

It's Your Choice: The Kingdom of God or Kingdom of this World, Matthew 4:8-10

8Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **9**"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Intro: 250th birthday of USA and World Cup soccer fans, and Tocqueville

Fun loving Americans celebrating our nation's 250th birthday and soccer fans from around the world have shared their experiences on social media. Freddy from Germany: Waffle House, Walmart, and Bucc-ee's. Others tear up at the Grand Canyon, flyovers of jets punctuating the singing of the national anthem by Dan and Shay or our own Mt. Paran Church of God Choir (shout out to Mark Blankenship from Chouteau), the friendliness of the American people, air conditioning everywhere, and the first tastes of smoked brisket, biscuits and gravy, free drink refills, and ranch dressing.

But these football lovers are not the first Europeans to experience America and write home about it. Alexis de Tocqueville visited in 1831 during the Industrial Revolution and, as a new kind of liberal (his words) he observed this new nation, its government, its people and its religion. And he wrote about it in his book, Democracy in America. This morning I'll highlight what he had to say about liberty and religion. , Alexis de Tocqueville argues that religion and liberty are inextricably linked. He famously viewed American Christianity as the "first of their political institutions," not because it dictated the law, but because it provided the moral compass and self-restraint essential for a free, democratic society to survive. 1. Tocqueville warned that the equality of democracy breeds "individualism"—an isolation where citizens detach themselves from the public good to focus solely on narrow material pursuits. Religion counters this by reminding individuals of their duty to others and a higher purpose beyond wealth. 2. (A moral conscience) Without spiritual or moral boundaries, the absolute power of the majority in a

democracy can become tyrannical. Religious morals establish a universal set of "rights and wrongs" that prevent society from descending into a mindset where "everything is allowed in the interests of society". 3. Tocqueville observed that American religion remained vibrant and preserved its moral authority precisely because it stayed out of partisan politics. By voluntarily removing themselves from government power, religious leaders allowed faith to permeate the "habits of the heart" and family life without the taint of political corruption.

Pray with me. *Prayer for the nation and above that, for the kingdom of God to be made real on the earth.*

We have a problem. It's a problem of choosing which Kingdom we want to belong to, the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of this world. You see, as people we bear the image of God, our Creator. Even though we are imperfect, we still have the creativity, the imagination, and the strength that reflects Him. The problem comes when we forget the scope of God's work and his intent to establish his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew tells the story in chapter 4 of the face-off between Jesus Christ and Satan for the title King of the World. This third temptation of Christ was a short-cut to the crown of all kingdoms. Satan showed him all of it and said, "Worship me and I will give you the Kingdoms of the world." Jesus knew Satan's offer was to bypass the crucifixion and, game over.... It was tempting, but the nations were not Satan's to give, salvation for mankind could not happen, and he would forever bow to Satan. Jesus' response was, "Away from me, Satan! It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."

Satan offered Kingdoms of the past, present and future world, nations with crowns made by mortal hands. They were crowns of nations with origins in royal families, or conquering tribes, or charismatic warriors who gained their territory through brute force or crushing influence. Those tyrants would favor a class of rulers at the expense of the class that lived desperate lives deprived of the basics,

without the hope of life, freedom or personal happiness. These poor souls suffered without justice, hoped only for the grave, and could only imagine the same life for any children that survived into adulthood. The nations Satan offered did not need a new ruler, they needed a Savior who would be King of King and Lord of Lords.

Jesus knew the Kingdom of God would be like the lush garden where Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day of early creation. Years later, Psalm 82 shows God's intent for his Kingdom in the nation of Israel. This psalm reveals a council meeting of spiritual judges. Here, God calls this council by the Hebrew word for gods and He charges them:

***2**"How long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?"*

**3Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.**

**4Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked."**

Notice how God has always known that people who follow his law to judge righteously and to care for the weak results in a strong nation. In this passage God holds these judges accountable for favoring wrongdoers and supporting the wicked. He calls them to take the side of the weak, the orphan, the poor and those who are taken advantage of. He calls them to rescue the weak and the needy and to deliver them from the clutches of powerful and wicked. I believe Psalm 82 had to be ringing in Jesus' ears as he shouted to Satan, "Depart from me."

Soon after this, Jesus taught more about the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. This teaching is for you and me. It's for the church in Oklahoma, the USA,

North America, western hemisphere, the whole earth, the moon and Mars...of his kingdom there is no end!

Jesus teaches in his Sermon on the Mount the nature of those in the kingdom. In the section called The Beatitudes, Jesus makes plain the spiritual and behavioral actions of all the citizens of his kingdom. This is not poetic fluff or suggestions for happiness. This is what the kingdom of God looks like, sounds like, feels like, acts like, hopes for, lives for and dies for.

Listen Up! From Matthew 5:

3“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12**Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Repentance for our brokenness is the right response to his Awesomeness, and it puts us on our faces at his feet in worship. Let me emphasize the first truth Jesus teaches here: We are called to be Poor in Spirit: Awareness of our brokenness is our response to his Awesomeness, and it puts us on our faces at his feet in worship!

This mirrors Jesus’ words in the temptation, Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only. The call to be “poor in spirit” is a call to awareness of our limits, our weakness, to the fact of our need to see him in his glory, for we lack anything that could save us. It is the opposite of pride and self-sufficiency. This is the humility that confesses, “My soul cries out, I need you God! I need everything you have and all that you are: your mercy, wisdom, guidance. I don’t have the answers, I don’t even know the questions. I want to know you, but I don’t know how. To this, Jesus says “Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This is it! Heaven is coming AND the kingdom of God is NOW through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The KINGDOM has a King and He is Jesus Christ. The KING has a kingdom and it’s you, you, you...it’s us.....oh give thanks to the Lord and worship him. This is how heaven comes into our daily experience, into our family, the church and the future of nations. This is how his kingdom comes on earth and his will is done here as it is in heaven.

His kingdom is not the kingdom of mankind, because the kindgom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah

Go forward toward the next 250 years with God's kingdom in your heart and mind. The psalmist in PS 82 sings about God's plan to have justice, compassion, and truth for his people Israel, and announces his judgment against any who misrepresent him. Jesus in Sermon on the Mount gives us timeless insight into the Kingdom of God that is in the heart first, then in the family, the church, the community and the nations of this world.

Have you made him your choice? Are you now, today, a citizen of heaven by the grace of God and the blood of Christ? Bow to him, give him your life and open your heart to him. If you have called on his name to rescue you, then you can rejoice with Re. S. M. Lockridge as he preaches "That's My King."

video "THAT'S MY KING" by S.M. Lockridge