

I. Introduction

A. Citizens of the kingdom of God

1. Review: God created and is sovereign over all things. We live in a world that consists of both the natural and supernatural that is in constant war. We serve a King Who is above all kings currently carrying out His reign over all the cosmos. We have a book, the Bible, which is the Word of God and we submit and obey it. We've talked about our loyalty, the tension we face, and the weapons we are called to take up, and the ones we don't touch.
2. The problem is that we still don't live in a way that reflects all these truths. We build our kingdoms and master our own destiny adding Jesus in varying degrees to the mix.
3. *If we truly belong to this Kingdom, then our lives must whole-heartedly be in on the mission of the Kingdom.

B. Three-fold mission of the Kingdom

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

1. Make disciples
 - a. Imaging over freedom
 - b. Our mission is to accurately represent God's heart and His holiness to the world He wants to reconcile Himself to.
2. Teach to obey
 - a. Transformation over fulfillment
 - b. Our mission is to become like Jesus even at the expense of our own fulfillment.
3. I am with you
 - a. Unity over autonomy
 - b. Our mission can only be accomplished through the genuine unity with the body of Christ.

C. The year 19 BBY when order 66 was executed

1. Inhibitor chips forcing compliance, no choice in the matter, slaves to their programming
2. "Good soldiers follow orders" and the orders were to kill all the Jedi
3. *The clones were free to carry out their orders. As citizens in the Kingdom of God's, we talk about our freedom mistakenly. Once we are in Christ, we have the freedom to carry out the mission that defines God's Kingdom.

II. Mission: Imaging God

A. Our Slavery (Romans 6)

1. Read Romans 6:1-19
2. *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?*

For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. (Romans 6:20-22)

- a. All people are by nature slaves to sin (v 20)
 - 1) We are not neutral, self-determining creatures making decisions between sin and righteousness. If the Holy Spirit is not dwelling in you, everything you do is for your benefit.
 - 2) We were, at one time, free toward righteousness - it had no power or real attraction to us. Remember, righteousness is not the same as good.
 - b. God alone delivers us from this enslavement to sin (v 22).
 - 1) We are acted upon, not the action takers, "having been freed" and "have become slaves of God" are not our doing (passive).
 - 2) There are only two categories for human beings.
 - a) Slaves to sin
 - b) Slaves to God
 - 3) *There are no neutral people
 - c. Without a new master and deliverance from sin's slavery, we will not inherit eternal life (v 22)
 - 1) Sin slavery=death
 - 2) Slavery to God=eternal life
3. About the slavery metaphors tension
 - a. Does it bother you? It should, especially with the history of the Transatlantic slave trade and all the devastating consequences thereafter. It was the most demeaning kind of slavery... Juneteenth
 - b. It bothered Paul too.
 - 1) v 18 and 22 are parallel
 - 2) v 19 is an apology for the metaphor
 - c. There is a weakness and finiteness for language that is insufficient for God's great and glorious and complex reality.
 - 1) We have to settle for words and images that are mildly helpful and mildly misleading. (Trinity from last week, didn't even try.)
 - 2) Paul knows that aspects of slavery cannot be attributed to our righteousness and to God.
 - 3) John 15:15, Jesus says from slaves to friends, some aspects do not apply
 4. *The point, however ...
 - a. Our wills are enslaved, either bound to do sin or bound to do righteousness.
 - b. Our hearts are so corrupt or so renewed in Christ that we see sin or righteousness as compelling.
 - c. We are enslaved to sin or to God in that sense.
 5. *When we surrender our sin and move to in Christ, our wills are the equivalent of being enslaved to righteousness in Christ.
 6. *But we tend to see ourselves as "free" from sin to do what we work out as mutually beneficial with God. That is actually still categorized as sin.

B. Our freedom (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)

1. God's ultimate purpose is to gather or reconcile all mankind to Himself.
2. What we learn
 - a. I have the freedom to pursue others generated by a healthy fear of God (v 11)
"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience." Paul lives his life to persuade all people about the truth of the Gospel.
 - b. I have the freedom to be controlled by the love of Christ and the freedom to obey His Word (vs 14-15)
For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised.
 - 1) Motivated by his accountability based in a healthy fear of God
 - 2) Motivated by his knowledge and experience of the great love of Christ and would not do otherwise then live for the one who died for him
 - c. I have the freedom to image reconciliation with God to the world (vs 18-20).
All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
 - 1) God committed us to the message of reconciliation (repentance and surrender and slavery to God).
 - 2) Our lives must appeal to others in order that they may be reconciled to God as well.
3. *We are free and actually commanded to image God in a way that is accurately communicating His heart and His holiness to humankind.
4. *That is our mission and the extent that our freedom reaches. We are not free for the sake of ourselves.

III. So what?

A. Implications

1. Do you self-identify as a slave to God? If not, and you see yourself as a free man or woman, then you might not be a citizen of God's Kingdom.
2. Are you living in a way that communicates that God desires to be reconciled to those who are far from Him?

*We need to stop asking, "Am I right or wrong?" We need to start asking, "Does this put me on the cross?" If it does, then you are exactly where God wants you.

B. Action

1. Wake up and begin the day, "Holy Spirit, how can I live out (image) reconciliation to God (the Gospel) for the people I encounter today?"
2. If we do not have this mindset, we are in overt rebellion to the Kingdom of God.