

## **The Kingdom of God – Matthew 20:20-28**

When we pause to consider the condition of the world we live in, it's extremely difficult to envision the things of this world as being part of God's Kingdom. Reality tells us that this is in fact God's created world but stands as a temporal place where reign and rule is on loan to as the Bible says in Ephesians, the prince of power of the air. People today must choose who they will serve, they must choose whether they will serve Jesus or someone or something else. God has not yet brought the final reality of His rule to bear upon creation and as a result, many people live their lives as though they are in control of their own destiny, they live as though there is no God to whom they must ultimately answer, and they go throughout the course of their lives without a thought for the eternal reality which they will ultimately face. The Bible teaches us that someday the clouds will roll back, the voice of the arch angel and the trumpet of God will sound, Jesus will appear, and like it or not, every defiant knee will bow, and every rebellious tongue will confess what we already know to be true, that Jesus is Lord of all. That is the future reality of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is coming back, only this time things will be a bit different.

**Read Romans 8:18-25:** These verses tell us that all of creation waits for that day when it will be freed from the physical curse of sin. However, this is a future reality that has yet to occur, but till that day, the genuine kingdom of God exists within the hearts and lives of those who love Him. The Kingdom of God as we recognize it, speaks to Jesus being the absolute Lord over all our lives. This is what the Sermon on the Mount addresses, this is what many of His parables illustrate for us. Jesus is to be Lord of our lives; He is to be the most valuable One who exercises authority in our lives.

Let's have a look at **Matthew 20:20-28**. This story helps us better understand what it means when we say, Thy Kingdom Come. If we truly desire to experience His Kingdom now, then we must learn to embrace these principles.

First, God's Kingdom has nothing to do with anything in this world. In His Kingdom, you will not find the ambitions of people. What will you find? His saints bringing praise, honor and glory to Him. Many people today continue to use the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven to further their own earthly desires. Churches have been ravaged by power groups and control centered divisions. Instead of truly seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness many see the church as just another business, just another gathering of people where the ambitious get ahead and the less ambitious get left behind. This was not what Jesus said His kingdom was going to be. It is not what His kingdom was about then, and it is not what His kingdom is about now.

Next, it is interesting to recognize that Jesus did not simply come out and tell the disciples "no" to their request. In fact, after He tells them that they don't know what they are asking, He goes on to tell them that what they have asked of Him is not even His to give but rather belongs to the Father, who will give it to those for whom He has prepared it. Jesus was again communicating that He was not here to do what He wanted, but to be obedient to the Father. Living a Kingdom now life, means submitting to His authority. Living under authority means the choices in our lives are all laid at His feet and left to His discretion. It means we go where He tells us, when He tells us and stay as long as He tells us to stay. It means we give no thought about any glory for

ourselves, whether or not we get the credit, or whether or not we ever get what we want. Our only goal, as was the goal of Jesus, should be to do the will of the Father.

When we consider this point, it leads us to the next concept concerning the Kingdom of God. We have been called to be different from the world. We have been commissioned with the responsibility of showing the world around us the difference Jesus can make in our lives.

Whereas the world teaches that we should hate those who hate us, we are taught to love our enemies. In the world when someone slaps you, you slap back. In the Kingdom, we must turn the other cheek. Study the Beatitudes and you'll see that it is the meek who inherit the earth, that you are blessed when others persecute you and say all manner of evil against you on account of Jesus. Our problem is that we want to inherit the kingdom of God, but we don't want to have to suffer to do it. We want to have the things of this world and the things of God's world, but unfortunately the way to greatness in the kingdom of God is through humility in the eyes of man.

Finally, speaking of greatness. If you want to be great in the Kingdom, then you must become a servant. When's the last time you asked God to change your heart from one who desires to be served into one who wants to serve others? God does not measure things as man measures them. God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts. He tells us in Matthew 7 that not everyone who says Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of the Father in heaven. Here Jesus says that in His kingdom, regardless of what we may think, irrespective of how we may feel about it, those who are truly the greatest in His Kingdom, are those who are the servants, not those who are being served.

You guys know who A.W. Tozer is? He wrote a book entitled: *The Incredible Christian*. In it, he lists seven marks which demonstrate the characteristics of someone who lives by the Spirit and lives a Kingdom now life. I want to close by sharing those with you.

1. You must desire to be holy rather than happy.
2. You must desire to see the honor of God flow through your life.
3. You must desire to carry your own cross by being attached to Jesus Christ.
4. You must desire to see things in this life the way God sees them.
5. You must desire to give up your life for the cause of Christ and be right with God.
6. You must desire to see others advance even at your own expense.
7. You must desire to make decisions based on eternal things and not temporal things.

This is Tozer's list as he views it. Could there be more characteristics of a Kingdom minded person? Absolutely! But let me say this... It's a good list to start with because each of them demonstrates that Jesus is in control of one's life. Let me ask you to consider this question. Considering your current place, what are your marks in comparison to this list?