

The Kingdom of Christ

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[0 : 01] Well, last week we started a new series titled, Living Distinctively as Members of the Kingdom of Christ. And I focused on beginning to answer the question, how did we get to the place in our world that living by the truths of God's Word is the odd way to live?

Living that way doesn't fit the norm of the mainstream of society. When people hear the truth of God's Word about how they should live, instead of receiving gladness and seeing it as wisdom, it's seen as a paradox.

Paradox being a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which investigated may prove to be well-founded or true.

So to the world, when they hear these truths from God's Word, it doesn't seem to mean doesn't seem to make sense to them. And it's even considered absurd.

Another term that would be used is it's counterintuitive, contrary to an intuitive belief or to common sense expectations.

[1 : 16] So how did we get to the place where the teaching of the Bible is believed to go against common sense expectations? Well, in the beginning it wasn't so.

In the beginning, the norm for human flourishing was to live under God's rule and to follow His commands and His good counsel.

And as long as Adam and Eve did that, they enjoyed a flourishing life, good relationship with God, with each other and the rest of creation. Life couldn't have gotten any better for them living by the norm of God's good counsel.

But when Satan, the great deceiver, the adversary of God, came into the human realm, he presented what at that time was the contrary message to Adam and Eve.

His message was actually the counterintuitive message. His message was the one that was contrary to common sense that Adam and Eve had at that time, and yet they believed it.

[2 : 22] And then they disobeyed God and everything changed from that point on. The default setting then became in their affections, in their minds, in the outworkings of their affections and thoughts.

And for all humans after that would no longer be toward God, His counsel and obedience to Him. Everything changed. They would live now counterintuitively from the norm that God had established and taught them.

They lived, as it's described in Ephesians 4, 17 and 18, in the futility of their minds, darkness, darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of heart.

And then we took a look at how, through human history, there's a record of how people as individuals and then as larger groups, nations, countries, followed this new ruler, Satan, and his counsel.

Their new association and their union was with, again, as it's described in Ephesians, was with the prince of the power of the air, that spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

[3 : 39] And that is what has become the norm for human activity. And that is the world in which we live. In fact, in 1 John 5, 9, as I read last week, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

They have become the majority. And God's people who live by God's truth are the minority. And that's one reason why God's word in living distinctively as members of the kingdom of Christ is now described as a paradox or counterintuitive.

Well, this morning, I want to look at living distinctively as members of the kingdom of Christ from a different angle. As I said last week, we saw how the distinction is visible through the moral darkness of the kingdom of Satan.

This week, I want us to see that followers of Jesus Christ live distinctively different in the world as members of the kingdom of Christ because of the inherent distinct glory of God.

The distinct glory and magnificence of his counsel we find in his word. And because of our association with him and his word in our union with Jesus Christ.

[5 : 00] That's the foundation, the greater glory of why we live distinctively different in the world today.

And I hope by the end of the class that as I focus on these three different areas, we'll go away refreshed with how privileged I am to live as a member of the kingdom of God in Christ in the world today, even though it's in the minority that I live, even though it might seem absurd to so many people around me.

And even though I might be ridiculed or looked down upon, it doesn't matter. I have the greater glory in living and following this king, Jesus Christ, and his counsel in his word where I find that, we're members of a different glorious kingdom, the kingdom of Christ.

So that can be our focus, focusing on the high, honored, privileged position that we have in being followers of the king of kings.

So first of all, we want to take a look at the glory of the king himself, the glory of God. In order for members of the kingdom of Christ, again, to live gloriously distinct lives, you're going to hear that phrase over and over again, because I want that to ring true in your minds as you move through the week.

[6 : 27] I have the privilege. It's not the burden that I have to bear that I live a gloriously distinct life in the world today.

It's an honor. It's a privilege that we have as those who are followers of Jesus Christ. Well, in order to be members of that kingdom and live those kind of lives in the world today, the source that produces such a life must be sufficient enough to produce the glory in my life.

The subjects of the kingdom will reflect the image of the ruler of that kingdom. We saw that last week with the subjects of the kingdom of Satan.

His domain is one of darkness. His counsel is contrary to what we find in the Word. And when the majority follow that counsel, it's chaos that results.

Darkness of moral life in individual lives and in the lives of large groups of people.

[7 : 37] Well, this week we see that the ruler of the kingdom of God, Christ, is well able to produce such distinctively, eternally glorious members because he, in his essence, is infinitely all-glorious.

It's not that he stands in equal contrast to the darkness. We mentioned that last week. He goes far, far beyond, infinitely exceeds and goes beyond and contrasts Satan in the darkness with him in his light.

In fact, his glory is manifested at times as literal radiant light. Ezekiel 10.4 And the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house.

And the house was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord. And we also see this in the New Testament in the transfiguration of Jesus.

That his glory burst forth. And there Peter, James, and John standing there and seeing that. After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

[8 : 55] And he was transfigured before them. And his face shone like the sun. And his clothes became white as light. A bright cloud overshadowed them.

And a voice from the cloud said, This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. To transfigure is to change or to alter something.

Often so that it becomes even more amazing or beautiful. He had already been seeing something of the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ and what he had done and what he had been teaching.

But now, something like this that they had never experienced before. They would agree totally with that statement that Jesus had become even more amazing and beautiful.

They saw the amazing glory of God and Jesus Christ that had previously been veiled. And they were amazed. What an experience.

[9 : 57] The thrill of being in the literal, glorious, beautiful light of the ruler of the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ. And I would say Peter gives a good summation of the experience for himself, certainly in James and John.

And for all people really beyond them, even though it seems to me as I read it somewhat understated, he said, Lord, it's good that we're here.

I would agree. You know, it's almost like, what can I say? It's good that we're here. I would have loved to have been there and seen that. What an experience to have.

They were in the presence, again, of the all-glorious, beautiful King of Kings, Jesus, the Lord of glory. And so, the glory of God bursting forth in literal light at times.

Well, let's go beyond that. His glory is also manifested in his manifold perfections of his character. I like the definition that John Piper provides for the glory of God.

[11 : 07] The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of God's manifold perfections. Like, how do we describe such infinite glory of God?

In the scriptures we have listed for us, and his various attributes and theologians in dividing them up have listed some as incommunicable attributes, those attributes that belong only to God in infinite magnitude, like his holiness, his immutability, the fact that he's infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent, self-existent.

I mean, we could go further in the scriptures. But then we also have listed for us communicable attributes, those attributes that can belong to people in some measure and to some degree.

It's goodness and justice and knowledge, wisdom, love, grace, mercy, rationality, truthfulness, patience. This is the one who is the king of glory, Jesus Christ.

On and on we go in describing and trying to help us to understand something of the glory of God. All that we really long for as human beings, and really that still resonates with us as human beings, even as sinful fallen human beings, these qualities in God still resonate with people.

[12 : 44] They still like to see what is right and just and good. And it's all found in perfection and infinitude in the person of Jesus Christ.

And I'm hoping that this brief reminder, because these are not new teachings, this isn't new information to you, but just a reminder begins to elevate more and more in our minds who it is that is our king, our God, our savior.

So that again, as we move through the week, we're not thinking, oh, woe is me, poor is me, I have to be the one who's in the minority and have to put up with this.

No, we follow this king, this all-glorious king. All that we long for, found in Jesus Christ.

Well, his glory is also seen, not just in his radiant light and his manifold perfections, but we also see it.

[13 : 55] It's put on display for us in the things that he has made. Every day we go out and see it. Psalm 19, verses 1 through 6, I'll just read a portion of the verses. The heavens declare the glory of God.

The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. So as you go out and start your busy day, and maybe some of you had to work knowing that, oh, there's challenges there this morning, and you step out and hopefully, once you're out of your garage or whatever it is, and you go out and see the magnificence of what creation is there, it's declaring you a message.

Yes, you've got challenges. You've got problems out there. But listen, the king of glory has done this. Can he lead you through this problem, this challenge?

He certainly can. Don't make your problem bigger than what God has put on display for us to see of his power. Really, all people enjoy his handiwork, saved and unsaved alike.

Go visit a national park these days if you can get in one. You've got to make a reservation these days to get in some of them. But it's telling us people enjoy what God has put on display, even though they don't recognize him as the artist, the creator of the work that's there.

[15 : 25] It's resonating within their hearts that it is a beautiful creation that they see. The all-glorious God knows how to provide beauty that people enjoy.

Why? Well, and there have been people who have written about the glory of God. So we can see the glory of God manifested in the testimony of people.

We just read about it in Psalm 19. That which is magnificent about God, David wrote about and how it's displayed in the heavens. Others write about his manifold perfections, his attributes, his character.

Psalm 96.9 It says, Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. His holiness held up as a great attribute these days.

Well, not necessarily. They would ridicule you and think, Oh, you're goody two-shoes, you know. Oh, you think you're holier than me or whatever. But here's the true testimony that we need to have fixed in our minds so that as we move through the day and we see holiness certainly not elevated to a wonderful quality, we're reminded that here's a testimony of someone who understood the truth.

[16 : 50] And he says, and he's calling for us to worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him all the earth. And then Psalm 33.5 He loves righteousness and justice.

Again, all those things that resonate within the heart of the human being. We find in him. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the steadfast love of God.

It is a grand privilege and a wonder to be under such a glorious king, to be in his kingdom. We can be counted as members of the kingdom of Christ while his glory is also seen in the king himself.

As he came into the world and as he lived, he certainly lived distinctively different in the world that he came into in his day.

the king of glory left heaven and came and lived among sinful people. Philippians 2, and again, just selecting a couple verses out of that set of verses.

[18 : 03] Verse 6, who, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man.

So he willingly came and veiled that glory and came into the world where he would be the minority, one of a kind in the world and lived distinctively different among people.

And he put on display his manifold perfection before the world, his grace and mercy, healing a little girl who was at the point of death in Mark 5, 21.

He saw in excess of 5,000 people and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he taught them and he fed them. He forgave sins. Luke 5, a man who was paralyzed whose friends had let him down through roof to set him before Jesus Christ and when Jesus saw their faith he said, man, your sins are forgiven.

[19 : 24] And then his power put on display raising people from the dead. John 11, Lazarus, Luke 7, a widow's son.

Casting out demons in Mark 5, a man who lived among the tombs who was possessed by many demons. No man could tame him. Ostracized by the community when delivered from the demons and in his right mind he wanted to follow Jesus.

It's always so interesting. Once people are in their right mind what do they do? They want to follow Jesus. So what does that tell us about ourselves when we were not following Jesus?

Were we in our right mind? No. We were out of sync. We weren't thinking right when we were not followers of Jesus Christ.

And as we begin to see in the scriptures more and more of the glory of this one Jesus Christ, well yes, we who are in our right mind can understand what was wrong with me.

[20 : 39] It made no sense for me not to follow Jesus back then. Well, we can give thanks to him by his grace that we are now in our right mind.

And as this man was delivered from his demons he wanted to follow Jesus as well. We also see his righteous life.

He didn't give in to the temptations of Satan. He was living distinctively different in the world in which he was living. Satan was very active. The great adversary of God wanting to stop the work of God.

coming before him with temptations and Jesus would not give in. He lived the distinctively different righteous life that needed to be lived so that those who would be his subjects could also live distinctively different lives as members of the kingdom of Christ and follow him.

He also saw his faithfulness in his word the manifold perfections of God the king of kings and he said but I do as the father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the father.

[21 : 52] All these things that he's saying all these things that he's doing living distinctively now we have the privilege of doing. We also can be saying I want to do what the father has commanded me so that the world might know that I love the father.

father. And also of course his love was manifested Jesus said even as the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many so very different in his culture at that time living distinctively in the world at his time.

Romans 5-6 while we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly so as members of the kingdom of Christ we have an all glorious king in Jesus.

Well but in order for us to live distinctively different lives as members of the kingdom of Christ we also need a glorious standard to follow a guide really that lays out for us what the distinctively different life looks like as a member of the kingdom of Christ and we have that glorious guide in God's word the Bible.

God's word is a sufficient guide for us that we need in order to know what the glorious life of a member of the kingdom of Christ looks like in the world today.

[23 : 37] And it's sufficient because of its origin. This all glorious standard did not have its origin in the minds of people so that over time in different locations they might change it to adapt with how things have changed in the culture.

And we hear that over and over again. We even hear it with finite documents like our constitution. It's now become a living document.

You know it was originally written not to be the standard that would stay fixed throughout all the years. No, it's meant to be adapted and changed with the culture.

Well, they do that with a finite document like our constitution. They want to do it with that which is the moral standard. But we can't do that.

It didn't originate with us but originated with God. And so it's sufficient because of its origin. 2 Timothy 3.16 All scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable.

[24 : 51] And then it goes on reassuring Timothy. Listen, Timothy, you're up against a big work, a big task here, but I want you to understand all scripture, what I've placed in your hand, what God has preserved for you here, it's not something that really came from my thinking to you.

Its origin is from God. It's breathed out by God and that's what makes it profitable for you in your daily work, your daily ministry.

Peter also gives testimony of its origin in 2 Peter 1.20 and 21. Knowing this first of all, no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. God and so sufficient because of its origin.

Remembering that that's the standard that we follow. But it's also sufficient in what it's able to produce. It's able to produce new spiritual life.

[26 : 10] Romans 1.16 and 17. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So it's the power of God unto salvation, whether it's their initial justification, their ongoing sanctification, all the work of God in salvation.

The scriptures are sufficient to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. This is an all-glorious standard that we have because of the origin it has in God and because of what it's able to produce in the lives of us as broken human beings who need renewal, transformation.

we have this in God's all-glorious word. Hebrews 4.12 The word of God is living and it's active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

It can move into the very heart, inner being of the human being, the individual. So as we take up that word understanding, I have a privilege to live distinctively for God today in this world.

[27 : 39] I need a resource, I need a word from God to help me know what that looks like today. Or my child needs that.

Is there anything that I can set before them that would accomplish the work that is so essential in their heart and life? Well here we have the word of God is able to go beyond the flesh and blood into the inner being of that child, that individual, that co-worker that we have.

Not up to me and my ability to convince, we've all been there, how come I can't convince this person to believe and follow Jesus Christ?

Well go to the word, use the word, it's the word of God, the all-glorious spoken word of God, written and preserved word of God who is able to accomplish transformation in the lives of the people and also provide this wisdom for new life.

Psalm 19, 7-11, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple, the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes, the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever, the rules of the Lord are true and righteous all together, more to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb, moreover by them is your servant warned, and in keeping them there is great reward, you want to flourish in the world in which you're living?

[29 : 20] You need wisdom, we all need wisdom for making these decisions that we're faced with every day, information that is set before us from a world who thinks Christianity and following Christ is absurd, it's counterintuitive, here we have it, we have the all-glorious word from the all-glorious God preserved for us so that we can have minds renewed and move into the world and live distinctively different than the world in which we're called to live.

well, it's sufficient because of its origin, because of what it's able to produce, but also, again, as we saw and heard the testimony of different people speak of the glory of the person of God, we also see people giving testimony of the glory of the word spoken by God, written and preserved by God.

Here's one individual, Psalm 119, 105, says, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. How many times have you had these decisions you've had to, you've been faced with?

You wonder, what am I going to do? You know, what should I do in this situation? Thy word is a light and a lamp to me. This individual David is declaring and giving testimony, you want something to sufficient that will cast light on your life and your life of decisions that you have to make and know how to live and follow God.

Look into the word. God's word is a light and a lamp to our feet. It's all glorious word of God. Psalm 119, verse 72, the law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

[31 : 13] What if somebody came to you and said, I have something here. It's better than thousands of pieces of gold and silver. Would you like to have it? Well, yeah. Give it to me.

Here it is, the word of God. You know, is that all? But the person who understands and sees the glory of God and the word of God, oh, thank you.

And that's what this testimony is, that this person is giving. It's better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Proverbs 35, every word of God proves true.

Job 23, 12. Job says, I've not departed from the commandment of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

I mean, these are people who have given testimony that there is great, great value in this word. word. So as we move through our day and the world is telling us in different ways that that's nonsense, we have to remember the greater testimony of these people who have understood the glory of God and the glory of his word and are testifying to us today, listen, this is of greater value than my portion of daily food or any pieces of gold and silver.

[32 : 40] Lord, don't give it up. Well, for those who are members of the kingdom of Christ who want to live distinctively for their king, we do have an all-glorious standard provided and preserved for us in the Bible from God.

Well, lastly this morning, in order for the glory of the king and his counsel to stand out in the world, there needs to be people. People who have become convinced.

of the glory of God and his word and want to follow him, his word, and I am willing to live distinctively different lives in the world in which we're called to live.

So there are glorious subjects in the kingdom of Christ. How is it possible to get such subjects for the kingdom of Christ?

There's a dilemma here. There's a problem. here. Because as we read in 1 John 5, 19, the whole world lies within the power of the evil one. Well, it's here again that the glory of the king and his word shine bright for it's through the king and his word that those who are held in bondage to Satan and members of his domain of darkness were delivered out of that domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ.

[34 : 08] Christ, what a glorious thing has been happening through the ages. You know, a glorious way in which it certainly was accomplished, certainly the world would think, what a paradox, that's counterintuitive, that through death people can live.

Even one death that many throughout the ages could live. Well, it is all possible through the reigning king. He lived the righteous life that his subjects couldn't.

You know the verse in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. 1 John 3, 5, You know that he appeared in order to take away sins.

And in him there is no sin. He died the death that they should have died, that we should have died. 1 Peter 3, 18, for Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

So the death was essential. The king had to come. He had to be the one to die in order to bring us to God. Being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

[35 : 29] Galatians 3, 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. What a paradox. He became the curse so that we wouldn't become the curse.

Death produces life. 2 Corinthians 5, 21. Oh, you already read that one. Romans 5, 6, For while we were still weak, in the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5, 8, but God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And then he was raised. We celebrated that last week and we could celebrate it this week too and every week hereafter.

Romans 4, 24, Jesus our Lord who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Begin seeing how the problem was solved.

these people needed to be declared righteous and yet they were sinful. How could they obtain righteousness? Well, they had to have a righteousness from God.

[36 : 41] And they came through Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of the righteous Christ on behalf of those who would believe. Wow.

And then he ascended while they were looking on. he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight and now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12, 2, looking unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Seated there. The work accomplished, the work done in his fullness. Through the king. coming into the world, making the way for those that would be his people, his subjects.

And also now interceding on behalf of his people. Consequently, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

So he made it possible. He made the impossible possible. So the people could be welcomed to him.

[38 : 01] Welcomed into his kingdom. Not just for a time, but to be with him forever. This work was done by the all-glorious king on behalf of those who would become his subjects, his people.

And that is the gospel that we have today. And as the gospel, the good news is proclaimed to those who are subjects in Satan's domain as we all were at one time.

It doesn't come among them just as empty, powerless words, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1, 4, and 5. Here's an example of how that worked in the lives of these people. As Paul wrote to them, he says, For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel, this good news message, came to you not only in word, not empty words, powerless words that other teachers may have brought to them, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

And as it came in the power of the Holy Spirit with full conviction, they received it. with gladness and in much affliction. Because now they were becoming those people who were distinctively different.

[39 : 26] As the one they believed in was also distinctively different. They received it through repentance and faith and began living those distinctively different lives.

See again and listen again to the testimony that Paul writes about them. and you became imitators of us and of the Lord. For you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere. And how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead.

Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. They had become like their king now living distinctively different lives. From them now was sounding forth this message.

This message that they heard from another individual who was living distinctively different in the world at the time. Who heard it from an individual who indeed lived distinctively different and accomplished that great work of salvation so that each one of them could hear this glorious message from this glorious Lord and live as glorious subjects of his kingdom even while they were in the world at that time.

[40 : 48] This is just one example of how anyone is delivered out of Satan's domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Many came before these individuals that we read about and read about in the Old Testament a remnant preserved even beyond that remnant.

Those who were not of the nation of Israel and then others that came afterward that were grafted in and we read many, many more beyond the New Testament writings who came and there are many more yet to come as they hear this message.

But all come through grace by grace through faith and each one becomes the workmanship of Christ, of God, created in Christ Jesus to live distinctively different lives that glorify their king who will deliver them from coming wrath and welcome them into his eternal presence when you know what?

Their lives will no longer be considered a paradox or counterintuitive. Why? Because everybody will be living by this glorious standard that has come from the glorious king of kings.

Well, we're not there yet. And so until that day comes, we need to live distinctively different lives as members of the kingdom of Christ.

[42 : 19] And we can do that. Jeremy's going to start sharing with us next week what that looks like specifically. And I hope that as we even go from this class this morning, we will live distinctly different lives as we move into the next service.

Can you imagine a group of people coming together in a building, sitting in pews, singing about the glory of God, the person of Jesus Christ?

The majority of the people in the world aren't doing that this morning. You are the glorious subjects of a glorious king, Jesus Christ. and we have much glory to sing about.

Let's pray that God would help us do that. Oh, great God, you certainly are the one who is worthy of all praise and honor and blessing.

We would not be here speaking these things, hearing these things, relishing in these things had it not been for the way you manifested your glory.

[43 : 23] and sending Jesus Christ to be the one to live that life we could not live and to die the life, the death that we should have lived.

So thank you for what you've been accomplishing in us. We look forward to what you'll continue to accomplish as we learn more of your word. Our minds are renewed and we, in the power of your spirit, keep in step with the spirit as we even go from here to the morning service or go throughout our week.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Thank you.