should have one. I just picked Augustine. I read everything he ever wrote and anything written about him. Peter Brown's biography is probably the most dense, difficult book I've read, and yet he has just become my ancient buddy. So I oftentimes go, "Oh yeah, Augustine. We had that conversation that day over coffee."

Augustine was talking about this very idea, that so much of our physical body right now is meant to keep us alive in a Genesis 3 world. In the kingdom to come, the new heavens and new earth, we will not need the energy used to defend ourselves there, because that energy will be given over to praise and love for God. So *this* thing needs to go in the ground, because *this* thing is perishable.

He doesn't give us a lot of details, but he says what will be raised is imperishable. No cricks in the neck in glory. No bad knees, no bad backs in glory. It's imperishable. That's just, "Yes, please." The older I get, "Yes, please." If you're in your 20s in here and perfectly healthy, you're like, "That's not that big of a deal." All right. I've started my timer on you. We'll talk to you in a bit.

We see here that this body is earthly; it's not heavenly. When this happens, when we have our imperishable bodies, death will be mocked. How good of a day will *that* be? "Where, O death, is your victory? Where is your sting? You've got nothing. What will you take from us, sin, death? Nothing. We'll be wearing imperishable bodies." What will they look like? I'm not sure. I know you can look at Jesus' resurrected body and touch it, and it eats food and can just appear places, which I'm kind of excited about. That's not conjecture, but what we get to do with that is conjecture.

Here's what I know about glory: whatever you're imagining, it's better. If you're like, "Oh, I hope we can fly there..." All right. Well, whatever is there is better than that. "Man, I hope we can..." Okay, whatever is in your imagination, just know the Lord is smiling at you. He thinks that's cute. You're like a kid coloring something. You're like, "Oh, that's great." There's something coming for us there.

The last point is a *remade reality*. Isaiah points to this in Isaiah 65. I'm just going to read verses 17-25. Chapters 64, 65, and 66 are all this new heaven and new earth that are coming for us. Let's look in verse 17.

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them.

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,' says the Lord."

This is a picture of what is to come when the kingdom is visible in its fullness.

A couple of things I would highlight here. First, you have this promise that the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. So I want to do this. I'm going to come over *here*. The Bible is over *here*. Let me tell you what I think that means. Take this or leave it. I think this means not that we won't remember difficult, heartbreaking things, but rather we will see them as the Lord saw them. There are some things that have been very difficult in my life that I look back on now with great affection and joy, knowing what the Lord accomplished in them.

There is a ton of mystery. There is a ton of heartbreaking, gut-wrenching, "What in the world are you doing, God?" moments that I think on *this* day I'll see the same way I look at places that I'm like, "That was very difficult, but I see how the Lord really brought me into his presence through that trial, through that suffering, through that difficulty." I don't know that for sure, but I just know if we see it the way God saw it, we'll rejoice in it in a way that's hard to rejoice in it when you're stuck and blind in the middle of trial and loss in this current state.

We see here that there's no more weeping or distress. I love that the word *distress* is here. It means worry or anxiety are gone. Think about...God help us...how much of our energy goes into worry and anxiety, how much of the joy of today is robbed from us at our fears for tomorrow. In the kingdom remade, there's nothing to be anxious about. I have three kids, a church I'm pastoring, a wife. Do you think I'm worried about stuff? I'm always worried about something.

I'm always having to go, "There's nothing I can do about that. Lord, I'm just going to lay this at your feet. Lord, I just trust you here. Just work in his life. Just work in her life. Just do this thing. God, lead us here. I want to hear from you." I'm constantly in that wrestle of finding myself worrying, finding myself being anxious, and instead having to drag that compulsion into the presence of Jesus. That's not even a wrestle that exists when the kingdom has been remade.

What it looks like to be a follower of Christ is you bring that compulsion into the presence of Jesus. In the kingdom remade, the kingdom present, the wrestle ceases to be. Isn't that good news? I don't know how your walk with Jesus is going, but my walk with Christ is constantly dragging bad compulsions into his presence and asking for maturation and grace and forgiveness and hope. I thought I'd be farther along than I am 20-something years into following him.

It's not an evil thing or a wicked thing to wrestle with compulsions. The godly thing is to drag those compulsions into the presence of Christ by the grace of God. But here there's not even a wrestle. The compulsions are gone, whatever they are. Do you have a compulsion toward anger? Do you have a compulsion toward lust? Do you have a compulsion toward selfishness? A compulsion toward worry? Whatever it is, it's gone.

If you're prone to depression, it's just gone. You don't have to fight it anymore. It's just not there. That alone makes me kind of go, "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus." Right? He also says... This is important. There are real homes, and there is real feasting going on. I just want to pound this into your mind. It's not ethereal. You're not floating around. We have houses, and we're eating, legitimate feasting together, in the same way Jesus' resurrected body ate real fish.

We're embodied creatures in a new heaven and new earth, new bodies that don't perish, actually living in homes and feasting with one another in the full presence of our Lord and Savior, living in and dwelling in his presence in ways right now that if we experienced it would blow all of our circuits.

Lastly, I want to point out that he says you're going to work without toil. Again, this idea that you're just going to be playing a harp and singing songs is silly. It's not true. This comes from a kind of escapism mentality that has us jettisoning this world while this one gets exploded into nothing, and that's not what the Bible teaches. It's just not what it teaches. It's teaching remade, purified. And where are *we*? On it. In homes, working without toil. Joy, life in his presence.

Still dominion and dwelling remain while we're in our dynasty. This is language we've been using. This is the kingdom remade. Let me just lay this before you. The Christian life is one of living toward that with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. I want to, and the Bible calls you and me to live toward *this* day. I am not living toward the day when I get to retire. I am not living toward the day when I'm an empty nester. I'm not living toward the day when...whatever. You fill in the blank.

I am not living toward the day that I have grandbabies. I am not living toward *that* day; I'm living toward *this* day, and every day I'm closer. This roots me in a kind of discipleship that I don't lose heart when my compulsions feel like I'll never beat them, because I *will*, and *you* will. It doesn't matter what they are. It just doesn't matter what they are. Are you prone to depression? One day, by the power of Christ, you'll stand over that depression and mock it. "Where is your victory now? Where is your sting?"

This is what's coming for us, and we turn our face toward it, and we don't forget about it. In fact, if you haven't read *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, he just nails this down. By the way, that's the second best-selling book behind the Bible in human history. Grab that book, even if it's a child's version, and let it get into your guts.

The days can be difficult. Life can be hard. Loss is real. Genesis 3 world is where we are, yet filled with the Holy Spirit, experiencing the kingdom now, breaking through in power, sustaining us to that day where we'll see this with our resurrected eyes. There will be no contacts there, no Lasik surgery there, no need. I'm there right now. When I read my Bible, I have this little one-inch thing right *here*, and if I go one inch down it's gone. It's not going to be long until I'm having to wear them up here. In my study it already happens.

Just know we are closer, and this is the kingdom remade, present. This isn't a fairy tale. This is what you and I should be living toward. Every aspect of my behavior I want to wrap around this. Am I loving my wife? Am I loving my children? Am I living in this space in such a way that shows *this* is the kingdom I'm betting on, *this* is where I've placed my hope?

If *this* is where I've placed my hope, then any difficulty in marriage is put in its right category. Look at me. I'm not talking about abusive marriage. If you're being abused, I'm not talking to you. I'm not saying you stay there and continue to be emotionally tormented while you look toward that day where that's not going to happen anymore. Come and let us help you as best we can by getting you in a place where that's not your reality right now.

If you battle with lust, if you battle with same-sex attraction, whatever it is you're wrestling with, I'm trying to fill you with hope right now and say there will be a day where you stand over it and victory is yours because of Christ. If you put your hope anywhere else, you're going to be anxious or angry, and that's going to lead you to control and manipulation, and that would rob you of the beauty of the kingdom, not just *there* but *here*. If you're struggling with compulsions, hang in there. Don't hide. Be known.

One of the things we have fought for tooth and nail in this place is that it would always feel like an okay place for you to not be okay. Why? Because we believe we're in a Genesis 3 world. Are you struggling with lust? Yeah, of course. Look at the culture we're in. Gosh. It's surprising if anybody

doesn't. It's okay. Let's come together, love one another, serve one another, pray with one another, and drag that compulsion into the presence of Jesus Christ.

Do you struggle with same-sex attraction? Do you have gender dysphoria? Okay, well, come into the light. Let's wrestle well together while we hold fast to one another, waiting for the kingdom to be remade, expecting a breakthrough of the kingdom in the here and now. Haunted by depression, paralyzed by anxiety, struggling with mental illness... We're closer. You and I will stand over it by the power of Christ and say, "Hey, where's your victory? Where's your sting?"

I'll end with this. Where have you placed your hope? We are moving so fast and are so busy that the quiet involved and necessary for us to figure out why we're agitated and angry means we'll never properly diagnose what's actually going on in us, and instead we'll lash out at those around us. May God slow down our hearts... I'm going to preach on this in a couple of weeks.

May God slow down our hearts enough to help us realize, "Oh my gosh. You know why I'm so angry? You know why I'm controlling and manipulative? It's because I've placed my hope *here*, and that's the wrong place to place my hope. If I could dial back the expectation on *this* person or *this* situation and put that expectation on God and not on this person, maybe this relationship stands a chance. Maybe health could be established in what has been a really toxic thing." Again, I'm not talking about abusive relationships.

Where have you placed your hope? If you've put it on something that cannot bear up under the weight of your expectation, you only have anxiety and anger and control and manipulation in your future. Jesus wants so much more for you than that. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women. I am eager as ever for this to be our reality, eager as ever to experience this in the here and now as I wait for it to come in its fullness. I pray for my brothers and sisters who have come into this place tonight weary, exhausted, beaten down, and maybe on the precipice of hopelessness.

I pray in this space that you might fan into flame that smoldering wick, that we might in this moment be reminded that you have not saved us to abandon us, that you will sustain us until this day, so empower us to keep running to you, to get back up and keep coming in.

Thank you that your grace is sufficient for the journey, the long journey to, as John Bunyan would put it, the Celestial City. Strengthen our hands, our resolve, our hearts by your Holy Spirit. Strengthen us all the more for the journey. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

© 2018 The Village Church