

St Martins C3 – March 31, 2024

The Victory of the Kingdom – Living Kingdom

Sermon Notes:

We have been doing a series over the last few weeks called, “Living Kingdom” encouraging each of us to bring God’s Kingdom to the world now. This happens through the resurrection.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Two examples are used in this passage to help us understand what Jesus’ resurrection meant. The first is a comparison between Jesus and Adam. Adam made things wrong and brought death. Jesus rose again bringing new life.

The second image is the image of Jesus’ resurrection being the first fruits. The word “first fruits” is a harvest term. It is the first of the fruit at the beginning of the season. Paul calls Christ the first fruit of God’s harvest, a harvest of living souls who will be raised to life because of the atoning death of Jesus.

What these images tell us is that when Jesus rose from the dead, He became the ruler of the world and wants to bring His Kingdom.

Paul then tells us Jesus the Messiah, will crush all enemies under his feet and has been chosen to be the ruler over all things. He will destroy every ruler and authority and power. He is the victor over every enemy that stands against humanity and God. He is the King over all other powers.

The key theme of these verses is the way Jesus resurrection ensures that life will win over death. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Death is a power that is greater than any other in our world. It is the power of decay that affects all things. It is the final enemy. But one day death will die. The Resurrection of Jesus confirms that is true.

Jesus’ final objective to destroy all the things that have broken, and spoiled God’s good creation will not happen until the end of time. Then all of that will be gone and God will be all in all (verse 28). Jesus will return to this world like a conquering King return to the capital of His nation and He will rule forever.

This leaves us in somewhat of a tension. We live in the time of death, yet we know Jesus reigns. Whilst we still feel the effects of the curse and sin and death, we begin to live in the Kingdom victory that Jesus has won. We live in the light of that future.

Read Ephesians 1:20-23

Jesus reigns and if we belong to Him then we reign too. We do this by bringing His presence to the entire world. By bringing His Kingdom to everyone around us.

We need to live in the resurrection reality. Where we work back the effects of sin and death with the authority of those who are seated next to the ruler of the Universe.

Let’s be resurrection people.

Connect Group Material:

Key Point:

The resurrection means we get to see how Jesus' victory allows us to walk in the victory of His Kingdom.

Other Questions:

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What are your favourite Easter traditions? What do you love most about this time?

How do the examples of Jesus & Adam and the first fruits help us understand what happens in the resurrection?

What would you say to someone who doesn't see death as an enemy?

How do we see the reality of death and decay around us right now?

How do you experience the Resurrection life of Jesus now?

How can we believe that Jesus reigns when we see so much evil going on around us?

What does it look like to live in the light of Heaven?

How can we bring the presence of Jesus to the world around us?

Monday Devotion: Jesus Suffers

Read Matthew 26:47-67; 27:11-31

Jesus knew that His life would end with His betrayal and death. It is not something He faced unwillingly; it was a path He chose to walk for the good of all humanity. He did it for the joy set before Him. However, that did not make things any easier.

Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest followers. His followers deserted Him. He went through the mockery of an illegal trial filled with false witnesses and trumped-up charges.

He was mocked, spit on, beaten and yet He remained silent except to proclaim His Kingship over all the world. He was condemned by the crowds and stripped by the soldiers. They mocked His Kingship, putting a purple robe on Him and making Him a crown of thorns.

As we read this passage, we can reflect on our response to Jesus. He has said He is the King of the whole world and wants to be the ruler of our life as well. It was for these claims that he was rejected.

What would you say if Jesus said to you, “Either I’m the complete ruler of your life or have nothing to do with me”?

Will we reject Him? Or will allow Him to be more than an influential person in our life? Will we allow Him to be our King?

Tuesday Devotion: Jesus Dies

Read Mark 15:20-47

Good Friday, they call it. Never have they been more right, never have they been more wrong.

I find it hard to spend too much time reading the stories of Jesus' crucifixion. They are truly horrific scenes for anyone, but especially for the One we love and worship.

Here is the Son of God treated like the lowest of humans. Here is the Lord of Life submitted to death. Here is the highest of all names shamed like the lowest of all creatures.

Yet, it is an important part of the story. Through it, we understand the sacrifice that Jesus made and we get glimpses into what it achieved.

One such moment is the tearing of the curtain in the temple. The curtain separates people from the Holy of Holies where God's presence was said to dwell. The symbolism of this moment is profound. Every barrier that has separated us from embracing God's presence – the life of Heaven – has been removed and we can now have life with Him.

Good Friday, they call it. If the stories are true then it is the best Friday ever. May we remember all that He has done and what He went through to bring our freedom.

Wednesday Devotion: Hope Fulfilled

Read John 20:1-18

The empty tomb is the key to the Christian faith. Yet when Mary saw it, she was confused. She believed someone had taken Jesus' body (vs 2) and she stood outside His tomb crying (vs 11). Jesus' followers didn't understand what was happening. They didn't realise He had risen.

Jesus was more than a good moral teacher. It is not possible to follow His commands and not believe His miraculous works including His resurrection. Either Jesus was who He said He was – God in human flesh and Lord of the Universe – or He was a liar. There is no middle ground.

The confident assertion of the early followers of Jesus was that He did bodily rise from the dead. It was an assertion for which they were willing to face death. It was an assertion for which they were willing to give their lives.

It is natural to doubt the resurrection of Jesus. Everything we see around us tells us there are two constants in life: death and taxes. Death has conquered every person who has gone before us. Everyone but one.

Jesus showed that He is greater than death and is the revealed King of all the Universe. We have confidence because Christ was raised, we too will be raised with Him after our death. This certainty leads us to live our lives in anticipation of his coming.

Thursday Devotion: Walking the Road

Read: Luke 24:13-34

Some days God seems so distant. We face many difficulties and challenges and we question where he is among those difficulties. We hear He is risen, yet all we see around us indicates we live in a world still in the grip of death.

Jesus took the time to walk alongside his followers as they struggled and wrestled with all that had happened. They had heard that Jesus had risen (vs 22-24), yet their faces were filled with sadness (vs 17). They were struggling to believe that He could have conquered death's power.

Part of the promise of the resurrection is that despite our difficulties, God would be with us always (Matthew 28:18-20). This story is a physical example of that.

It would have been easy for Jesus to reveal Himself to them earlier and ease all their concerns. He hid His true identity, letting them struggle but helping them to something more. The result for these disciples is an understanding of God and His plan that is greater than it would have otherwise been.

God wants to bring His power into our lives, and this often means walking the road of difficulty. Faith's proving ground is not peaceful, sunny days, but the times when the clouds gather. He walks with us most closely not when the going is easy, but when it is tough. That is when you need His resurrection power and presence most.

Friday Devotion: The Ascension

Read Acts 1:1-11; Philippians 2:6-11; Ephesians 2:4-7

We end our look at the story of Easter by exploring Jesus' ascension. We often spend a lot of time at Easter looking at Jesus' death and resurrection, but it is easy to neglect the ascension. The ascension was more than a cool floating magic trick, it was Jesus rising to be seated to the right hand of the Father.

Jesus ascended as the now and forever, Lord of Heaven and Earth! And He invites us to share in His authority.

When the Bible says Jesus ascended it means that He has started to rule over the world. But the apostle Paul goes a step further. He writes in Ephesians about those who have been redeemed. He has "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). And He has blessed us in Christ "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3). This is Paul's way of saying that the power, authority, and resources of heaven accessible to Jesus as He rules over the world are also available to us because we are "in Him."

Dallas Willard said it this way, "The treasure we have in heaven is also something very much available to us now. We can and should draw upon it as needed, for it is nothing less than God Himself and the wonderful society of His kingdom even now interwoven in my life."