

Luke 13:18-35

The City of God

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We are going to Luke 13 today. Today's text will be timely as usual and actually have a lot to say to us as Christians in an election season. So because it will involve some politics and because we always need the Lord to teach us, let's go to Him in prayer first.

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One of the most influential Christian pastors of all time was St. Augustine. He was an African pastor in the city of Hippo in what is now Algeria in northern Africa when it was part of the Roman Empire.

As a young man he was given to wild living. He was always brilliant, but was arrogant when he was younger. He was a womanizer and a partier, and actively rejected Jesus, which caused his Christian mother Monica great pain and led her to pray for him and pursue his conversion earnestly. God answered her prayers, and Augustine was converted to Christ by the power of God in 386 AD. (He wrote about his pre-Christian life and conversion in his book, the Confessions of Saint Augustine.)

His faith grew, and he applied his brilliant mind and skill at speaking toward being a pastor.

He pastored at a critical time in history and his work greatly shaped the church. While he was pastoring in Africa, the largest city in their Empire was Rome. It was no longer the capital, but it was the most influential city, like their NYC. They called Rome the "eternal city" because it had become the spiritual center of the Empire.

Christianity had been spreading throughout the empire since its inception, it became legal under Constantine in the year Augustine was born, and gradually replaced the old Roman gods and religion, it got power, it changed the empire. And the people were hopeful: from Rome Christianity would conquer the world.

But while Augustine was pastoring, In 410 AD, after over 1000 years of Rome dominating the world, the Visigoths came in and sacked the city of Rome, and it never recovered.

This was a shock to everybody. It sent non-Christians and Christians into disarray.

Non-Christians were blaming the rise of Christianity for the collapse of Rome. The non-believers thought that it eroded traditional Roman values and angered the Roman gods, and they blamed the collapse of their society on these Christians. They thought the Christians undermined Roman strength because they weren't patriotic enough and asked people to worship God and not the state as ultimate. They thought, "If Rome was a great Christian city now, why didn't Jesus protect Rome?"

Blaming Christians for the problems in society is not new in our day. (Satan is said to be an accuser who accuses Christians day and night, so we should expect that.) I saw Christianity trending on Twitter a few weeks ago and I thought "What are the odds that this is positive?" The answer is zero - there is a zero percent chance that will be positive.

Blaming the Christians is popular in our culture, and lots of Christians even love to pile on to get the likes and join in on the accusations. While social media is new in our day, Christian leaders having to give an answer to the unbelieving world is not.

And the collapse of Rome also shook the faith of genuine believers. Christians had bright hopes - Christianity had finally gotten power, and this great Christian Empire would rule and change the world with the power of the Gospel from the eternal city.

So the Christians were wondering what happened. How could a powerful Christian empire fall? How could their Christian cities burn to the ground? This was the kingdom of God, they thought, and it was crumbling around them. The fall of a Christian empire looked like a failure by God to care for his people. Many contemplated suicide in response, some wanted to take matters into their own hands and go down to make Rome great again and go to war.

And the Christians and non-Christians became angry and argued bitterly with one another. Civilization was in an uproar, the people were under stress, they feared for the future, nothing was certain, the world fell apart and Christian leaders like Augustine were called upon to give an answer for all of this. How could this happen? And what was the place of Christians in the world now that their powerful, eternal city was gone?

So he wrote his greatest work, a book called the City of God, to answer some of these questions. It's one book made up of 22 smaller books. The first 10 books argue against the pagan notion that Christianity was to blame, then the rest of the book is one of the most important books of Christian doctrine ever written.

He teaches and solidifies Christian doctrine, he informs and comforts the Christians, and explains the relationship of Christians to the nations of the world.

And to explain how Christians are to live in the world he divided all people into two categories: the earthly city and the city of God.

But he blows up the notion that the city of God is Rome or any other earthly city. The city of God is a people who know God in Christ, but who live within the earthly city. They seek the good of the earthly city, they work for the good of their neighbor and the thriving of the country. But their ultimate country is with God.

He wrote, *"Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self; the heavenly by the love of God."*

And while the City of God is a reality, it isn't a physical earthly city yet.

Right when Rome fell, he preached, *"God does not raise up citadels of stone and marble for us; outside of this world he raises up citadels of the Holy Spirit for us, citadels of love which could never collapse, which will forever stand in glory when this world has been reduced to ashes. ... Rome has collapsed and your hearts are outraged by this. Rome was built by men like yourself. Since when did you believe that men had the power to build things that are eternal? Your souls, filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, will not perish."* - St. Augustine, *Sermon on the Fall of Rome*.

Christians live in earthly cities, but they are dual citizens, with their ultimate citizenship in heaven in the city of God. Christians have never been fully at-home here.

If you grew up in one town, you probably have a natural affinity for your homeland. I grew up 60 minutes west of here in Orchard Park, and even though I've lived here longer than I ever lived there, I go there and it feels even more like home.

And for us, the kingdom of God should feel far more like home than any earthly city. Christians are always a bit out of place here, and a bit troubled here.

He said, *“In this manner the Church proceeds on its pilgrim way in this world, in these evil days. Its troubled course began not merely in the time of the bodily presence of Christ and the time of his apostles; it started with Abel himself, the first righteous man slain by an ungodly brother; and the pilgrimage goes on from that time right up to the end of history, with the persecutions of the world on one side, and on the other the consolations of God.”*— Augustine of Hippo, City of God

Christians experience constantly here the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God. Christians are more at home there than they are here.

And here we are, six weeks before an election. And we are hearing nearly every day how everything is at stake. We are being fed a steady diet of fear by the news media and by both parties.

We’ve been told that the future of Christianity is at stake in this election.

We can get a sense that the work of God in the world is threatened by politics. That the ultimate thing is at stake in the election. Which causes tensions to flare, even among Christians. Our fears are on full display, our idols and allegiances rise to the surface, and our bitter anger about these things makes it evident that we believe our first home is the earthly city and our second is the city of God.

Politics matter, and there are things at stake in how we vote, for sure. Part of loving our neighbor is electing just leaders who will pass just laws - that’s good for everybody.

So we want a justice system, for example, where everyone has a right to a fair trial no matter how rich they are. We want a system where people are not treated any differently based on the color of their skin. We want just weights and measures. We want everyone to have equal access to opportunities.

We want innocent life protected, the most innocent being unborn human life. We want the rights of the poor and immigrants upheld as much as the rich or native-born. We want the laws of the land to come pretty close to the law of the land in Israel in many categories, because those were good laws given by God.

People who have been freed from sin by Jesus thrive the most under governments where there are lots of freedoms for everyone. I could say far more about what a just society would look like, but voting in that direction is good, some of us will even run for office and directly make those policies and governing in that direction is good.

But here's something that I think is key for us to engage well: we have to believe that our primary citizenship is in heaven, that the earthly kingdom is temporary, and while a lot might be at stake in an election, everything is never at stake.

Which means that we can talk about politics with one another and challenge one another's ideas, because we are not so identified with our political alignments that we feel that we are being cut to the core when our ideas are challenged.

And it means we don't need to fear. And we need to approach this election free from panic. There is not anyone or anything that can destroy our true country - as long as we define what *our true country* really is biblically. We are tempted to fear, we are tempted toward anger, we are tempted to treat this world like our ultimate home and our political party like our ultimate church where our primary allegiances lie.

But the hope today is that we would be reminded as Christians of our ultimate city, the City of God that we are part of, the place where we have our first citizenship, and of the power and permanence of the most important kingdom we are part of. And that we'd be reminded how fleeting and powerless even our strongest leaders are in comparison with King Jesus. But we will be reminded not by the words of Augustine, as true and timely as they are, but by the words of Jesus.

Luke 13 18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

So Jesus here says that the kingdom of God, the kingdom that He builds, is like a tiny mustard seed that eventually grows into a huge tree or bush, and the birds nest in its branches.

So a couple of things here. First, the kingdom of God is a very real thing.

Graehm Goldworthy defines the kingdom as *"God's people in God's place under God's rule and reign."*

Anywhere that God reigns and has subjects, his kingdom is present. And as his subjects under his rule we are already part of His kingdom. But obviously, there's more still to come. So we pray for God's kingdom to come. It is already here because Jesus is our

king, but not yet fully here because there's an awful lot of the world not yet aligned with His purposes and yielded to His reign.

And in this passage, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God will grow.

The kingdom of God isn't stoppable. Jesus didn't say the kingdom would grow if we do things right or if the right people get elected. He said the kingdom, by nature, is a seed that grows. That isn't conditional on our nation or any other nation welcoming it.

Despite all that people may try to do, despite the results of any election, despite, at times, all the power of the world being arrayed against this kingdom, the kingdom will grow and thrive in the long run.

The country where the church is growing most quickly as a percentage of its population right now is Iran. More Christians have come to faith in Jesus in Iran in the last 20 years than in the previous 1300 years since Islam took over Persia.¹ 20 years ago, they were saying there were so few Christians in Iran that Christianity may have been eradicated by the harsh persecution there.

But there was enough of a seed there, and it has grown, despite the threat to life and livelihood, despite not having political power, despite being a minority faith. The mustard seed grows. So that's a reminder that, while having political power is nice, Christianity doesn't need political power to thrive. Remember it was thriving for those first 300 years when it was illegal to practice.

I'd rather it thrive without people being killed for their faith, but it will grow.

So regardless of how politics go and what ideas and philosophies are adopted by the world around us, the kingdom of God will grow. Again, none of this means we should disengage, politically or otherwise. None of this means we shouldn't care or shouldn't try.

But all of this means we shouldn't panic and shouldn't fear, and that the ultimate final future is secure because that eternal city, the city of God, will prevail.

And all of this means we don't need to use sinful, violent means to accomplish our ends. We aren't people who use name-calling, dishonesty, spin, insults, intimidation, theft, fear,

¹ <https://www.foxnews.com/faith-values/worlds-fastest-growing-church-women-documentary-film>

or violence to make this happen. We speak. We love and serve. We pray. And the kingdom will grow.

The mustard seed will grow.

And, given enough time, Christianity will outlive the United States of America. (At this rate, it looks like it only needs to make it about 10 more years to do that!) If we have 10,000 more years, there may be dozens of empires that rise and fall on this same soil, and the Kingdom of Jesus will outlive them all.

Just like it outlived the mighty city of Jerusalem when it fell. Just like it outlived Rome when it fell. It kept going long after the Soviet Union that tried to wipe it out was in ruins. It's like a mustard seed that grows, and because it is given to us by grace, none of our failures can stop it. No earthly power can ultimately snuff it out. So today in parts of China, where church buildings are being destroyed and government services being denied to those who worship Jesus and not Xi Jinping, the Christians can have confidence that the kingdom of God will outlive the Empire of Xi Jinping.

This is always our confidence:

Hebrews 12:27-28 “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.”

We are receiving an unshakeable kingdom.

This doesn't say we are making a kingdom that depends on our winning politically. We aren't building the kingdom, we're receiving it. It's a gift from above. And it cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 11:10 says of Abraham,

Hebrews 11:10 “For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”

That's our primary kingdom, the place of our primary citizenship and residency. That's home, that's permanent.

And knowing this should take the edge off.

As passionate as we might be about politics, we can't be bitterly angry. We can't divide from other Christians over political strategy. We don't need to be fearful. We don't need to resort to shrill rhetoric and spreading lies and mischaracterizations of the other side.

We don't need to be irrational and irate. We should be able to have lively conversations and debates with each other about politics, and do that much better than those for whom the kingdoms of the world seem ultimate.

If it's true that the country that matters most is the USA, then it makes sense that we get angry and can't talk about things, we get defensive, we tweet past each other and talk past each other, because then we are at war for our ultimate home. But if the ultimate home is certain and secure, we should be able to have rational conversations about politics where nobody storms out of the room. When we can't, we are betraying where our true allegiance and country is.

So the kingdom of God, or the city of God for Augustine, is a real kingdom, a real city. It is guaranteed to grow and thrive, often despite us.

And Jesus says it will grow until the birds of the air make nests in its branches.

The birds are the nations of the world. In Daniel 4:21, for example (we won't turn there now), a tree that grows until all the birds of the heavens take nest in its branches is a great and mighty king whose dominion spreads around the world.

This kingdom of God we are part of is far greater than our country, and grows around the world where people from every tongue and tribe and nation find a home in it.

This real kingdom, this guaranteed to grow and thrive kingdom, is also a global kingdom.

Which should drive from our minds any idea that we are somehow the superior Christians, that Christianity is an American religion, that the American way of practicing Christianity is somehow superior. There are citizens of this kingdom of God all over the world, who also have secondary citizenship in every nation of the world.

Christianity is not just a local or national faith that is true for us but maybe not so true for people in another culture. Jesus is truly Lord, He is the one true God, He is the maker, the creator, the judge, and the redeemer of all who trust in Him from all the nations of the world.

Christians are citizens of the kingdom of heaven first, and the nations of the world second. Which means we should have more in common with a Christian in Algeria or Russia or Brazil than we do with a non-Christian right down the street, even one that shares our politics and background.

So Jesus compares the kingdom to a mustard seed, and then to leaven:

Luke 13:20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

Most of us don't bake our own bread, and many of us have never seen it baked. So this might be a foreign concept to us. (And it mostly is to me - bread comes from Wegmans in my mind.)

But to make bread, you use a lot of flour and a little bit of yeast. In this illustration, the three measures of flour would be about 60 pounds of flour, enough to make bread to feed over 100 people. And a little bit of yeast is added - hidden in all the flour.

At least it was hidden at first. It was unnoticeable at first. But it is inevitable that the yeast will cause the bread to rise - it will transform all of that flour into something unrecognizable.

In the same way, the kingdom of God, God's people reigned over by Jesus, are hidden in some ways in all the nations of the earth. The kingdom of God doesn't have a great Capital Building and a military. It doesn't have a capital city on earth. We don't have a mecca, we don't have an army, we don't have a fully Christian country anywhere.

It seems small and insignificant. But, over time, it has an undeniable influence on the world around it.

And it isn't the majority in most cultures. It doesn't derive its power from its numbers. Just like you don't need one part yeast and one part flour to make bread rise, even when the kingdom of God is a very small percentage of an earthly nation, the influence and presence is powerful.

Which says something about the primary way we influence.

Sometimes we become convinced that the way the church influences the world around it is just by getting power, money, and huge numbers. And at times the church has those things, but those times are rare.

The church influences by being like yeast in flour, small but potent. Or, as Jesus says elsewhere, like salt - not influential because of its size but because of its savor.

Our whole body is influenced by our conscience, but whatever bundle of cells makes up a conscience is small compared to the whole mass of the body, probably hidden and indiscernible.

And the church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth, to hold to the Gospel, to follow Jesus, to be a redeemed city within the city, to gain a voice not by our power, but by our distinction. Not by being cool and just like the world, but distinct from it and full of love and grace and mercy and purity.

Sometimes also we tend to think that the way we will influence the world is to be just like the world. And when we scroll through enough social media, we will come to the conclusion that the world around us doesn't accept and embrace a Christian worldview.

And in lots of ministry books, there are calls to the church: "Adapt or die." The whole world has a different view of (take any number of examples) - what a man and woman is. What a marriage is. What justice is. What injustice is. How racial reconciliation happens. What the role of the church should be.

And it's so easy for us to say, "For us to be effective and relevant we better adopt these philosophies." Because if we don't adapt we'll never be effective.

But the church that spread like crazy through Rome never thought that way. They were expecting no power. They lost their jobs for being Christians and being unwilling to say the words they had to say to worship Caesar and be welcomed as citizens. They were small in number, but their communities were distinct but potent.

Tim Keller writes:

In Destroyer of the gods, Larry Hurtado seeks to explain why an increasing number of people converted to Christianity in the Roman world, even though it was the most persecuted of all religions and carried significant social cost.

And he says that a that church was a unique human community that had five main elements that set it apart from the world around it:

- Multi-racial and multi-ethnic (it was open to people of all races and ethnic backgrounds - no other religions did that.)
- Highly committed to caring for the poor and marginalized (Christians were known for caring for the bodies of the poor that died, taking in the sick, ministering to the unclean.)
- Non-retaliatory, marked by a commitment to forgiveness (Radical grace was shown toward enemies and persecutors)
- Strongly and practically against abortion and infanticide
- Revolutionary regarding the ethics of sex - Roman sexual ethics denied the good of monogamy, pedophilia was institutionalized, men had mistresses. Homosexuality was practiced. Christians valued the one man one woman for life view of marriage which didn't fit at all there.

Keller writes, "The early Christian community was both offensive and also attractive. Believers did not construct their social project in some strategic way to reach Roman culture. Each of the five elements was there because Christians sought to submit to biblical authority. They are all commanded. They are just as category-defying—both offensive and attractive—today. The first two views (ethnic diversity and caring for the poor) sound "liberal," and the last two (abortion and sexual ethics) sound "conservative." But the third element, of course, sounds like no particular party. Churches today are under enormous pressure to jettison the first two or the last two but to not keep them all. Yet to give up any of them would make Christianity the handmaid of a particular political program and undermine a missionary encounter."

What would that look like today here?

Very similar:

- Multi-racial and multi-ethnic - we need to grow here, but we are eager to make this a place where people from all races feel at home - through leadership,

aggressive welcome.

- Highly committed to caring for the poor and marginalized - we are growing here. We regularly welcome the homeless not just into our services but as part of the fabric of church, we care for the poor through mercy ministry to one another, through agencies like ODM. More to be done, but I'm encouraged.
- Non-retaliatory, marked by a commitment to forgiveness - I think we're a mixed bag. I've seen so many occasions of radical forgiveness extended - people who believe what Lewis said when he wrote, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." But we also sometimes see division, refusal to forgive, leaving the church because of a refusal to reconcile with a brother or sister. Some of that is just non-Christians among us doing what non-Christians do, some is immature Christians. We're still quick to blow each other up on facebook but slow to pursue face-to-face in-person reconciliation. We've seen much grace, but we could grow here.

There's more to be done to be people who are approaching current societal issues with grace and forgiveness as opposed to intimidated and anger (on both sides of the issues.)

- Strongly and practically against abortion and infanticide - We speak this way, we counsel this way, we partner with agencies like compass care.
- Revolutionary regarding the ethics of sex. We hold Christian ideals and haven't caved on what we preach. But we also have a long way to go in practice.

So how do we grow in those categories and become a unique and compelling and stand-out community.

Paul wrote to those Roman Christians that would soon spread throughout the Empire: “

Romans 1:16 “16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,5 as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

The power of the righteousness of God revealed, of the good news of Christ, of people who have really believed it and been changed by it is the primary power that changes the world. And it is a power that for 2000 years has proven to out-change and out-last all other earthly powers.

To believe the gospel is to take into your heart a truth that has the power to change it. It is to experience the radical grace of Jesus.

And once we experience his goodness that has been extended to us on the cross, we become people who extend that goodness and welcome - to people of other races, to the poor who can't give back, to those who have wronged us deeply, to the weak and unborn. And, believing that God must be so good to give us the cross, we can believe He must also be good to give us commands about sex and gender and money and peace-making and the words we speak online and in person.

The Gospel changes us on every level over time, and if we all agree that we believe the Gospel and we are submitted to God, that makes us a unique community. Probably not huge, usually not powerful and rich, but potent like yeast in flour.

And that's the primary way that the church gathered changes the world. Now we scatter to work for good in a million other ways through our vocations, some jump into politics, everyone does some good. And the bread rises.

This brings up a question: how big is the kingdom of God and how many are part of it?

Luke 13:22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' 28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. 29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of

God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

So people ask Jesus, "Will those who are saved, those in the kingdom be many or few?"

Jesus doesn't directly answer their question. But he says there is a day when the master of the house returns, and allows people into his kingdom from all over the world.

But some on that day won't be allowed in. There will be weeping in grief, gnashing teeth in rage, as people from all over the world are allowed in but others are not.

It is a reality that not all are saved. But rather than concern ourselves with the number, Jesus says our response should be to "strive" to enter into that kingdom.

And this doesn't mean we have to do a lot of good deeds to get into the kingdom. "Strive" was an athletic term that meant single-minded devotion. Just like an olympic athlete devotes their entire life to training for the games, you, He says, must devote your whole life to the kingdom of God.

That's the evidence that you've been saved, that you are part of that kingdom, you live for it. He says elsewhere to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

The first pursuit and highest aim of the Christian is the kingdom of God. For all that we want to see changed here and work to see changed here, it isn't in some fashion where we disconnect ourselves from the Gospel, leave Christian truths in one bucket while we work to change the world from some other bucket of resources.

Strive to enter into the kingdom.

And that striving is a regular transformation by the renewing of our minds. It is consistently repenting. It is letting go of all other ultimate allegiances. It is turning from sins and lifestyles that don't honor our king and that have no place in His kingdom. It is repenting of attitudes that don't reflect the king. It's turning from selfishness, and turning from all other kings and ultimates. We strive to enter the kingdom by living our kingdom realities now.

But talk like this is a threat - it's a threat to people who like to manipulate by threatening to take away our power and money and influence. If those things don't hold sway

because our primary residence is in another kingdom, we can no longer be controlled. We can be in their kingdoms, but not of them. Legitimately working for the good of the countries and cities and towns where we live, but not enslaved by the same idols and fears.

And rulers don't like subjects that they can't manipulate with fear.

So Herod, who was the king over Israel and thought himself to be the king of the Jews, was threatened by Jesus who came claiming to be a king and to be establishing a kingdom. So, through the Pharisees, he threats to have Jesus killed:

Luke 13:31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32 And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. 33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

So they tell Jesus, "Herod wants you dead."

And Jesus, in one of only a few places that he calls out a political leader, calls Herod a fox.

Now for us, a fox is sly and crafty. And that's what they thought of a fox, too. But for them, a fox was not only sly and crafty, but also *inferior*. Greeks and Jews thought of a fox as a wimpy animal that's greatly inferior to a lion, so as a result has to be sneaky and crafty because he has no real power.

So Jesus has them deliver a message to Herod: "*You think you're a lion, but you're really just a fox.*" You are not as big a deal as you think you are.

And he said, "Let him know I'm gonna keep doing what I'm doing."

Even when the kingdoms of the world attempt to shut down the kingdom of God, the message of Jesus is that the kingdom just keeps going anyways. Jesus is gonna be Jesus. The Spirit is going to do His work in the world through his people.

So tell that fox Xi Jinping that the kingdom is gonna be growing in China. He may think he's a lion persecuting Christians, but he's just a fox and no match for the lion of the tribe

of Judah. Tell the foxes running for president that their affirmation is welcome, but the kingdom of God is gonna be just fine.

Tell those fox politicians that try to get you to believe that God can't survive without them that they aren't the lions they think they are. This kingdom exists independently of them. We would love it if they were on our side - but we don't need it.

We don't crave it so much we can be manipulated. You don't get to make us live in fear. You don't get to make us hate each other and divide from each other over politics. You have pulled that off in the world's kingdom that is built on a different love that in our kingdom. Identity politics and setting groups against one another have certainly led to huge division in our culture. But that crap doesn't work here. We should at least be growing into people for whom that doesn't work.

You don't get to convince us that the ultimate power in this land is in the whitehouse. You don't get to make us scared and irate, you don't get to make us be the sly foxes that deal in dishonesty and spread lies and half-truths on social media to get our guy elected. The city of God needs to stay independent from the cities of the world.

Like Augustine said, our city is built by a different love. We don't love money and power, we love Jesus. And we just can't be anybody's puppet if that's the case.

Now while all of this is true, we have to see here how Jesus used his independence from Jerusalem. In verse 33 he says again **“33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.”**

Jesus is independent from the powers that be in Jerusalem, but will soon die for Jerusalem. He used his radical freedom to give his life for their good.

And our independence from the kingdoms of this world doesn't mean we carry ourselves with an arrogant swagger and look for every chance to defy, it means we give our lives for the good of our neighbors.

And when we see the brokenness of our world and its rejection of the words and ways and Gospel of Jesus, our first response shouldn't be to go to war with it.

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers

her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35 Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

When Jesus says these things about his city, he is lamenting. He's weeping.

He sees the brokenness there and the rejection of Christ, he knows what it will mean for them.

He knows the heart of God for them and the love that they are missing.

He knows they will crucify Him, and He knows what that says about their hearts.

And he laments.

When our world's powers don't line up with the ways of God, we don't see that as a time first for war, but as a time for service and lament at the brokenness. I wish you knew what you are missing in Jesus.

And our first concern is always for their souls.

Sermon Discussion Guide
The City of God

I. The Kingdom of God Is Real (Luke 13:18-19)

Why is it significant that the kingdom of God is real and not just a comforting metaphor?
What difference does that make in our lives?

II. The Kingdom of God Grows (Luke 13:18-19)

How does the guaranteed growth of the kingdom comfort us? Why is this a freeing doctrine?

III. The Kingdom of God Influences (Luke 13:20-21)

How do Christians influence the world around us?
How did Jesus influence the world around Him?

IV. The Kingdom of God's Size (Luke 13:22-30)

Why do you think Jesus doesn't answer the question about whether those who are saved are many or few? What does He instead teach?

V. The Kingdom of God as Supreme (Luke 13:31-32)

How is Herod a fox?
Why is this significant?