



THE KING

The Kingdom of God is Like... | 2.22.26

Steve Frissell

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Steve Frissell 0:00

Steve, Well, good morning. Welcome to Bent Tree. If this is your very first time here, whether you're online or here in person, we are so glad that you were here today. I'm Steve Rizal. Like the joy and privilege of getting to serve as one of the pastors here, that was Libby and Abraham, our lead pastor. He's with that team that's in India. They'll be getting back later this week. And so we're excited to hear all the stories of what God's been up to and doing there. Well, today we are starting a brand new series The Kingdom of God is like. And we're going to be looking at parables teachings that Jesus gave about this kingdom. And if you take a moment and think about all the things that you've heard Jesus teach, if you can just kind of think through like the sermons you've heard and the passages that you've read around Jesus teaching, and if you could summarize all of his teaching into one phrase or one topic, what might that be for many of us, we might think it's love one another. For your love for one another proves that you are my disciples. Treat others the way you want to be treated. You may think that the central theme and message of Jesus is to trust Him, to walk with Him. You may think it's for to do justice and bring restoration and and if you've answer, if that's your answer, all of those are right, but it's because all of them actually fit into a larger thing of what was the central thing that Jesus taught? And it was the central message that Mark captures in the very beginning of his gospel, where he summarized what Jesus had to say and what Jesus was often teaching. It was the time is fulfilled. The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. It is right here. Repent and believe this. Good news, the main theme, the central thing of what Jesus taught on most often, was the kingdom of God. In fact, his teaching wasn't really about a morality. It was more about his monarchy. It's not a way in which you live. That's a moral way of living. It's a way in which you live that is actually surrendered to this larger thing about the kingdom. This was the main thing that Jesus spent his time teaching on, was the kingdom of God. And he says that we are to repent and believe this good news, the gospel. And for many of us who've been walking with Jesus, we understand the good news of the gospel is good news that seems too good to be true. It's almost unbelievable. So I love that Jesus is like you should believe it, because it actually is true. In Matthew's gospel, we get to see that Jesus references, teaches on or addresses the kingdom 50 times. So it is the main topic of Jesus and His teaching, the way of the kingdom, His monarchy and his kingdom. Well, Jesus taught on the kingdom a lot. We see it all through the Gospels, and also some of the other New Testament writers had wonderful things to say about the kingdom as well. There's so much written about the kingdom, but no one actually stops and says, here's the kingdom. Like in a simple, concise definition, there's no clear definition for it, and any attempt to define it is going to fall short. Like no definition really captures the fullness of the kingdom, because there's so much to it. It's so rich and so deep. So every definition that anyone's come up with is a miss. It doesn't really capture the whole thing. So for the sake of this sermon series, we have a working definition that that we're going to use as we talk about the kingdom. So the kingdom of God is the king's reign through the king's people over the king's place. And this is what we're going to be focused on now heading up into Easter, that we're going to step into this in a deeper understanding of what it means that the king reigns through the king's people over the king's place. Every earthly kingdom has a king, and the same thing is true about the heavenly kingdom, that there is a king and that this is the King of kings, of all the kings, he's the most kingly, and he's different than the other kings, because he doesn't rule over his people. He actually reigns and rules through his people. This was God's design from the very beginning. The Bible, this whole thing. It points us to and helps us recognize that this is a rescue story. But God isn't rescuing us from a broken creation so that we go to heaven someday. He's actually rescuing us to become a new creation. He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and for the kingdom of light. So the kingdom is both not yet and now there's a future part of the kingdom, and there's a present part of the kingdom, because the king presently reigns through his people. This is how he brings his restoration, His love and His mercy. Is the way in which he reigns through his people, and it's over his place. Some of us. We've grown up understanding the gospel is about us trusting

Jesus so that we can leave Earth and go to heaven. But what actually is happening is that the scripture helps us see that the kingdom of heaven is coming to earth. This is actually what is happening, there is a place. It's where his people are, and he is currently, actively bringing his reign into the earth. The Kingdom begins in the human in the human heart, and one day it will extend to the ends of the earth, as he brings his heavenly kingdom here to Earth. So as we spend some time over the next few weeks heading towards Easter, I hope our prayer is that we will all understand more of what this means that there is a King Who reigns through his people over his place, and that we don't understand it just in theory, but that we actually understand what it means practically for you and for me and the way in which we live our lives, that we better understand what it means to be citizens of this kingdom of heaven, and that we don't live so caught up in Kingdom confusion and living for other kings and kingdoms today, as we get started in this series, before we hop into parables and teachings that Jesus has about the kingdom, we want to start off with looking at Jesus, our King. And I don't know about you, but when I think of Jesus, the first title I think of for Jesus is not King. When I think of Jesus, I first think of like my savior. Do you resonate with that at all? Like when you first think of Jesus? I think it was like Jesus, my Savior, my hope, my life, my source, my Redeemer. That's usually the leading thing I think of when I think about Jesus, I don't think of him, first and foremost, as king. And if you're like me and that, it could be just the simple fact that we live in a democracy, not a monarchy. So we don't think about kings a lot. It might be that simple. It could be maybe a little bit harder for some of us to think about Jesus as our King, because we just, you know, we have authority issues. It could be that for some of us, we struggle to see Jesus as our King because our earthly leaders that we see aren't worthy of trust, and so there's a disconnect for us to trust a heavenly leader because of our distrust for earthly leaders. There's probably a whole lot of reasons why we may not or may struggle to think of Jesus as King, but my hope and prayer for us today is that we fix our eyes on Jesus and rightly see him our King. Today's sermon is a little different than the norm. Typically, what I love to do is just take like, one text and teach a text. I'm not teaching a text today. I'm also not preaching a concept. What we're doing today is we're actually going to look at a theme. This is more of a study of a theme that we see all throughout Scripture. It begins in Genesis and goes all the way to Revelation, this theme around a king. So let's hop in, and let's get started Genesis one. We see that God created humanity in his image. We were made to be like Him in His image. And we see that we were set apart from everything else and all of creation. Now Psalm eight is a poetic expression of Genesis one. So this gives us an understanding of how, how the ancient world and ancient Jews would actually look at Genesis one, and what their thought is, and how they think about it. So Genesis or, I'm sorry, Psalm eight, verse three, when I observe your heavens, right, when I look at all that you made God, when I observe Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars. When I look at all that you've done, God, what we see from Genesis one, the way you spoke creation into existence, the way you set the moon and the stars in place, the way you organized it all. You set those in place. What is a human being that you remember him, you what? It's amazing to think you Creator God. Remember me a human being, a son of man, that you look after him.

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You made him God. You made us. You made human beings. You made him a little less than God, and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands. You put everything under his feet. Now, when we think of us being made in the image of God, often what we think about of the things that set us apart from the rest of creation, we think of the things like that we're spiritual beings, or our ability to reason, there's so much that sets us apart from the other created beings. But an ancient Jewish understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God is that God reigns and rules, and he made us in His image, crowning us and making us rulers that he actually. He is the image of a reigning king, and he made us in His image so that he can reign and rule through us into the rest of creation. So being made in the image of God isn't just the fact that you're spiritual being an ancient Jewish understanding is that there's a reigning and a ruling that happens, that that is who God is, and we were made in His image to let him reign and rule through us. And if you've read the story, if you've been around church for a little while, you know what happens soon within Genesis is humanity rebels against the king and goes after rival kingdoms, kingdoms of pride, power and self and sin enters into creation, and humans were broken, and God was no longer reigning through his people. A little bit later in Genesis, we see that God takes Abraham. He says, Abraham, I am going to form a people from your family you are going to be my people, again, set apart, and this family grows into a nation that's enslaved in Egypt, and God shows up through Moses, a series of miracles and plagues and rescues them from slavery out of Egypt. And they get to the whole triumphal moment they cross the Red Sea, and they finally get free from the slavery that they've experienced in Egypt. And this is the moment where they sing a song, and it's the first biblically recorded moment where people address God as king. We're gonna look at this song. We're just gonna look at the first verse and the last verse of the song. But here's where we see them, acknowledging, recognizing God. You are our King. I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. You are lifted up. You are in a lofty place. You are enthroned as a king. You are highly exalted. He has thrown the horse and the rider into its sea. Here's the first verse. Let's go to the last verse says the

Lord will reign forever and ever. God, you are our King that is highly exalted, and you reign forever. After they get through the Red Sea, and they find this freedom. They acknowledge God as their king. They go and they become a nation in the Promised Land, and they were to live as a nation distinctly different and set apart from all the other nations. And one of the ways that they were to be set apart is God said, I'm gonna be your king. Like all those other kingdoms, they've got earthly kings, but you don't need one. You've got me. I'm going to be your king. And do you know what they said? Cool, cool, cool. We want our own earthly king, though we want to be like all these other lands, and they ask for an earthly king. And God, in all his kindness and love, knew that they were going to do this, so he gave instructions in Deuteronomy already for what an earthly king for the nation of Israel is supposed to be like. Here's a few of the things that God describes for this king from Deuteronomy 17. An earthly king for my people must not acquire many horses. He shouldn't have a vast, big army that his confidence is in, rather than his confidence being in me as the God of the nation. He must not acquire many wives. You are not to live as a slave to your desires, but instead, let me be the one that meets all your desires and needs. He must not acquire a large amount of silver and gold as the king of Israel, you're not supposed to be about yourself, your wealth, your agenda, your status, all your things. These are the instructions that God gives him. So don't do those things, King. And here's some of the things you should do. Take a look at this. He says he must write a copy of this instruction. The King of Israel is actually supposed to, in his own handwriting, not have someone else do it, write out the law into a scroll, and he's to keep it with him every day, and he's to meditate on it, to study it. He's to set time aside every morning and every night to meditate on the instruction on the law. This kind of king is not like your typical warrior army fighting King that the other nations had. This is more like a Bible nerd, a guy that's just like, Yeah, I'm going to just study scripture. He's more humble and gentle, like a shepherd. And this is the instructions that God gives for what he wants the king of his people to be like. And sure enough, they get their first king, King Saul. And if you've read Saul's story, you know he only gives half his heart to God. Actually spends most of his life bowing to the king of jealousy, the king of himself. David, David's a man after God's own heart, but yet he was a miserable failure, bowing to the king of his desires. Solomon, I don't know if any king had more horses and wives. King after king, every single one of them was a massive failure. None met the measure. None lived the way that God planned for and hoped for and set as the standard for the kings of Israel, every single King was a failure, even the best were terrible. And because of poor kings and poor leadership, the Kingdom splits. And not too long after that, the Babylonians come take them over, and they go to exile. And now the people, the followers of God, are living in exile, and any dreams, any hopes of being a part of a kingdom, are long gone. They're wondering what happened to us? Will we ever mean anything again? Will we ever have a better existence than the existence we have enslaved and taken away to a distant land, and in the midst of a time of desperation where all dreams of a king and a kingdom are long gone, God speaks through the prophet of Isaiah, and he says, How beautiful are the feet of The Herald, who says to Zion, your God reigns. God lets his people know their kingdom is not over. And there is a king who is on the way. There is a king that is coming. And then hundreds of years later, Jesus shows up onto the scene. He's walking the countryside, and he lets everyone know the time is here. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is near. It's at hand. It's right here. It's breaking in, repent and believe this good news. And Jesus spent his days walking through the countryside teaching about this kingdom, not a morality and a way to live, but a way of following the monarchy and being a part of a bigger Kingdom purpose. I have to think though the teachings that Jesus gave when people heard it, maybe were they getting a bigger, grand vision of what life could actually be in this new and different kind of kingdom, and as Jesus was teaching on the kingdom, he also met so many needs like he met people right where they were, people who were sinners, who were like the exiles, the downcast, the people who were the marginalized. They sought out and wanted to actually sit with Jesus. I mean, he loved people in such a way that when they looked into his eyes, they felt like they had a sense of belonging women who were less than men and never really quite measured up. Women spent time with Jesus, and for the first time, saw what it was like be what it was like to be seen as beautiful without being objectified. They got to experience what it's like to have true, real friendship, where there was no hierarchy or looking down upon or minimizing, and he just felt loved and accepted.

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Jesus spoke on justice God's heart for the people who thought they'd been long forgotten and the healings, I mean, he he met real, tangible needs that people had, where they were in so much pain, there was so little hope. And he showed up and worked and moved and ministered to them, where they restored hope and they saw that their life could be something other than and he didn't just fix a disorder, he actually healed them in their soul. And as Jesus is ministering to people, teaching and healing, the people started to wonder, is this the Messiah? Is this the king that Isaiah has talked about, is he the one we've all been longing for and hoping for? Could he be the one that's going to restore us as a nation and free us from this Roman oppression? Could he be the long awaited King and what they hoped for? He was a king, but a king different than Jesus, a king that was going to be a warrior, a king that was going to go and fight for and grab for power. See every other

king that they knew of, the way that they would work is they would fight for power and keep that power. They had no category for Jesus, the King who is all powerful and doesn't need to fight for power or keep that power. Instead, he leverages power for the powerless. This is a king entirely different than any other king they've ever been able to think about. And so they're whispering, they're wondering, could he be the king, and then it's a few days before Passover, and Jesus is making his way into Jerusalem, and he's coming from Bethany, and on this day is actually the day that's set aside just days before that Passover celebration where you're instructed to go and find your Passover Lamb, the perfect, spotless, sinless Lamb. So people are in the midst of getting all their affairs in order, getting ready to do this big celebration that they do every year, and they're trying to make sure that they can find the right sacrifice, the right lamb, and do all the things that they need to do to be ready. And Jesus is coming from Bethany, making his way to Jerusalem, and then Bethany, there was a huge buzz, this massive energy about Jesus. He just did something that's never been done before. Lazarus had been dead for days, and Jesus resurrects him back to life. I mean, the energy, the excitement in Bethany about Jesus. They're like, Oh, he is the long awaited king. He's the one we've been waiting for. So it's from this place that Jesus is heading into Jerusalem, and people are grabbing their palm branches and they're chanting, and they're screaming and they're waving them. They're saying, Hosanna. Hosanna. And Hosanna comes from a Hebrew phrase that means, save us, we pray. And I wonder, for how many of these people? Was it a chant, or was it a pleading? Save us, we pray. I wonder some of them are looking into his eyes, going, Save us, Jesus, we need a better existence, a better life than this. Would you be our king that restores Israel? Would you get Rome out of here? And Jesus says he's making his way from Bethany into Jerusalem? He's riding on a donkey. And this isn't a mistake. It was intentional, and it's biblical. 700 years before Jesus makes his way from Bethany into Jerusalem, Zechariah has this prophecy. Says, Look, your King is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey. In the ancient world, when a king was coming in, and he was making his way in, and he's coming in to come in and like bring his reign, he would ride in on a horse to show I'm coming for war. I'm coming to take the lives of my enemies. But when a king would ride on a donkey, it was a way for them to show I'm coming from a place of peace. And so Jesus get this. This is so powerful. Jesus, in this moment, he hops on this donkey. He's riding into Jerusalem, and he is making a massive statement. He's declaring loud and clear, I am your king. He's not hiding that. He is making a loud statement, I am your king, but I'm not the king that you are anticipating or expecting. I'm coming in on a donkey. I'm not coming to take the life of my enemies. I'm coming to lay my life down for my enemies. I am a king riding in on a slow trot on a donkey, slowly ushering and bringing in peace, the peace of God that's going to come through the bloodshed of myself. This is a different kind of king. And while these crowds are chanting Hosanna, hosanna, those crowds and the chants shift in just a couple of days to crucify him. Crucify Him. And as the crowds are chanting for and cheering on and pleading for his death, Pilate asked Jesus a question. He says, Are you the king of the Jews? And what Pilate wants to know is, are you a threat to Rome or Caesar? Are you the king of the Jews? And again, Jesus is absolutely clear. And he says, My kingdom is not of this world. I am a king of a different kingdom, far different than Rome. And I am a king far different than Caesar. Pilate has Jesus flogged, whipped, and Mark records what happens with these guards. God and Jesus, says, the guards dress him in a purple robe. Purple is the color that royalty would wear. So get this. Here's what these guards are doing. They begin to mock Jesus, the King of the Jews, by putting a purple robe on him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him. In Genesis three, we see that when sin entered into the world, that the curse of sin caused creation to change, and the ground began to produce thorns and thistles. Thorns a symbol of the curse of sin. This is what the guards took, fashioned together a crown, and didn't just lightly put it on his head, but jammed it onto his head, where now the thorns are piercing into his skin,

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and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews. Let's go to the next slide. They were hitting him on the head with a stick, spitting on him, getting down on their knees. They were paying homage to him. These guards are mocking Jesus, falling to their knees going Hail King of the Jews. And what it looks like is that they're taking advantage of a man that is completely powerless. But what has actually happened is Jesus, the one who is all powerful, is actually being coronated as the king, and he's about to restore his reign and restore humanity. And they take Jesus. He goes up to the top of a hill. They stretch him out over a cross, and they pull his hand out, and they grab a stake, a metal stake that had probably been used in other crucifixions the Roman guards, they don't know that this is anything different than anyone else they've ever executed before. They put his hand against the wood. They take the spike, they put it to his hand, they lift up their mallet, and wham, they drive the hammer into the stake, and it pierces into his skin, and they do the same to his other hand, and the same thing with his feet. And then they lift Jesus up with a system of pulleys and hoist and his cross is lifted up into the air, and Jesus is now exalted between heaven and earth with a hot sign above his head that says, King of the Jews. And this is the moment where he brings his kingdom and his reign back into humanity. He's up on a cross, stretched out, beaten, fighting for every single breath, looking at the people who were cheering on his suffering. And he sees his mom, Mary, John. He says,

Father, forgive them. And the mystery of this moment is where it looks like everything is all wrong. This is where Jesus is reigning, but he's reigning in a way that is unlike any other king. He's not reigning with quick clenched fists but with open wounds. He's not reigning with a sword in his hand but nails in his hands. He's reigning not by taking life, but by laying down his own life. This king is radically different than every other king who has ever lived, and this is what this whole thing is about us understanding is that the kingdom of God is drastically different than every other kingdom. Because the king, God, Jesus, is different than every other king. He is drastically different, and he is a king that does not demand worship. He is a king that has proven himself worthy of worship. He is a king that restored rain through His mercy and His love. This king so different. So as we start this series, the question we have to ask ourselves is not, do you believe in the kingdom? The question you and I need to ask ourselves today is, Have you bowed to the King? Have you bowed to the King? Because of all the other kings in this world, every other king has never measured up, and every other king has never been the kind of king that Jesus is. And in our lives, we find ourselves so tempted to run to and go to so many other kings. I mean, how much of your life have you spent bowing to the king of success because you. Success, and you just so need to be successful. How much of your life Have you bowed to the King of comfort? You just want ease and steady and predictable and safe, and so you bow to the king of comfort. How much of your life have you spent bowing to the king of reputation because you need a status? How much of your life have you spent being totally enslaved to the king of anxiety, where it rules every single day of your life we bow to so many things, politics, our nation, tribal thinking, our need for control. Just so much of our lives we spend bowing to the wrong kings. How much of your life Have you bowed to the King of your desires and lusts? How much of my life have I spent bowing to a king needing approval? How much of the life have you spent bowing to the king of fear or trying to have power? Have you spent your life bowing to the king of self, every single King that we've bowed to has failed us and has even wounded us, and yet we continue to bow to these kings as if they're worthy of our worship, if they're worthy of our hearts. But there is only one king that has ever worn the thorns. There's only one king that has ever died for his enemies. There's only one king that has ever walked out of the grave. There's only one king that has brought you life. There's only one king that brings you out of sin. There's only one king that is sufficient and enough. There's only one king that has given you the name Beloved. There's only one king that washes feet. There's only one king that sees the broken and makes them beautiful. There's only one king that reigns from the throne of grace. There is only one king that is truly worthy of our worship, and I can't think of anything else to do right now other than worship this king. So let's let every knee bow, every heart confess, every tongue confess, every heart surrender and bow to Jesus, the King, the one who is worthy of our worship. You.