

How Do We Enter This Kingdom?

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Recap:

We started last time by asking the question, *what is this thing called the Kingdom of God?*

We discussed how there are so many different versions of this, so many different takes on it from so many different people. We decided we would go back to the source and spend some time on exactly what Jesus meant by this phrase.

The verse we started with was:

Luke 17:20-21 ESV

*(20) Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,
(21) nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."*

We are told here clearly by Christ that the Kingdom of God is not something you can observe.

It is not socio-economic by nature.
It is not military, it is not political.
All of these things are observable.

We mentioned how there are two Greek words that are intertwined through out the entire New Testament and that to remove these reference would be to remove 226 very specific references.

These two words are-

Basilica or Kingdom.
And Ecclesia or church.

We noticed how Jesus emphasized the Kingdom in the gospel and the Apostles emphasized the church.
Basilica or kingdom is a word more often used by Christ.
Ecclesia or church is a word of the apostolic era.

The Kingdom was established by Christ but was made manifest by the Apostles in the form of the Church.

The Kingdom or Basilica of Christianity is a spiritual organism, the Ecclesia or the church of Christianity is an institutional organization.

The Basilica or Kingdom is divine;
The Ecclesia or church is human.

The Basilica, the Kingdom, is the goal of Christianity;
The Ecclesia or church is the method of Christianity.

The Basilica is God's aim;
The Ecclesia is God's means.

Christ came to establish the Kingdom, then withdraw so the Apostles could establish the church.

The Apostles did not establish the kingdom.
We can not build the kingdom...it has already been established.

We then took task with the common misconceptions of the Kingdom ranging from the

- Jewish Misconceptions of a socio-political order
- all the way through to the Dominion Theology of the Latter Rain movement that has declared a heresy in 1949 here in the USA
- Which has been rebranded as the 7 mountains or seven spheres Theology today

Now, I do not want to re-preach this point, but let me introduce one new scripture that clearly states this argument:

Jesus in His response to Pilate's question as to the nature of His Kingdom says:

John 18:36 ESV

(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."

This can be read like this:

My Basilica, my kingdom is in the hearts of man,
Is not of this *cosmos*;
Is not of this circle of the earth;
Is not of this realm, this government;
If my basilica was of this world, this cosmos, then my followers would be fighting against you now.

The amplified Bible translates it like this:

My kingdom is not from here (this world); it has no such origin or source.

Our aim should not be to dominate politically or culturally but to influence spiritually.

All of this brought us to the question, *what is the Kingdom of God? If it is not all these things we have been lead to believe, then what is it?*

Our Lord said that:

The Kingdom is not something you observe!

Or my Kingdom is not of this world.

He said His kingdom was something far greater than something that lines your stomach, far greater than something armies could fight for. Far greater than a political position, a successful business or a ministry.

The Kingdom of God is within you.

That is inside of you.

The Kingdom of God is according to Our Lord's own definition:

God's rule and reign in man's heart through Jesus Christ.

Simply put, the Kingdom is God's redemptive action through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question all of this raises for us this morning is that if this kingdom is spiritual, something that is divine in nature, then how do we get in?

How do we participate?

First, let us look at how we enter.

Then let us look at the qualities of the person who is allowed to enter.

Intro:

Turn to John 3 and let's look together at the interaction of Christ with a man named Nicodemus.

We meet Nicodemus three times in the Gospel.

The first time in John 3, the second John 7 when he tries to defend Jesus before the Pharisees and finally we see him again after the crucifixion as he and Joseph of Arimathea prepared the body of our Lord for burial in John 19.

We see in the life of Nicodemus the journey of a man from skeptic to servant, from an enquirer to a believer, from someone outside of the kingdom to someone with the kingdom within them.

You see, Nicodemus had the same misconceptions and the same questions that we all have had at times. He had been raised to believe falsely about the kingdom of God. He had been raised to think that the kingdom was something that he did, not someone that he became. He was raised to think that he was special because of the country that he was born in. That he was entitled to have a place in this kingdom based on the faith of his parents.

Church...God has no grandchildren, just sons and daughters.

The manifestation of His kingdom in your life, the reconciliation of you with Christ is a personal thing, not a corporate thing.

John 3:1-2

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Nicodemus, according to church tradition, was an older, wealthier Jewish leader. He was a political and religious leader.

He had obviously heard Jesus preach and teach and there was something about this prophet from Galilee that grabbed his heart. He had no doubt that Jesus was sent from God. But he wasn't prepared to fully submit himself to Christ.

One night, to avoid being seen by the other Jews and risk social and political shame, he sneaks to the place where the Galilean was staying.

We don't know why Nicodemus came, scripture doesn't say. He was just drawn from out of the darkness to the only man who had an answer for the condition and the questions of his soul. What we have here is a glorious picture of salvation in process.

Someone who is lost, someone in the dark, someone who doesn't know why they are being drawn, who is being drawn to the only one with an answer.

Nicodemus ends up sitting with Jesus.
And Christ does the most amazing thing.
This untitled, unstudied rabbi does what only a brilliant teacher can do.
You see an ordinary teacher will answer the questions that you are asking.
But a brilliant teacher will answer the questions that you are not asking consciously but are searching for subconsciously.

Christ sitting with this man skips the small talk and gets to the issue of his soul.

Out of nowhere.

With no context in scripture.

No recorded context in any literary document.

Jesus makes a claim that has never before been made in the history of mankind or in the history of the Jewish people.

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

When Jesus said this Nicodemus was stunned.

Here was a respectable man, a learned man, an older man.

He didn't come looking for conflict, yet here is this young man, challenging everything he had ever known.

Nicodemus knew this phrase 'Kingdom of God.'

He had grown up with this phrase and believed by virtue of his nationality that he was already a member of the Kingdom.

He was taught that the kingdom of God was a physical.

That it was a socio-economic kingdom that the Jews would possess.

Now this Jesus is saying...your wrong, He is saying that he must be born a second time.

Nicodemus, confused and elderly asks an obvious question to a seemingly impossible request... how?

Maybe his mother was dead.

Maybe she was still alive but very old; the thought confused him no one had ever spoken of such a thing and surely not in the context of the things of God.

Jesus calmly and patiently lays out the plan and process of entering the Kingdom.

Now remember church, the conclusion we came to last week...

The Kingdom of God is God's reign in man's heart through Jesus Christ.

It is the restoration of the relationship between God and man.

So Jesus goes on and says:

*'Nicodemus,
the longing,
the drawing of your heart,
your secret enquiring is to know how to have the relationship
with the Father that I have.'*

How do you reconcile yourself with the Father?

*'There is only one way Nicodemus and that is being born of the
water and born of the spirit.'*

Jesus was speaking of a two part process, baptism as a sign of repentance, and a second thing, a spiritual rebirth that Nicodemus had no parameters for. Neither of which he thought he had need of.

Nicodemus would know of the Jewish ritual of baptism. He was well aware of people being baptized by John for the forgiveness of sin.

But he was a Pharisee. In the eyes of himself and everyone else, he was blameless.

He would have felt no need to be baptized, to repent.

But here is this man saying... 'All have sinned. No man regardless of statue, position or spiritual experience can escape the need to confess their sin, and publicly declare their sins and be baptized just like everybody else.'

.....*'Except a man be born of water...'*

But Christ does not stop there.
But there is another element as well.
There are the spiritual aspects, the spiritual elements.

Repentance is necessary, but it is only our human response to the spiritual drawing of our soul.
There is the divine aspect.
You see the physical aspect of our repentance is not the power behind our salvation.
The baptism is a symbol that holds no saving grace.

It is the spirit and the work of the spirit that draws us,
convicts us,
saves us,
and sanctifies us.
There in lies the power behind the desire and longing to repent.

Friend, you can establish a kingdom of politics, a kingdom of good works.

You can conduct the kingdom of ministry or even the kingdom of the ecclesia, the church, all without the spirit.

But you can **only** enter the Basilica of God by being renewed by the Spirit.

But Jesus doesn't stop there.

He not only tells him that this spiritual rebirth is essential to knowing God, but He goes on and tells Nicodemus that he has no claim to this kingdom, that he can not enter it, it is not based upon his heritage or his current belief and behavioral systems.

John 3:7-8

Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

Nicodemus... you don't get to chose to be born again, you don't get to demand to enter this kingdom, the Spirit of God calls who he will to salvation.

This is a sovereign thing and outside of your control.

You maybe a leader in the Jewish community, but this doesn't make you a member of the Kingdom of God.

And Nicodemus cries.

John 3:9

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Instead of giving him respite, Jesus continues to hammer him:

He ties all of Jewish history together with the power of His coming atoning act, from Moses to the Cross.

Then He makes the most incredible and startling statement so far that drives His point home.

John 3:16-17

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

He says....God has a new chosen people and you are not apart of those people simply because you are Jewish.

The word 'For...' connects the promise of eternal life through God to the Jews in previous verses into the Gentile world.

This was astounding for someone like Nicodemus to hear.

The Old Testament and other Jewish writings had spoken only of God's love for the Jewish people, that the Jewish people were Gods chosen people, God's elect.

But now this Jesus of Nazareth is saying that this promise of eternal life

- a) comes through Him,
- b) that entrance to the Kingdom comes through Him
- c) The condition of entry is not based about birth right or political position or theological background.
- d) And the real kicker is that now God as a new chosen people. People.

John 3:16

You see what was really startling to Nicodemus was not that gentiles could be saved, there had always been provision for that under the law, but that God now had a new elect group of people and he, Nicodemus, wasn't a part of it.

He was now the man on the outside, he was now apart of those people who were not elect, who could not enter the kingdom of God.

When we hear this verse, the word that is most often emphasized to us is the word 'whoever' or the KJV is *whosoever* and we have been told that the *whoever* means everybody is the target of God's salvation, that everybody is the target of this new Kingdom.

But these passages of scripture do not deal with that topic at all.

The Greek text literally reads-

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son in order that every the one believing in Him, not perish, but have everlasting life'

Maybe a more accurate and easier way to put it would be-

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that the believing ones shall not perish.

The emphasis is not on the “whosoever” as we have been taught, but on the believing.

The verse doesn’t talk of universal salvation, but talks of a salvation that is only extended to those that believe in Jesus Christ, God new elect.

The Father gave His Son for the purpose of those who believe. The Son is given so that the believing ones will not perish, but opposite to that.....we would experience eternal life.

This verse says:

- A** all who do believe
- will **B** not perish
- But **C** have ever lasting life

REPEAT:

This verse does not address the issue of who WILL believe or who CAN choose believe, Jesus did that earlier...he said that just like the wind blows, no one knows WHO THE SPIRIT WILL TOUCH.

And Nicodemus either sitting there or at sometime later, Did what we must all do to gain entrance into this Kingdom....like a child he simply believed and was born again.

Child-Like Faith:

And this brings us to our second question, what qualities does a person have to have to enter this Kingdom of God?

Jesus taught us that in order to enter His Kingdom we must be repentant of heart, regenerated by the Spirit and we must be child-like in our faith.

Matt. 18:2-4

*And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them **3** and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

***4** Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

And this verse has baffled people for years.
It baffled the disciples.

The reason being is that we have tended to read more into it than is truly there and we also don't want to believe it.

The disciples around this period, as we discussed last week, were trying to figure out their status and position in the Kingdom.

They got the repentant part, they knew of the regeneration part, But still...they wanted to know who gets the big chair next to Jesus in your kingdom.

So Jesus adds one more layer of explanation to try and help them.

We don't want to believe this explanation because we are so filled with ego and competition that our agenda over runs our spiritual sensibilities He said you had to be to be child-like in your attitude to the things of God.

So let us look at some of these qualities.

So what Jesus was saying here was that in order to enter in a restored relationship with the Father, you must do so with a child-like manner.

v. 3 'Truly I say to you unless you turn...'

That is unless you turn back from, unless you change your opinion, you can not enter the kingdom.

Jesus was not talking about the state of conversion, the miracle of regeneration, but rather that unless they changed their mind and opinion about what the Kingdom of God is they would never enter it.

They needed to change their opinions, their views about the Kingdom of the Messiah.

Christ was not a temporal prince and this was not a temporal kingdom, and that they would not be great and important political rulers who would lead a worldwide movement.

These things are the cry of our flesh and not the cry of God's Spirit.

So what are these child-like qualities that we should endeavor to develop?

Well let's think about these things.

Now let us not think in terms of the brat across the street
But let's think in terms of the pure aspects maybe our Lord was alluding to.

1) A child is excited about everyday and what every day brings

We have lost a lot of this.
Particularly the longer we have been saved, the greater the danger, we lose sight of the simply joy of our salvation.

2) A child is Innocent, not tainted or corrupted by the world or its way of thinking.

They just ask and accept.
They have not learned to manipulate and politic for selfish gain.

If it is their turn, it is their turn.
If not, they will wonder off and find something else to do.

3) A child is Teachable.

They listen and they learn.
They observe everything and will try everything.

4) They act themselves as if all were equal.

They are free from selfish ambition.

They are not judging another or qualifying or un-qualifying themselves based on education or personal history or parenting.

5) They simply trust that they will be taken care of.

So many times the reason we lobby for recognition and position is because we don't trust that God has the ability to promote.

6) They simply believe in God and His Word.

I found a picture of Jessica when she was 8, She was standing next to a lady who's deaf hear she had just prayed for and seen healed.

She hadn't been to Bible College or sat in dead church for years. She just listened to her daddy preach and watch Jesus do miracles, so when she came to praying she didn't doubt, she just believed and did what her father told her to do and got the rules her Heavenly Father promised.

7) They are obedient and wanting to please.

8) They are affectionate, loving and readily forgiving.

We spend more time justifying why we wont forgive and more emotional energy on being bitter than it would take us just to be bigger than the issue.