

Bad News: Israel's Sin & God's Judgment

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Well, this week's lesson is entitled, The Costume, Kingdom, and Christ. The Costume, Kingdom, and Christ. Before we go into that, let's do a little review to sort of warm ourselves up.

The first week that we did this book, The Quest for More by Paul Tripp, Tripp said that we were made for four glories. We were made to live in light of four great glories.

Do you remember what those were? God's glory. God's glory. That is the chief one, the most important one from which everything else flows. God's glory. Any of the others?

The glory of truth. Right. We were made to rise above ourselves and our own ideas, and we were meant to receive and live in light of God's word to us. And so that's why we're here today, to hear God's word to us and live in light of that.

There was two more. Come on. Stewardship. Stewardship. We were meant not only to care about ourselves and our little neck of the woods, so to speak, but we were meant to live for, to take care of the creation, to take care of everything else.

[1:14] We weren't meant to live like squirrels, only caring about ourselves. And then there was a third one. Yes? Okay. Right. We were created to love one another as we love ourselves.

And it's important to remember those things. We need to keep those four things in mind because it's over those four things that our conflict is going to come out of.

The world, the flesh, and the devil want us to settle for less than those four things. They want us to live basically for myself. And so God made us to live constantly thinking of his glory.

We were meant to live in light of him telling us and talking to us and to be responding to his greatness and to his beauty. That's how we were meant to live day in and day out.

We were meant to live in light of God's glory. But the problem is we constantly end up falling in love with our own glory.

[2:17] Instead of looking at God, we look in the mirror and look at ourselves. And we were meant to live for the good of others and to lovingly take care of God or to take care of God's creation.

We were meant to live as stewards. But what ends up happening is we end up living as tyrants. We make everything rule.

We rule everything for our own good. And so we exercise sinful dominion, selfish dominion over the creation when God calls us to exercise loving dominion over his creation.

Well, God made us to live in light of all these relationships that we have. We were meant to live in communities. But somehow, because of sin, we end up turning every relationship back in on ourselves.

And instead of hearing and responding to God and his word, we close our ears to his word and we live out of our own ideas. We listen to ourselves. So in short, we seek our kingdom.

[3:29] Instead of seeking God and his kingdom first, we seek our kingdom. We want to be at the center instead of God at the center. And so we live for the little kingdom, our little kingdom.

So I'm going to go out on a limb here. And I'm going to ask you to tell me, have sometime this week you've been living and then you stopped and you realized, wait a second.

I'm not living for God and his kingdom. I'm really trying to advance the agenda of the little kingdom, my little kingdom. Has anyone had that happen to you this week where you were living or you thought, you know what, all of a sudden God opened your eyes and you see that this whole time, this whole morning, I've been trying to live for my little kingdom instead of seeking his kingdom.

You don't have to get into the bad details, but yes. Wow. Does that sound familiar to any of you?

How many of you, it's like, this isn't moving fast enough.

This needs to be happening now. And really what it is, is it's me and my kingdom. I want it to happen now. And obviously God has a different plan. Very good.

[4:46] Yeah, the little kingdom is very self-conscious, isn't it? It feels very sorry for itself, even though it's doing everything for me and myself and I. Well, little kingdom living, last week we saw, it boils down to two points of focus.

You always end up living for two things. Do you remember what those were? Earthly treasures? And what was the other thing? Yeah, worry. Thank you. He called it earthbound treasures and anxiety-bound needs.

And so the little kingdom is chained to those two things. It's bound by those two things. You're living for here and for now, and you're consumed with what you need and what you can provide for yourself.

Well, that's little kingdom living. And I think in the examples that we had, you can see how those two points come out. Those few examples that our people gave us, those two points come out.

We're living for ourselves, for immediate treasure, for comfort, for rest, for relaxation. Or we're all worried that things aren't working according to our time.

[6:03] Well, this week we're going to look at the little kingdom one more time. And then we're going to look at what Christ does and has done to destroy the little kingdom.

So what the little kingdom is, one more time, and then what Christ has done to smash the little kingdom. And the first thing that we want to see about the little kingdom is that it has its own civilization.

It has its own way of doing things. And that it is always civilizing others to its culture. So it's always civilizing others to its culture.

Now let's suppose that someone here goes and lives in Germany for the rest of your life. So 20 years from now, you're living in Germany. You've been living there for 20 years.

What's going to happen to you over the 20 years? You're going to adjust to the culture that you're living in. Is it going to be even, are you going to do it consciously?

[7:08] Somewhat. Is it always going to be consciously? No. You're pretty soon you're going to start thinking and acting just like a German. So every kingdom has a certain culture, a certain civilization.

And that culture is always civilizing us to those who live in it. So if you live in Germany over time, Germany is going to civilize you to live like a German.

And whatever that means. And so everyone who comes into contact with the little kingdom inside of you, you are going to attempt to civilize them to your kingdom.

You're going to overtly or covertly try to convince them to make them live according to the rules of your kingdom.

And so when you're living in a certain kingdom, you learn what goes and what doesn't. And you learn how to navigate that culture, that civilization.

[8:11] And the little kingdom works the same way. It's always pressing its agenda, its rules on other people. And so when you're living in the little kingdom, you're always pressuring, prodding, urging, civilizing others that you're living around and with to obey the rules of your kingdom.

And that might seem kind of out there. But let me give you a few examples and you'll understand what I'm saying. So here's a 20-year-old young lady and she's engaged.

And every time her fiancé does something that she doesn't like, she gives him the silent treatment. Until he begs and grovels, she is not going to say a single word to him.

Do you think over time that her fiancé and then her husband, is he going to learn how to navigate and follow her rules? Yeah.

He's going to learn the rules of her civilization. And basically she's saying, if you don't play by the rules of my kingdom, then you will suffer.

[9:23] Okay? Here's a mom. And she allows her kids to run around throughout the house. And she's okay with that. Until, every now and then, they end up breaking something. And then that's when she goes ballistic on them.

They broke something that belongs to her. And she starts yelling and screaming. What is she doing? She's civilizing her children to her kingdom.

The things that she thinks are important, she's going to impose those on her kids. And so she's civilizing her children to her kingdom.

And so by her outburst, she is showing her children what they think should be the most important thing in their lives. And the most important thing in their lives, she thinks, are things.

Things are a big deal. Well, here's another example. Dad comes home from work and he's tired and he wants to just sit and watch the news. And the kids come in, as they have a tendency to do, and they're tumbling around and playing around and carrying on and making lots of noise.

[10:28] And then dad blows up. So what are the rules of dad's kingdom? The rules of dad's kingdom are, when I get home, I need to sit and be quiet.

And if you make noise and you disturb my news watching, then you will suffer. And the children learn the rules of dad's kingdom.

And so that's what we're doing all the time. We're imposing our rules, our agenda, our way of thinking on other people. And we do it by the way we react to them. So children, they civilize each other.

At school, when a child looks differently, the kindergartner, the five-year-old, they'll make fun of that kid. Because they are going to civilize that child into thinking about himself or herself the way they think about him.

Well, the little kingdom comes out in all sorts of sinful, worldly ways. So let's go into a nice neighborhood, like maybe ones that you live in.

[11:32] And we'll say that this family is a Christian family. And the parents, they hardly ever do family worship. Because there's too many athletic events going on.

There's too many athletic events to go to. And the parents hardly ever talk to. I say hardly, it's not a never thing. They hardly ever talk to the children about the gospel.

But they do take them to the mall frequently to buy nice, neat clothes. And there's really nothing wrong with that. They want their children, their teenagers, to dress nicely, to look nice.

And so every Sunday, the children are there. They're sitting, the whole family is sitting in a nice row in a pew. And they all look like they went to the gap. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But do you see how the parents are civilizing the children to think what they think is important?

They want their children to think is important. Do you see how the parents are civilizing their children to live for the little kingdom?

[12:37] So let me ask you, what is going to be all important? The most important thing in those children's lives, based on their parents? It's going to be sports and how you look.

There's nothing necessarily wrong with those things. But when they're lived for, when you civilize others to live for them, you're teaching them to be, to worship an idol.

And so when we live for the little kingdom, we're always civilizing the people around us to live according to the rules of our commitment. The things that we want, they need to follow.

And so you better fall in line with my way of thinking and living, or you're going to pay for it. That's how the little kingdom works. And that should be easy to see.

That should be easy to see in our lives, but it's not. It's not easy to see for one major reason. And this is why it's going to be so hard for us to see how we're living for the little kingdom and how we're making others live for our kingdom.

[13:44] And the reason is the little kingdom is a costume kingdom. It's a costume kingdom. The little kingdom dresses up. And you know what it dresses up like?

It dresses up like the kingdom of God. It speaks and it acts. And on the outside, the surface, it looks like the kingdom of God.

But in reality, it's still just the little kingdom at heart. Listen to what Tripp says. It's very important to note that the most dangerous idols for all of us are those that are easily Christianized.

Selfishness is at its most dangerous when it masquerades as service. And self-focus is most powerful when it dons the costume of love.

Earthly treasures are most seductive when they take on the appearance of spiritual need. Idols do their nastiest work when they wear the latex mask of God.

[14:50] So when the little kingdom dresses up like God's kingdom, what you get is a Pharisee. And you know what the Pharisees were like.

They were good people. But they served and they worshipped and they did everything they did. They prayed and they gave for all the wrong reasons.

And I'm more like them than I'm afraid than I'll ever know. And you are too. Because the little kingdom inside of ourselves, it dresses up so easily and it is so convincing.

So have you ever served because you liked what other people were thinking about you as you served? And so there we are. We pray, men.

We pray in front of the church. And we're so focused on saying nice, beautiful words that we never, our minds never even go up to God.

[15:51] The whole time we're thinking about what other people think of us and how we're praying. And we serve the church. And the whole time we're hoping that someone will notice us. And I do something nice for my wife.

And then when she doesn't do the same thing in return, I'm disappointed. I'm upset. Why is that? Because I was really doing it for myself.

And when the payoff didn't come, I wasn't happy anymore. So we do our good deeds. And then we say, See, I'm obeying the rules, but you aren't.

God, I'm doing what I'm supposed to do, but you're not giving me what I want. And then we turn our disappointment, we turn our negative way of thinking, I guess.

I don't know how to put this. And we turn it onto other people. And so we say, Look, I'm obeying the rules. I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. But they aren't. Now look at them.

[16:53] Just look at them. Why can't they get their lives together? Why can't they do what they're supposed to? What's wrong with those people? And we do all these things, and we tell ourselves the whole time that we're living for God's kingdom.

And in reality, we're just living for ourselves. We aren't living for God's glory. We're living for our own. We aren't living to love and delight in God. We're trying to perform something in order for Him to give us something in return.

And we don't live for God's glory. We don't live for other people. We don't live for the truth. The whole time, we're taking all those religious, very good things, and we're pointing them back on ourselves.

And so the little kingdom is a costume kingdom. It dresses up like God's kingdom. And so it becomes very hard for us to know what we're living for. And if you think about this, I think you'll see what I'm saying.

When we're in our day-to-day lives, it is so hard sometimes to know why we're doing what we're doing. And when it comes down to it, a lot of times, it's, I'm just doing it for me.

[17:58] God has not even entered into the equation. Well, how can you tell then? How can you tell if you're living for your kingdom or for God's kingdom? How do you know if you're living for the costume kingdom?

Well, it's not by outward deeds. We already said that. They're going to look the same. The Pharisees look better than any of you will ever look. And so it's hard to tell.

You're going to have to go deeper than your outside. You're going to have to go inside and look at your motives. You're going to have to look at your heart. And so I'm going to invite you to, as we talk about the next three points, look at your heart and see what's going on there.

Examine yourself. So how do you know if you're living for the costume kingdom? The first way to tell is the lack of excitement or enthusiasm about the gospel.

If you aren't totally enthralled, if you aren't excited about what Jesus has done on the cross, what he has done in becoming man and everything that he has done to save you, then you are living for the costume kingdom.

[19:08] If you're not excited about Jesus, then whatever is motivating you, it's not God's glory because at the heart of God's kingdom is Jesus Christ. And at the heart of God's kingdom is this message of the gospel.

And if we're not excited about the gospel, if we're not living for the glory that we find in the gospel, then we can't be living for God's kingdom because that's what God's kingdom is about.

It's about Jesus Christ. And the deepest motivation of God's kingdom is gospel motivation. And so the problem is is that the nonchalance, the coldness, it can come on us so subtly and so slyly, our hearts start to substitute the glory of God, the glory of the gospel, for something less.

Tripp tells the story of a young man and you'll see how this worked in his life. And as I read this, ask yourself, what were the things that he substituted for the glory of God?

What did he substitute for the gospel? And how did they freeze his heart? As a new Christian, Drew seemed to have an insatiable love for the things of the Lord.

[20:29] He could not find enough Bible studies. He read as many Christian books as he could get his hands on. He took copious notes during every sermon. His presence seemed to open and close almost every gathering of his church.

Now, five years later, Drew seems to be a different man. The sermon notebook doesn't accompany him to worship services anymore. He seldom attends the gatherings of a small group and he is barely able to get himself up in time to have a brief personal time of worship before he hits his day. What happened to Drew? The same thing that happens to many believers. Drew came to Christ as a lonely young man. Although he did not know it, his enthusiasm for the gospel was not about the grace and glory of Christ.

No, in the church, Drew had found the circle of friends he had always longed to have. In the church, Drew had found a family. And while that is very good, the spiritual problem was that the end, a love relationship with Christ, had functionally become the means to another end, acceptance with the family of people.

Big kingdom glories were a way to experience little kingdom treasures. And these relationships with sinners proved to be flawed as they always will be this side of heaven.

[21:54] Eventually, Drew's growing lack of enthusiasm for the gospel revealed that his excitement about his newfound faith was simply the kingdom of self dressed up in the costume of the kingdom of God.

So what did Drew, what was Drew using the gospel for? What happened in his life? Yeah, he was lonely. And the gospel became a means for him to experience friendship and family.

Is friendship and family good? Yeah. But when it becomes the center and we start living for it, then what happens is the gospel and the glory of God fades.

And we substitute the greater glory, a lesser glory for a greater glory. And that's what happens in the little kingdom. You might start out strong and you might start out really on fire, enthusiastic about the gospel.

But as time goes on, if you start living for the little kingdom, you start substituting other things, better things, and the gospel doesn't become as exciting anymore.

[23:03] So let me ask you, is the gospel exciting for you? Or is it just old hat? You read your Bible and it's like the same old story over and over again. Well, the second way we can tell that you're living for the costume kingdom instead of God's kingdom is that you're often disappointed with God.

You're often disappointed with God. Why would anyone be disappointed with God? What do you think? He didn't do for us what we thought he should do. That's right.

You've worked hard. You've obeyed. And I should have things going my way. And there are always good things that we want.

There are always good things that we so desperately want. So you prayed that your husband or your wife would come to know the Lord and that you would be connected together and that they would love you.

And then he or she never does. And so you're disappointed. And that's really understandable. But when you turn your disappointment to God and say, you know what, God, you owed me this.

[24:12] That's when you know you're not living for the big kingdom. And so you strive and you work and you pray for your business to take off.

And it never takes off. And you're disappointed with God. And so there you are. You're working the same old job that you've always worked. And year after year and you become disillusioned.

You become disillusioned with God and you say, what's the point of serving him? That's when you know you're living for the little kingdom. Well, why are we so disappointed?

It's because the whole time we thought we were living for God, we were really living for ourselves and our kingdom. And we were hoping for something for ourselves. And so we become very unhappy with God.

So are you disappointed with God in some area of your life where you think he owes you something? If that's the case, then you know that you're even living for the little kingdom no matter what your life looks like on the outside.

[25:11] The third way is that your heart begins to look like the things that you treasure. And that's a principle. You become like what you worship.

And so if you're worshiping Christ, you'll become more Christ-like. But if you're living for the little kingdom, your heart is going to start looking more and more like those earthbound treasures that you worship.

So if you worship relationships, you're going to live in constant fear of man because they are your God. And if they leave you, you've lost everything.

If you're living for material things, then your heart will become more and more materialistic. And if you worship control, you want things done your way, you want people to get in line and do what you think needs to be done, you're going to become more and more power-obsessed.

and you're going to be more and more about domineering people because you become like what you worship. So look into your heart and say, am I going the right way?

[26 : 19] Am I becoming more like Christ? Or are things satisfying me? Am I living for things or for people or for control or for any other idol?

See, it's totally possible to think that you're living for the kingdom of God and really be in love with the world and with your idols.

See, the Pharisees used their goodness and they used their righteousness to hide what they were on the inside. And after you penetrated the exterior, Jesus said, they're just tombs with dead men's bones in them.

They're whitewashed, but that's all they are is tombs. And so you have to ask yourself, what's going on in my heart? Is my heart alive to God or is my heart just a tomb?

Well, here we are. God's made us to live for his kingdom. Jesus, the son of God, our Lord, tells us to seek his kingdom first.

[27 : 29] And our hearts are absolutely in love with our little kingdom and the way that we want to do things. And our heart is so sneaky that we can start off thinking we're living for God and his kingdom and then at the end we find ourselves we've been living for the wrong kingdom the whole time.

We're in a bad situation apart from God, apart from Christ, we're in a bad state. But thank God, this is the good news.

And this is where we start heading the right direction. Jesus Christ came to destroy the little kingdom and on the cross he smashed the little kingdom and it is on its way out.

Jesus went to war for us. he invaded our kingdom and destroyed it and he is our warrior. He's the strong man that does the things that we can't do because our hearts are so in love with our little way of doing things in our little kingdom that we would never on our own leave it.

We would never go and live for his kingdom. But Jesus did what we couldn't do and he saved us. Four ways that he did this.

[28 : 53] On the cross he broke the power of the little kingdom. And you could read about how Christ did this in Romans 6 and I would encourage you we don't have time this morning but go to Romans 6 and read what exactly Jesus did to deliver us from the little kingdom.

There the apostle Paul says we were united with Christ in his death. And so our old self died with Jesus.

And so when Jesus died our old self died and that kingdom that we were living for effectively died. Decisively died.

Because on the cross our old life died. Our old self died. And Paul goes on to say if we died with him then we'll surely be raised with him.

We'll live with him. And so count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Jesus. And so you're effectively dead and now he raises you to new life.

[29 : 55] And so in his death and in his resurrection as we're united to him Jesus effectively destroys our little kingdom and our way of doing things and he raises us again to live for God.

And so there we are we're living for him now. And it's all because of what Jesus did. So on the cross Jesus decisively won the battle. he crushed the little kingdom's power in our life.

Secondly, how does Jesus' sacrifice help us? Jesus paid the debt for every selfish thought, every selfish deed, every word, action, agenda, plan, thing that we've ever done for the little kingdom.

He paid the debt for all of that. And that is wonderful good news because tomorrow morning when it's 1030 and you realize I've been living this whole day so far for myself.

I've been living for the little kingdom. We don't have to cover it up. We don't have to pretend it's not there. We don't have to do anything to make ourselves righteous.

[31 : 02] All you do is stop and you confess it. And he will forgive because Jesus paid the debt. There's nothing for us to pay.

Jesus paid your debt. And so the cross makes repentance and it makes hope possible. Because yes, on the cross Jesus decisively won the battle.

But it's still an ongoing thing. There's still the remnants of old self there, of the flesh, of the little kingdom trying to get control. And so it's going to be a battle.

There's going to be lots of sin. And this is the way forward. We go to Christ and we ask for forgiveness and he will get granted to us because Jesus paid our debt.

Thirdly, on the cross, Christ purchased the power that we need to obey. Our hearts are like magnets stuck to the refrigerator. Our hearts are stuck on the little kingdom and we need his power.

[32:09] We need his help. And so on the cross, Jesus purchased the power that we needed. He purchased the Holy Spirit. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can say no to ungodliness.

We can say no to the little kingdom. And through the Holy Spirit, we're born again. And our allegiance has been effectively, decisively changed.

Yeah, there's going to be temptations to go back. But now the direction is, I want to serve God. I want to seek his kingdom first. And that is all because of Christ and his death.

And so we're resting on what Jesus did for us. How does the cross of Christ help us? Fourth, the cross guarantees that someday your kingdom conflict will be over.

It's going to be over someday. Right now, our little kingdom and God's kingdom, we're going to be butting heads until we die. But because of what Jesus did on the cross, the battle will be over someday because he has crushed the serpent's head.

[33:18] He has destroyed the little kingdom. And then someday, Jesus, the king of kings, the lord of lords, is going to rule in your heart and he's going to rule there alone.

Your little kingdom will not stir anymore. It will be completely defeated and the prince of peace will shed peace all through your life and you will completely live for God and his kingdom.

And that's because what Jesus did, what he did on the cross, he won that for us. He won our peace. He won our final victory. And so his victory back then assures us that in the future we will have complete victory over the little kingdom.

And so the thing to do then is to look to Jesus for everything that you need. At the cross, he has given us all that we need and want in this battle for the little kingdom.

And so stay near the cross because when you're sitting, when you're kneeling beneath the cross, it's going to suffocate the little kingdom. The cross and the little kingdom cannot live in the same space.

[34:29] And so stay near the cross and you will see the little kingdom slowly destroyed. We have a couple of minutes. Would anyone like to share anything?

Roger. I'm trying to pass the disciples as we know just, they ask Christ, how should we pray? The prayer that he gave them to pray is so key that it's trying to all the will be done.

Thy will be done. Thy kingdom come. And it seems like the antidote to all of these things is not to have a will at all. Or if you have a will to really take a good look at what am I willing, why am I willing, and what is God's will, and how does it compare with what I will.

And it just opens up ways to constantly be showing ourselves maybe we're wrong. Jeff?

God. I a good example of small king but Naaman might be like the old collectors.

[35:39] So he was sent somewhere. Well, Elisa was there and told him to go worship himself in Jordan and he'd be restored. Well, he got upset because he went away angry and said, God thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure the leprosy.

He mentioned a couple of the rivers I can't begin to pronounce with. Aren't they better in the baskets and the waters of Israel? He said, the good not worse than them would be cleansed. So he turned and went off in a rage.

He was looking for his little king. It wasn't convenient for him to do what he was told. I think if you go on, he's upset that he wanted to do something, he wanted something spectacular to happen.

Because, hey, I'm Naaman, I'm the great ruler. Something great should happen and you go tell me to wash in a dirty river, that's going to make me look bad. So he wanted the cleansing, but he didn't want the humility that went along with it.

Yeah. Mark. This lesson makes me think about evangelism because so many people seeking to evangelism hold out the gospel as the means to a better life.

[37:03] You'll help your family, you'll be able to quit smoking, you know, on and on and on and on. You know, you just let Jesus into your life and he's going to make your life better.

And that just sets people up. You know, even if they become believers, even if God does change their hearts, they have this false expectation that God is there just to make their kingdom more comfortable.

And we have to be careful that in our evangelism we're pointing to God and the problem he has with us. You know, that he has acted in order to solve that problem for us to get on his and the reason. Yeah, so much of evangelism, this is going to sound very familiar and I didn't come up with this, but so much of evangelism is, you know, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

And that's the extent of our evangelism and that really appeals to the little kingdom because guess what? I love me and I have a wonderful plan for my life. And so great.

[38:11] Great. Great, God, come on in. I mean, we're working on the same agenda here. And that's not what God has in mind at all.

He's going to totally overthrow our sinful agenda and our world. Yes, dear? That makes me think of something that was kind of funny and yet very sobering and real.

There's a gal I've been seeking to slowly go ridges with and we had coffee this last week and we got to talking about churches and I was talking about our church and I wanted to have a come visit. And she said, well, I really hope it's on the church that makes you feel bad because I really want to go. I want to feel good. I want to feel encouraged. And I said, oh, no.

I said, our church talks about sin. But when we realize our sin, then we realize how great God is in His forgiveness. And she kind of looked at the cross eyes like, you know.

[39:08] But it was such a good opening. You know, that's the perspective that people have. I want to feel good. So church becomes about me, not about God.

Well, time is up. We're dismissed. away. may