

Intro:

What we have been talking about has brought up tension in me.

Guitar string change from my childhood

Thought it was too much, but it hadn't even reached the note it was meant to play.

My big point this morning is that when we surrender ourselves to Jesus, and really live with the Kingdom in mind, all the time, we can count on a life filled with tension.

Now what? That can't be right could it? I thought Jesus was here to make my life easy and simple? I thought He was supposed to resolve tension in my life, not create more.

Jesus is here to make your life worthwhile, but make no mistake, living as a citizen of the Kingdom will introduce tension into your life. So we've got to ask the question, "Is that true?" And if so, how will you handle it?

Quick caveat- we are talking about Kingdom tension, not bad-decision tension or being-a-stubborn-fool tension. We're talking tension that comes about because we are living out the values of the Kingdom.

So let's talk about this, and let's make sure this is accurate.

We hate tension. We try hard to actively remove it- so we need to figure out for sure if this is true, or is this some hairbrained idea from Kyle or some pastor somewhere.

Well let's look at why the Kingdom creates tension in our lives.

We are used to tensions in our lives, we might not like them, but we are used to them.

Our King Jesus loved to throw out statements that actually generate tension in our lives.

#### SOVEREIGNTY AND FREE WILL

*For by Him all things were created, in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16–17)*

And yet so many examples of people choosing or not to follow God or not.

## SAVED BY GRACE

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

*So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:17)*

## GRACE AND TRUTH

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)*

## JESUS

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)*

## TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS

*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. (Matthew 16:24-26)*

## ABUNDANCE VS POVERTY

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)*

*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! (Luke 6:22)*

## PEACE AND SAYING THERE WILL BE TROUBLE

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

## CONTENTMENT AND PERSECUTION

*I am not saying this out of need, for I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation— to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. ... (Philippians 4:11-13)*

## JOY AND (IN) SUFFERING

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

## BEING MADE ALIVE, YET DYING TO OUR SELF

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Freedom and self-sacrifice. Pretty much all of 1 Corinthians, people are losing their minds about how much freedom to live in, and Paul says

## WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" ... Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

## The Sermon on the Mount

Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:1-12)*

I don't know about you but living like this does not alleviate tension in our lives, it only ramps it up. Because living like this is directly at odds with how the world around us works. This is not how you get ahead in the world in which we live.

So I hope we can see what the Bible is so clearly explaining to us. The Kingdom brings about tensions in our lives in this world in which we live, and there is a reason for it. And the reason is this:

The Kingdom is now but also not yet fully realized

*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." (Mark 1:14-15)*

When Jesus returns it will be, but until then, we are left in this in-between and this in-between is full of tension. And I don't think we need to be so afraid of it. In fact, maybe we should embrace it.

But that is not our natural response.

We hate tension—unless you're a sociopath. Most of humanity is in service to removing or alleviating tension.

What are the reasons we like to resolve or diminish tension?

It's easier.

It feels right.

It allows us not to change.

It's clearer to draw hard lines when there is no tension.

So if we can agree that Scripture says living for Jesus will bring about tension, and that we don't need to be afraid of it, we get why it's there, then the next question is, "What should our response be to this Kingdom tension?"

See I think that unfortunately our response to Kingdom tension is the same response we have to any other tension we experience. Our temptation is to try to minimize or remove it altogether.

There are three major ways we tend to do that: Fight, Flight, Freeze

### **Fight**

My mind jumps to Peter: my world is crumbling; I will take things into my own hands.

We don't fight for the sake of the Kingdom; we fight to remove the tension the kingdom creates.

We use one-liners to shut down conversation.

We legislate morality - wish

Peter, example of how we respond when introduced with tension- the desire to fight back

### **Flight**

Rich young man. We run away from the tension, (GET OUT OF CALIFORNIA NARRATIVE)

Jesus calls us to be in this world not of this world, not separated out, but to go into the world for the sake of the Kingdom.

### **Freeze**

(It's like this tension is some kind of T rex from Jurassic Park that if we don't move it can't get us, and we ignore it) The crowd- circling the outside, staying in the peripheral, enjoying the benefits, but ignoring the hard truths.

We have gotten pretty good at that here. We fill our lives with enough things that we can effectively ignore the tension.

We may have been able to get away with that, but those days are coming to an end. And I think that is a really good thing.

Why does this matter

We live in tension now, so that we don't feel it there.

The idea of the gap between how we live now, and how we will live in the Kingdom is pretty small.

God is not just keeping us alive until He decides to take us to Heaven, He is equipping us to be ready for it. Heaven is not meant to be a terrible shock for us, like some celestial holiday resort which looks nothing like the photos, a place where we wake up and find ourselves saying, "Ooh, I never thought it would be like this!" It will of course be utterly wonderful, better than we can possibly imagine, but the point is: its values are ones we should be trying to live now.

When we embrace Kingdom tension, we can accomplish kingdom purpose. In my life, the most Kingdom-looking things I have ever done have come with a boat load of tension.

Foster care

Back around to that guitar string. The only way it can make music, is for it to have a certain level of tension. No one is going to hear the sound that string can make if all the tension has been removed. Maybe the church is the same way. Maybe the world can't hear the message of hope that we carry because we have removed all the tension that makes it compelling. Maybe for the world to hear the message of hope we carry, we need to embrace the good tension that the Kingdom brings into our lives.

So walking out of here, I think there are a few questions each of us can ask of ourselves.

1. Where is your tension coming from? Make sure it's coming from the Kingdom.
2. How are you managing it? Are you fighting, running, freezing, or embracing it for the sake of our King and His Kingdom?