

I. The American church today

A. Some stats:

1. Pew research (2018-2019)
 - a. Percent of adults who identify as Christian
 - 1) Silent generation (1928-45) = 84%
 - 2) Baby boomers (1946-64) = 76%
 - 3) Generation X (1965-80) = 67%
 - 4) Millennials (1981-96) = 49%
 - b. Percent of adults who attend religious services one or more times a month
 - 1) Silent gen = 61%
 - 2) Baby boom = 49%
 - 3) Gen X = 46%
 - 4) Mil = 35%
2. Gallup (2017): Views on morality
 - a. Divorce is ok = 91%
 - b. Unmarried sex is ok = 70%
 - c. Dr assisted suicide is ok = 57%
 - d. Pornography is ok = 36%

B. Observations

1. Every successive generation has been less churched. (1930's = 70%; 2020 = 47%)
2. The church in America has consistently fallen behind in its primary mission.

*What the church has been doing and how they have been doing it doesn't look like a prevailing church. I believe this has happened for many reasons but in large part, because we have forgotten where we are from and where we belong.

-Hook, Peter Banning, forgot who and where

II. The Kingdom of God

A. Human history as God's Kingdom

1. Throughout the biblical witness, God's people have consistently been "called out" of the world's citizenship.
 - a. Adam and Eve: gave birth to a rival kingdom
 - b. Abraham: a revived kingdom
 - c. Moses: a rescued kingdom
 - d. David: a forever kingdom
 - e. Jesus: a revealed Kingdom
2. Constant with every movement is an outward and expansion mission.
 - a. Adam and Eve: grown Eden outward
 - b. Abraham: bless all nations
 - c. David: eventually bring peace over all the Earth
 - d. Jesus: every tribe and every nation, 1st to the Jew and then to the Gentile

*But, what exactly is this Kingdom?

B. Defining the Kingdom

1. Some options

- a. Place you go when you die
- b. The church: synonymous with each other
- c. Simply ethics: a call to social action and good deeds;
"Humankind builds the Kingdom of God as it works for the ideal social order and endeavors to solve the problems of poverty, sickness, labor relations, social inequities, and race relations."
- d. Euphemism for the rule of God in one's own heart

*All of these suffer from reductionism (taking a part of the whole and placing it in the center)

2. The witness of Scripture

a. Jesus

1) Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."

2) Matthew 16:13-28

-v16-19

Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

-v24-25

Then Jesus told His disciples, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

*When a believer speaks words with the bedrock of Jesus' identity at the center, they are using the keys of the Kingdom to open the Kingdom in people's lives.

3) John 18:33-36

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?" Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My Kingdom is not from the world."

b. Paul

1) Ephesians 2:18-22

For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the

cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

2) Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.”

3. The Kingdom of God is the King’s power over the King’s people in the King’s place.
 - a. A true kingdom consists of a king, a people, and it exists in a place.
 - b. God is King. We tend to gravitate to God as friend or Father, however, kingship is the root metaphor for the Bible’s description of God.
 - c. In the Gospels we see this clearly played out.
 - 1) Matthew: place of the Kingdom
 - 2) Mark: the King’s authority (power)
 - 3) Luke: who will inherit the Kingdom, the weak, poor, neglected, and unexpected (people)
 - 4) John: life in the Kingdom

*The Gospels present the Kingdom realized through the cross. The cross lives on in the people of God and the places where they gather together when they take up their crosses and follow Jesus, there is the Kingdom of God.

C. Kingdom and the cross

1. The Kingdom of God has been established through the cross of Christ by which Jesus reign is irreversibly fixed on Earth as is in Heaven.
 - a. At the end of John (19:20), “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

*Announcement to the whole known world that the king had arrived.

- b. In the Kingdom, the risen King Jesus grants power to His people and they spread the good news of the King to every place.
2. Two hymns
 - a. Colossians 1:15-20 (explains the extent of Christ’s Kingship)
 - b. Philippians 2:6-11 (gives the means by which Christ is declared to be King)

*Jesus crown is bestowed on Him because of the cross.

D. Kingdom visual: Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

1. Historical and literary whom represent the choice before all of us
2. Two Thieves
 - a. “Save yourself and us”
 - 1) Viewed Messiah as savior of the people but no king
 - 2) How could a king be on the cross

b. "Remember me when you enter your kingdom"

- 1) Saw Messiah and the cross as something bigger
- 2) Recognized that the king has power, but a paradoxical power, one of suffering and weakness

*The Kingdom is not simply social ethics, or Heaven, or the church, or God's sovereignty, or in my heart; the Kingdom is much larger. The Kingdom concerns the King, His people, and the place. And at the center of His Kingdom plans stands a wooden cross, covered in blood.

III. The challenge of the Kingdom

*As human beings, we hold our ideologies very ravenously. It is in our nature to protect what we hold dear. And when it comes to God's Kingdom, we are prone to idolatry with our ideology. Therefore, we cannot wed the Kingdom of God with an ideology which has been a core sin of humanity since the fall. It is not limited to one person or tribe or nation over another. So here is the challenge for us of the Kingdom ...

A. We are an advantaged people.

1. Because of our heritage, we believe that a favored church is normative.
2. Because of our bias toward a democratic form of government, we don't recognize nor know how to honor a king

*Therefore, we struggle with the power of the King.

*As much as you may believe yourself above this, you are not. I am not. We don't know how to interact with Jesus as King.

B. We are a national/global people.

1. We primarily see ourselves through the lens of geopolitics (political power reinforced/undermined by geographical arrangements).
2. Other are seen through this lens - we don't have Kingdom vision as our default. Our belief in the global family of God falls short of actions.
3. Our earthly citizenship, by nature, competes with our Kingdom citizenship - if it doesn't then we aren't thinking Kingdom.

*This has to do with the King's people and place.

I have one thing to ask you this morning. From what you know about kings and kingdoms, and from what the Bible says about who we are and how we are to live, are you really treating Jesus as King in your thoughts and in your behavior? With what you have and what you do? Because I'm not. And the Church hasn't. And I think that's one of the primary reasons that we are where we are today. That's why we are on track to go from a nation with the highest percentage of self-identified Christians to one of the least-evangelized nations on the planet in two generations. It's not because of a liberal or conservative agenda. I think it's because Jesus is not really King of our hearts and our minds and our bodies. That's what I would ask you to genuinely wrestle about this week.

We are so grateful that Jesus has saved us from our sin. It's time to recognize Him as King and learn how to live our lives around that truth.

Invite band and pray and intro communion

Luke 22

And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."



THE KINGDOM

MARK 1:14-15 and other Scriptures
APRIL 11, 2021 | PASTOR MATT WHITEFORD



ACCOUNTABILITY FROM LAST WEEK'S LIVE IT OUT QUESTIONS

Was there anything you committed to doing after reflecting on Scripture last week during your group? Did you follow through with that commitment, what steps did you take, and is there any way we can help?

GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT AS YOU START YOUR CONVERSATION)

- 1 What words would you use to describe Christians? Choose words that are essential to what it means to be a Christian.**
- 2 In your own words, what is the "Kingdom of God"?**

As citizens, we understand what it means to submit to governing authorities, as well as to the laws and leaders of our country. Our citizenship determines the way we live. However, all followers of Christ have dual citizenship, both in their country of origin as well as in Heaven. The greatest allegiance we have is to Jesus and the Kingdom He is building—so much so, it impacts every area of our lives as we submit ourselves to the Gospel of Jesus and His Father's Kingdom.

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

- 1** Someone read **Mark 1:14-15** for the group.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel."

Jesus said repent and believe the Gospel. How are the ideas of repentance and faith central to the Gospel and being a citizen of God's Kingdom?

What was controversial about what Jesus was teaching? How might His first audience have understood this teaching?

Jesus came on the scene and immediately diagnosed the problem with the world. People were sinners and in rebellion against God. Such teaching was not popular in Jesus' day, and it is not popular in ours. People want to assume they have it all together. To suggest that not only do they not have it together, but also that they need to actively renounce the way they're living, is a hard teaching. The call to follow Jesus is the call to repent, or to do a 180-degree turn and head in the opposite direction. Following Jesus comes at the cost of our desires and will.

2 Someone read **John 18:33-37** for the group.

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about Me?”³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You over to me. What have You done?”³⁶ Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My Kingdom is not from the world.”³⁷ Then Pilate said to Him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose, I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.”

How did Pilate (an earthly ruler) and Jesus (the heavenly ruler) have different ideas about the Kingdom?

What is the difference between being a part-time visitor and a full-time citizen in the Kingdom of God? Which are you?

According to Jesus’ words in v. 37, how can we tell if we are citizens of His Kingdom?

3 Someone read **Luke 23:39-43** for the group.

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”⁴⁰ But the other rebuked Him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”⁴¹ And he indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.”⁴³ And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

How was the second criminal’s faith revealed in what he said? How does this give us hope for forgiveness?

How did the two criminals’ view of Jesus differ? How do the differences between how they viewed Jesus reveal the choice we have in how we respond to Him?

The first criminal who spoke out wanted to use Jesus—His power and deity—to save himself from suffering the punishment for his crimes. He saw Jesus as a savior, but not a king. However, the second criminal recognized his own sinfulness compared to Jesus’ deity and holiness. Even as they were all on their crosses, the second criminal believed that Jesus was still the King of kings, evidenced by his request for Jesus to remember him in His kingdom.

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

1 **Are there times when you, like the first criminal in Luke 23, only see Jesus as your Savior, but not your King? What has that looked like?**

2 **If Jesus is our King, what do you need to change so your thoughts & behaviors are aligned with how a citizen of God’s Kingdom should live?**

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK: CITIZEN Week 2

Take some time before Sunday to pray that God would use these messages and the truth in His word to transform the minds and lives of those who hear it. Pray that God would move you and others in our church to live out what is revealed in His word. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

MARK 1:14-15

The words "after John was arrested" indicate an interval between vs. 13 and 14, possibly as long as a year if this parallels John 4:3,43. Mark did not include Jesus' early Judean ministry (John 3:22-36). Further details about John's arrest and execution appear in Mark 6:17-29. In the person of Jesus, the Kingdom of God was so near that announcement of its arrival demanded immediate response - repent and believe.

JOHN 18:33-37

The incredulous Pilate could not imagine this broken and beaten man before him was the King of the Jews. But Jesus would not give him the satisfaction of claiming or disclaiming such an office. All this turned Pilate's disdain for the Jews up another notch in v. 35. He characterized this entire trial as petty religious bickering among these Jews whom he was authorized to control. Vs. 36-37 offer poignant truth from the lips of the Lord. All earthly kingdoms find their source with sinful humanity, but Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world. It needs no human defense. Jesus was not referring to the ultimate millennial kingdom; His spiritual Kingdom of truth represents the lordship of the King over the lives of His people. Who forms this Kingdom? "Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice", said Jesus. Once again Jesus set truth as the dividing standard for right and wrong. But if truth was all He cared about, He posed no threat to Rome. Pilate would have to weasel out of this situation in some other way.

LUKE 23:39-43

In the midst of this display of unbelief and mockery, the other criminal came to understand the difference between his own guilt and Jesus' innocence (this man has done nothing wrong). He also realized that Jesus was the Messiah and asked to take part in His coming Kingdom. Jesus assured him that, after death, he would immediately be reunited with Him in paradise (eternal life beyond the grave; see 2 Cor. 12:4).