

Your Kingdom Come

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 June 2021

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Okay, just for a few minutes this morning, I want to talk, before we get the kids back up and enjoy the baptism together, I want to talk a little bit about these two passages that we read together.

It's great. We're going to, I think, we're going to have lots of baptisms in the next few while because we've got lots of babies that have been born in the pandemic and the closing of church and everything is meant.

It's kind of like planes stacked up in a runway. I think we're going to just have lots and lots of them coming back to church and the thrill of baptisms coming soon.

And it was great to see the con all there with us, killed on after Friday night, even better. It looked fantastic and you should have just kept them in. He's fine. But these passages are really interesting because Jesus speaks in these two addresses that he gives to the disciples.

He speaks about what's important, about value in life. He talks about the significance of children.

And he's also talking about the kingdom of God in these passages.

[1 : 09] And so we look for, when we come to the Bible, we look for what Jesus is saying to us and what he wants us to learn. And we sit up and take note of what Jesus says because we regard Him and recognize Him as God in the flesh and one who is hugely relevant and important and living, and His word is living for us.

He's always worth listening to. And at a broader level today in our baptismal service, we're reminded of what we want to be reminded of what baptism says for us, why our children and the children of Christian parents, what we are saying about our lives, our families and what we regard as significant because when Graham and Cursley take their children for baptism, they're saying that they recognize as we do when we've done that, that the most important thing our children need to know about and experience in life is the reality of God and the good news that He declares and the significance and the importance of that in our individual lives and in our family life as well.

In the second of the two sections in Mark chapter 10, Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God. And I guess we just, we ask that question, well, what does that mean?

And He speaks about the kingdom of God, it's kind of not the kind of phrase you hear every day, and it's very important in the Bible. And really basically what, when Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God, He's reminding us that there are two ways to see life.

We can see life with God, or we can look at life and live our lives without God at the center really of our lives. There's two ways to live, and recognizing who God is and recognizing who Jesus is and trusting our lives to Him enables us to live in that, with that perspective and in that place which is the kingdom of God.

[3 : 27] But most people in, certainly in the Western world today are living without God in their lives to any degree, maybe other things, other people or themselves at the center.

And so there's, in a sense, two kingdoms that we see and that the Bible speaks about. One with God at the very center, God who reveals Himself as Creator, kind of important, the author of life, the author of love, the author of justice, the one who is unparalleledly sovereign, eternal, unique, holy, uncreated, of whom Jesus is God and the flesh revealed to us.

So there's that reality of recognizing and knowing as we come and worship together, as Christians that's what we do. Knowing the importance of the centrality, the kingdom of God and having God at the center.

And Jesus uses children in these two episodes to explain or help explain that choosing to follow Jesus and to belong to His kingdom, in other words, turns our world upside down and gives us a different set of priorities, reminds us that we will live very differently now as Christians when we follow Jesus and also transforms our prospects eternally.

In other words, as a life changer when we're following Jesus. And I think sometimes as Christians we forget that. Sometimes we forget who He is, we forget the significance of Him every day. We become cold and cynical and unchanged and we use Him as some kind of insurance policy for something that might happen in the future.

[5 : 14] Rather than living for Him and serving Him and knowing Him and loving Him today. So there's a couple of things just I want to say about that. The first is in the first section we read in chapter 9, verses 33 to 37, He redefines greatness for us.

He redefines what we mean by greatness. And that's a practical and an interesting question for all of us. How do we define greatness? Who's the greatest?

Or what is the greatest? Or what is the most significant thing in our lives? The disciples in this passage had been walking previously before Jesus met them and they'd been arguing about who was the greatest.

In one of the other gospels it has the parallel passage and it tells us they were arguing about who's the greatest in the kingdom of God. So as believers they were asking a bit of a crazy question. And Jesus wants to shake them out of their misunderstanding of what it means to follow Him and what it means, what greatness means. And He uses children to do that.

[6 : 22] He uses the children that come to Him and He uses them as an example. And He says, this is what true greatness is about.

And that would have been very, very shocking for the people and the disciples especially to whom Jesus was speaking I think. Because in that society and at that time kind of kids were very much to be seen, at best to be seen and not to be heard.

They weren't important. They were often silenced. They were ignored. They were sometimes neglected and rejected. And regarded as vulnerable and weak rather than the greatest.

Nobody would take a child and would regard a child as kind of object or a definition of greatness.

And now that situation has changed very much today in the society which we live I hope and pray.

There have been huge advances and huge changes so that people do regard and value children I hope much more than maybe sometimes they have been in the past. We educate them, we love them, we safeguard them against abuse and we seek to protect them as those who are vulnerable.

[7 : 46] But yet, strange isn't it? In 2020 the lives of over a quarter of a million unborn children in the UK didn't see the light of day.

And in a world of staggering inequality it's often the children that are neglected and most vulnerable and suffer most in this strange and equal world in which we live.

Even in Scotland the statistics are that one in four children live in poverty. So I wonder even if today society's markers would ever use children to define greatness, to define what's really important in society and what really matters.

Maybe still doubtful about that. But from Christ's perspective, greatness looks different and He uses children here as we'll go on to see.

Because His challenge for us today is that everyone has a definition of what is of first importance, what really matters, that defines in many ways how we live and what we regard as significant, what we value.

[8 : 59] And it can be lots of different things as we compare ourselves to others, as we do our best. Maybe it's health, maybe it's wealth, maybe it's love and relationships and happiness, maybe it's this driving desire for greatness within ourselves.

And very often maybe today it's simply just being true to ourselves that that is the mark of greatness in people, just being honest and being yourself and what that means for every individual.

And Jesus wants us to challenge that idea of greatness and to change our perspective if He is not in the picture of what's ever in our lives.

And you know we've experienced that change of perspective often at a human level as well, haven't we? Maybe if in the workplace you've maybe been betrayed by a colleague or something like that, then maybe loyalty and trust takes on a completely different perspective to you and you see things differently and you value it in a way that you maybe never did before.

Or if you've had a heart attack and you recover, therefore a walk on the hill, breathing the fresh air, maybe something you never did before and weren't interested in, your life has changed and your perspective has changed and that becomes important when it maybe wasn't important before.

[10:30] I wonder if Christian Erickson, and even if you're not sorry, football illustration I know, for those of you who are not in St. Columbus normally, there's always football illustration, sorry.

But even if you're not a football fanatic, maybe you'll have heard of Christian Erickson who had a cardiac arrest last week playing football. I wonder if his perspective on life and on what is important will have changed as a result of what he's gone through.

I'm sure it has in many different ways. But Christ is challenging us here as well to do something radical, to consider all that we're aiming for, all that we're searching for in life, and that elusive kind of permanence is security that we think maybe greatness will give us.

To consider looking at things differently and stop making these things your ultimate goal and stop chasing them as the meaning of life and listen and be challenged and be moved by what Jesus has to say about greatness and what really matters.

And he uses the simplicity of the life of children to do that for us.

[11:50] In chapter 9 he speaks about trusting and believing like little children.

But it starts with Christ Himself, doesn't it, as king of His kingdom? It starts with who He reveals Himself to be. And I guess that's at the core of our Christian faith and of our Christian lives and of the good news of the gospel because it is for us greatness defined.

As God, God is the sovereign King of what we believe is the universe, the source of all power, of life, of justice, mystery.

The one before whom we will all stand to give account, His holiness and His perfection would blow us all away if we were to stand ever, try and stand in His nearer presence because of our own imperfections and because of our failings.

As the Bible just calls, refers to that as sin. Yet in His relentless inexplicable love He comes as God in the flesh.

[13:06] We can't, it's hard for us to understand God as a spirit. Just difficult. So He comes in the person of Jesus in the flesh and He comes in poverty and He lived in the darkness and in the protection of the womb for nine months and He humbled Himself to being a child and to growing up unheralded and in anonymity and who lived to know rejection and betrayal and in death made Himself nothing and in the third day rose again.

You know, what is that all about? Why in earth do churches and Christians still speak about that from such a long time ago?

Why is that significant and important? He reminds us that greater love is no man than this one who would lay down his life for his friends and He asks us to entrust our lives to Him and to know His friendship and to know that He has sacrificed His life on our behalf and taken the sin and the failure of our lives and paid the price for that on the cross.

And that's for us to investigate and it's for us as Christians to be reminded of every day in our lives. So it starts with Christ and then He goes on to explain greatness from His point of view and recognizing that we become great when we learn from the humility of little children, which is really what He's speaking about in that passage about the little children who come to Him and who He uses as an example of being last of all, a servant of everyone and He takes a child in His arms. And that greatness is that, is an ongoing recognition, we're not so great on our own and we entrust ourselves to one who is truly great so that we can know true greatness.

[15:17] When we are bowled over by His love and we commit our lives to Him and come to Him forgiveness and grace, when we learn to hate the things He hates and love the things He loves, when we know that being forgiven is the best and greatest thing and our priorities change so that we are willing to become a servant of others and have a special love for the most vulnerable, the most isolated, maybe the most unimportant people in the eyes of others.

It's kind of that we think of ourselves less rather than thinking less of ourselves because we're precious children of God. It's not that we are worthless and come to that, a position of thinking that, but rather that we are unworthy but still loved and given grace and a future.

And we welcome, therefore, children and bless them just in the same way that He did. And that's why we love having children in the church and I hope that's why we love just the energy and the noise and the disruption that they cause because that's great.

It's wonderful. And we always want to treat whoever it is in our lives and in our day-to-day living as image bearers of God and therefore of great value.

And that may be a challenge for us in our day-to-day living. So He starts and He shows us greatness from a different perspective.

[16:56] And then He just, I'm just, as I close with this, He illustrates the kingdom of God in the second passage in chapter 10 again by using the example of children.

And He says, truly whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. And He's really just using an example there of receiving a gift in the same way as a child does.

You know, just think of children who receive a beautifully wrapped gift on their birthday from their mum or their dad. They just receive it, don't they, without question. They don't leave it in a corner unopened.

They just trust that it's going to be a great gift. And there's not that ounce of cynicism in them. They just, yeah, they rip it open and it's something great that they're going to be given from those who love them most.

And He uses that in an illustration of the simplicity of a child receiving a gift to reflect the way that we should receive the gift of salvation from Jesus.

[18:00] That's the way we enter the kingdom of God, accept what He's done for us as a gift and recognize it as a gift, a gift where He gives us faith and forgiveness and new life now and forever and it comes to live in us and with us.

So we become children of God, not childish, grown-ups, but those who have a childlike faith in that it's one that we receive without cynicism and we accept willingly.

And it's not like the gifts we get and, you know, what happens, gifts that we get are lovely and new and then they get old and then we throw them out and then we get a new gift. It's not like that at all. It's a growing relationship we get. So it's not like as as Christians here, I don't want you to think and sometimes you think, oh yeah, I became a Christian 30 years ago but I sold that now, it's all dull and boring and I really like other things more.

It's not like that for us. There's a satisfaction and a growth and a development and a resourcing and an ongoing forgiveness and grace in our lives that changes us every day.

[19:11] So I think we have much to learn from children and from their attitudes and from what God thinks of them for ourselves. You know, maybe the world we live in would scoff at that idea but we believe literally that the little children belong to God.

They are, I think the citizens of heaven on that last day will surprise us a great deal by all who are there. Not one of his children will be lost.

And as believers, we baptize our children because they matter to him. He blesses them. We believe they belong to his covenant family of faith and they receive the outward sign of the promise.

I wish everyone else enjoyed my sermons as much as they say that she's having a great time, just the visual outworking of the joy of receiving.

Okay, no, don't take it out. No, she's fine, she's fine. I love to hear her laughing. But he blesses them and they belong to the covenant family of faith and they receive the outward sign of the promise which they will come to know when they accept Jesus themselves as the seal of the promise that they are given in baptism.

[20:36] And the use of water which we will use just in a moment is a sign of Jesus cleansing from sin and the life-giving reality of the Spirit of God that comes into our hearts when we believe.

Therefore, it speaks of our union with Jesus and also it speaks more broadly therefore of our union with his family, the people of God, which is why when we come to the baptism, the congregation will be asked to take a vow as well and answer a question on behalf of Connell.

So, we rejoice today with the Thompson's and we hope and pray for them that Connell will grow up like Struan, will grow up to love and serve the Lord Jesus and we can celebrate and rejoice and thank God for his greatness and all we can learn from our children.

Amen.