

Sunday 9th January

Kingdom Come: Repentance

Intro

- Last week Pastor Steve introduced our theme for 2022 which is, 'Kingdom Come.'
- This follows on from our theme last year, 'Jesus People' and I think it's a really exciting theme.
- There are so many things that encompass the breakout of God's Kingdom and a simple way of understanding God's 'Kingdom' is that it is God's reign and rule.
- There is a King who reigns and rules supreme and His name is Jesus.
- God's Kingdom brings hope, healing, transformation, purpose, truth.
- As Jesus people, we pray for God's Kingdom to come and for His reign and rule to manifest in our lives and our communities.
- I have recently started reading the Narnia books by C.S Lewis. They have some incredible allegories for the Christian faith. In the book, 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,' the white witch is the wicked ruler of Narnia and under her reign, it constantly remains dark and winter- no Christmas. The people live in fear of her and her kingdom is wicked. But there comes a day where slowly good starts to triumph over her evil reign and a new kingdom takes over- a kingdom where there is sun and summer and hope and goodness.
- It's a great illustration of how, when we belong to Jesus, we no longer belong to a kingdom of darkness and wickedness but we align ourselves to a kingdom of light and hope and peace.
- This week I am speaking on 'Repentance.' Part of re-aligning ourselves to God's Kingdom means repentance- turning away from darkness and turning towards light.
- Jesus said it Himself in Matthew 4:17 when he says '*repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*'
- Repentance is key in God's Kingdom.
- Let's explore it and unpack it more today.

Repentance is...

- I don't think that repentance is a very popular word. It can have negative connotations; it implies that somebody has done wrong and nobody likes being told they have done something wrong.
- I hated getting into trouble when I was a child- I just remember that I would cry if a teacher at school told me off! I still don't like doing the wrong thing today!
- When I googled 'repentance' it said 'sincere regret or remorse.'
- I'd like to suggest that Biblical repentance is deeper and more substantial than just being regretful or remorseful.
- It involves a whole change of heart and lifestyle.
- The Greek word 'metanoia' means repentance and it's having a change of mind or direction. It goes beyond just feeling sorry or regretful and it means reorientating our hearts and mind with what is pleasing to the Lord.
- In the Old Testament, repentance was seen as turning away from idols and turning to God. God says to the prophet Ezekiel, *'Therefore say to the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!'* Ezekiel 14:6.
- God's people were constantly repenting and turning from worshiping idols to worshiping the one true God.
- In Joel 2:12-13, God says, *'Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.'*
- Repentance involves a returning to God from that which has captured our attention wrongly.
- In the New Testament, when Jesus came He ushered in a radical new way of life where repentance involved a whole hearted devotion to following Him, just as God's people had always been invited to do.
- Repentance and the Kingdom of God go hand in hand.
- We cannot belong to God's Kingdom if we don't repent. God's Kingdom requires a change of heart and attitude, a turning away from sin and an embrace of what pleases and honours God.
- The Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, is that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. None of us is perfect and none of us can find our way back to the

Father on our own. BUT God has made a way through Jesus for us to experience forgiveness and life in all its fullness. (Romans 3:23, John 10:10).

-We once belonged to the dominion of darkness but now in Christ Jesus, we belong to the Kingdom of light.

-Colossians 1:12-14 says, *'the Father... has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.'*

-There is a dominion of darkness but when we repent and turn to Jesus, when we recognise our need for forgiveness, we become part of the Kingdom of light and our lives are completely redefined.

-What's important is not just turning *away* from evil but turning TOWARDS God.

- The truth is that to be part of God's reign and rule, we have to acknowledge that we have done wrong and there is a right way to live.

- I read Proverbs 12:1 the other day which really struck me. It says, 'whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.' It was very blunt but I was struck by the concept that we are stupid if we won't take correction.

-Correction is part of the Gospel. Correction by the Holy Spirit helps us to change if we will listen- being corrected from wrong to right, from bad to good, from sin to forgiveness and to the God who loves us is central to the Kingdom of God.

- The question is, will we humble ourselves daily and turn from idols, from darkness, to light?

- So, repentance is a turning away *from* and *towards* Jesus.

Repentance brings change to us and others

-Zacchaeus the tax collector in Luke 19 is an amazing testimony of somebody who meets with Jesus and is totally changed.

- This was always one of my favourite Sunday school stories growing up; the man who climbs a tree to see Jesus and then meets face to face with Him.

- Zacchaeus, if you don't know the story, is a tax collector who cheats people out of money.

- He climbs a tree to see Jesus because he is a short man, and Jesus comes right up to the tree, calls him by name and asks to stay at his house.

- People watching begin to mutter and question how Jesus can spend time with this sinner.
- Imagine if the Queen came to Wolverhampton and walked through the high street. There would be people queuing to get a glimpse of her and she'd have heavy security surrounding her. And then imagine the Queen, someone highly esteemed, well known, stopping and inviting herself to a pub/a home in Wolverhampton to spend time with someone who you think is a bit of a sinner and not really worth her time.
- That's exactly what Jesus does. He surprises the crowds and picks Zacchaeus.
- Yet after his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus is completely changed.
- We don't read the full conversation that Jesus had with Zacchaeus and we don't see Zacchaeus praying the 'sinner's prayer of repentance.'
- But we do see a life completely transformed and a turning away from greed to kindness.
- Zacchaeus changes from cheating people out of money, to giving half his possessions to the poor and paying back 4 times the amount that he had cheated people.
- It is clear that something radically shifted in Zacchaeus' heart and I believe that was repentance. Jesus' reign and rule came upon his life.
- The impact of repentance is that a life cannot stay the same.
- When we repent, it impacts other people. People notice. People are blessed.
- Charles Spurgeon said, *'Another proof of the conquest of a soul for Christ will be found in a real change of life. If the man (or woman) does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of and his conversion is a fiction.'*
- The lasting and true fruit of repentance will be seen in our lives, and this will impact other's lives too.
- I believe that we will see God's Kingdom come when we align ourselves with His heart and we live daily in a place of repentance.
- So, repentance is a turning away from, towards, it changes us and others, and thirdly, repentance aligns us with God's Kingdom values.

Repentance aligns us with God's Kingdom values

- Again, to use the story of Zacchaeus, he turns from being greedy to generous. His value system is realigned with God's value system.
 - One of God's Kingdom values is generosity. He who did not spare even His own Son for us (Romans 8:32), the One who delights in giving us, His children, good gifts (Matthew 7:11).
 - When we say yes to God's ways and not our own ways, He fills us with His Spirit and enables us to live Kingdom lives full of love, kindness, peace, hope, joy, self control (Galatians 5:22-25)- the fruit of the Spirit. These are His values and what is important to God.
 - Josh and I are friends with a pastor in Dudley called Craig. Craig used to be a criminal. Now he is passionate for Jesus, leads a church, does street evangelism, has planted churches and is I'm sure a much nicer person than he was before.
 - When Jesus' reign and rule impacts a life, there is total transformation. People turn from stealing, swearing, blaspheming and realign themselves with what is pleasing to God.
 - My Dad has a model railway at home and, obviously, the trains run on tracks. It's very clever to see the train speeding round the tracks and then my Dad can press a button and the trains move onto a different track.
 - If the train is not aligned properly on the tracks- if it's not placed in the proper position then it won't run and will come off course.
 - In order for us to see God's Kingdom manifest, we have to align ourselves with His values.
 - We have to place ourselves in a position where we hear Him, humble ourselves and live as He calls us to live so that we go in the right direction.
 - Jesus is alive and His Kingdom reigns today. He has been moving and changing people's lives for thousands of years and it is a joy to be part of His Kingdom.
- Repentance is turning away from, towards, it changes us and others and it realigns us with God's Kingdom values.

Application

1) What will you turn from today?

What are the idols that you need to turn away from today? Is it an addiction, something unhealthy you are watching, a relationship you shouldn't be in? Maybe it is how you're spending your time or your money.

-I started watching a crime drama recently and after 1 episode I just wasn't sure whether it was something I should be watching. It was quite violent and it didn't sit right with me- on the one hand, it's tempting to keep watching it to know how it ends. But I decided not to keep watching it- I felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit- and I picked up my Narnia book by C.S Lewis instead. It's good to have a wholesome alternative and something healthy to turn towards.

- I believe that it's even in the decisions we make like that each day, what we watch, what we read, that determine which kingdom we belong to and how that kingdom will manifest in our lives.

-We have to learn how to be in the world but not of the world. We cannot shut ourselves off and I don't believe we are supposed to do that, but we must discern what to do, what to watch, how to speak etc so that we witness to the Kingdom of light and not the kingdom of darkness.

-We must regularly be discerning what to turn *from* and how to turn *towards* God.

- Maybe you have never turned towards Jesus, and when I finish in a moment I'd love to pray for you if that's something you'd like to do today.

2- Let your life model repentance.

-What I mean by that is live a life that shows others what repentance means. Live a life that shows others what it means to live for King Jesus and not your own desires.

-I'm not saying this is easy but it will be a powerful witness.

- Align yourself daily with God's Kingdom values. Let your gentleness and faithfulness be evident to all (Philippians 4:5). Let God's love flow out of you. Be humble before God and before others.

-One of the most powerful witnesses to the world is a changed life that comes through repentance.

-Use the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6 in your prayer life.

3-Pray for God's Kingdom to come in the lives of those around you.

- Again, Matthew 6 is a great prayer that Jesus has taught us to use.
- We ask God for forgiveness and we pray for His Kingdom and will to be done.
- Join us in seeking God in our 21 days of prayer and fasting starting today (show reading plan).
- There are also daily blogs which you can sign up to receive emails with, and they will be on our app and our website too.

Conclusion

- Repentance is giving our whole selves to Jesus. We can hold nothing back. It's wholehearted devotion to Jesus and His reign and rule. And I believe there is a freedom that comes with embracing the life Jesus has for us over the life we might plan for ourselves.
 - C.S Lewis wrote, *'The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self-all your wishes and precautions- to Christ.'*
 - Yet when we do, when we embrace God's Kingdom and ways, it enriches our lives and the lives of those around us in amazing ways.
 - I'd love to take a moment to pray with anyone who wants to turn to Jesus today for the first time or maybe to recommit yourself to Jesus.
 - The amazing thing is that no matter how far away we think we are from God, the darkness is light to Him (Psalm 139) and He wants us to come back to Him. His love extends to every single person, even if you think you're a sinner like Zacchaeus was.
 - I felt that there might be somebody watching who feels ashamed and embarrassed about an area of your life and I want to say that it doesn't have to stop you coming to Jesus. Jesus has compassion on every person and He wants you to turn to Him.
- PRAY to close.