



THE CHALLENGE...

- * We struggle for a clearer grasp of the big picture, always feeling like something is still missing.
- * "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but **then** face to face..." (1Co 13:12, ESV) "**then**" isn't here yet!
- * Oscar Wilde - Irish poet and playwright. - died in 1900, age 46.
 - * "**We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.**"
- * First a few comments about Saul and earthly kingdom stuff; then let's see if we can catch a glimpse of how different God's spiritual kingdom is!

1SAMUEL 9, 10, 11...

- * 3 chapters 69 verses about the huge transition in Saul's life...
- * Chapter 9 Saul chosen to be king
- * Chapter 10 Samuel anoints Saul; Saul brought out of hiding to be proclaimed king.
- * Chapter 11 Saul rallies the people to liberate a neighboring city from a dreadful threat.
- * Key passage in these 3 chapters:
 - * 10:19a But **today you have rejected your God**, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.'

FROM SAUL TO TODAY...

- * Fast forward a few 1000 years: What has modern man learned from the history of nations, the blood-letting, and the struggles for power?
- * HUGO GROTIUS (1583-1645) A Dutch humanist and theologian..."Throughout the **CHRISTIAN** world, I observed a lack of restraint in relation to war, such as even barbarous races should be ashamed of; [...] when arms have once been taken up, there is no longer any respect for the law, divine or human; it is as if, in accordance with a general decree, **frenzy** had openly been let loose for the committing of all crimes."
- * Human kingdoms are doomed for failure. At best, they foreshadow a future we still yearn for.
- * In this post-Resurrection age of walking in the steps of Jesus, **there seems a radical, better way!**

THE FORK IN THE ROAD...

- * Two contrasting visions as to what the Kingdom of God in the world is, and what its relation is to that which lies around it. Crucial, because they generate starkly different outcomes...
 - * Conquering or witness-bearing?
 - * Coercion or liberty of conscience?
 - * "liberty of conscience" became a rallying cry against state churches and religious establishments—when the state enforces religious conformity, it inevitably corrupts both the faith it enforces and the civil order doing the enforcing.
- * What were the US founding fathers aiming for?
 - * homogeneity vs. pluralism

LIFE IN GOD'S KINGDOM: HOW DOES IT FEEL?

CITIZENSHIP

- ✳ **Repent:** "the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mrk 1:15, ESV)
- ✳ **A spiritual kingdom:** "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13-14, ESV)
- ✳ **A Peoplehood:** "As indeed he says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.''" (Romans 9:25, ESV)

SHALOM (שָׁלוֹם)

- ✳ **More than peace:** carries the core idea of completeness, wholeness, or soundness.
- ✳ **Devotion:** (undivided loyalty): "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Mat 19:24, ESV)
- ✳ **Belonging:**
 - ✳ "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," (Ephesians 2:19, ESV)
 - ✳ Coldhearted and Christlike are never compatible!
- ✳ **Sheltered:** "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed," (Mark 4:30)
- ✳ **Childlikeness:** "'Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.'" (Mark 10:13-15, ESV)

SIMPLICITY

- ✳ **Unstained:** "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself **unstained** from the world." (James 1:27, ESV)
- ✳ **Assembly:** "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18, ESV)
- ✳ **Uncomplicated:** "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance." (Act 28:30-31, ESV)

NEWNESS

- ✳ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; **behold**, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)

HOME AT LAST!

- ✳ How did I stray so far from the life of King Saul? God's kingdom is so much different than our temporal, visible kingdoms... it is worth our steady gaze from time to time.
- ✳ "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now... **Come further up, come further in!**"
- ✳ **Prayer:** Lord, help us to step out of the gutter and walk with you among the stars!



Questions or Comments?
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