

# **St Martins C3 – March 24, 2024**

## ***Bringing the Kingdom – Living Kingdom***

### **Sermon Notes:**

The mission that God has for the world is not just about non-Christians hearing the salvation message but opening them to God's way of life. Bringing God's Living Kingdom.

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:15-20**

When you meet Jesus everything in your life changes. It changes the way you see the whole world.

If you know Jesus, then you are part of the new plan that God has in store for all of the world. The whole world became broken through sin and the curse, it experienced separation from the sustaining life of God. However, a day is coming when all things will be made new.

God's future begins when individuals and the world are brought into alignment with His will. Anyone who believes in Jesus is reconciled to Him and becomes a new creation. God's followers are already Kingdom people!

Then God's mission becomes our mission. We are part of making all things new, working back the effects of sin and the curse. Anticipating a new creation in all we do. It is our job to bring God's reconciliation to the people and all things in the world.

Our job is to be an ambassador. One who is in the world seeing where we can bring God's reconciliation to it. But we

are to be not of the world, so enamoured with this world that we neglect to bring the message of reconciliation. Bringing the message that there is a new creation for others to join.

Today, we are challenged to move to action and not just talk about God's Kingdom but go out and do something about it. Be a carrier of God's love.

If we care about bringing God's way of life to the world, then we will get active in bringing that change.

Imagine all the things that would change in our world if our world became like Heaven.

Think about the major areas of your life and what might change from this understanding:

- Seeing your work as kingdom-building
- Bring God's way of life to your family
- Your friendships showing the life of God
- Your prayer life focusing not just on your wants and needs but on what God is doing in the world

As we consider the opportunity to do good in the world around us we are compelled to do what we can.

Just start somewhere. It doesn't have to be perfect.

## **Connect Group Material:**

Key Point:

*When we become Christians we enter into a new Kingdom, we need to consider how we can bring the life of that Kingdom to those around us.*

*Other Questions:*

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

*What does this message tell you about God and humans?*

*Read 2 Corinthians 5:15-20. How do you respond to the idea that you are already a new creation?*

*How does the idea of being an ambassador for God help you understand your role in God's mission?*

*What do you currently do that could be considered Kingdom building?*

*Imagine you could bring something of Heaven to our world now, what would you specifically change?*

*What will you do to commit to bringing God's Kingdom this week?*

*What practical steps would it take to bring this to your world?*

*How can the group support you in your Kingdom bringing efforts?*

## **Monday Devotion: Jesus is Coming, Plant a Tree**

**Read Matthew 6:10; Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1**

Our devotion this week will take excerpts from an article written by Tom Wright in 2015 which explores the reason we work to see God's Kingdom come here and now.

*We have declared, in the Nicene Creed, that Jesus Christ “will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end,” but neither mainline Catholic nor mainline Protestant theology has explored what exactly we mean by all that, and we have left a vacuum to be filled by various kinds of dualism. In particular, Western Christianity has allowed itself to embrace that dualism whereby the ultimate destiny of God's people is heaven, seen as a place detached from earth, so that the aim of Christianity as a whole, and of conversion, justification, sanctification, and salvation, is seen in terms of leaving earth behind and going home to a place called heaven.*

*This is simply not how the earliest Christians saw things. For the early Christians, the resurrection of Jesus launched God's new creation upon the world, beginning to fulfil the prayer Jesus taught his followers, that God's kingdom would come “on earth as in heaven” and anticipating the “new heavens and a new earth” promised by Isaiah and again in the New Testament. From this point of view, as I have often said (though the phrase is not original to me), heaven is undoubtedly important, but it's not the end of the world.*

## **Tuesday Devotion: The Future and the Present**

### **Read Revelation 21**

*The early Christians were not very interested, in the way our world has been interested, in what happens to people immediately after they die. They were extremely interested in a topic many Western Christians in the last few years have forgotten about altogether, namely the final new creation, new heavens and new earth joined together, and the resurrection of the body that will create new human beings to live in that new world.*

*The question of how you think about the ultimate future has an obvious direct impact on how you think about the task of the church in the present time. To put it crudely and at the risk of caricaturing: if you suppose that the present world of space, time, and matter is a thoroughly bad thing, then the task is to escape from this world and enable as many others to do so as possible.*

*If you go that route, you will most likely end up having no interest in improving the lot of human beings, or the state of the physical universe, in the present. Why wallpaper the house if it's going to be knocked down tomorrow?*

## **Wednesday Devotion: Just Do Good Now?**

**Read Romans 8:18-23**

*At the opposite end of the spectrum, some theologians have been so impressed with the presence and activity of God in the present world that they have supposed God wants simply to go on working at it as it is, to go on improving it until eventually it becomes the perfect place he has in mind. From this point of view, the task of the Christian is to work at programs of social and cultural improvement, including care for the natural environment, so that God's kingdom will come on earth through an almost evolutionary process until human hard work in the present world attains the result God ultimately intends.*

*I once encountered some people in the church who had been saying that there was no point in worrying about the trees and acid rain, the rivers and lakes and water pollution, or climate change in relation to crops and harvests because Jesus was coming back soon and Armageddon would destroy the present world.*

*Not only was there no point in being concerned about the state of the ecosystem; it was unspiritual to do so, a form of worldliness that distracted from the real task of the gospel, which was the saving and nurturing of souls for a spiritual eternity. I can't now remember what sort of answers I gave to these questions, but the questions themselves have stayed with me.*

## **Thursday Devotion: Creation and Judgment**

**Read John 20, 21**

*It is striking how the earliest Christians, like mainstream rabbis of the period, clung to the twin doctrines of creation and judgment: God made the world and made it good, and one day he will come and sort it all out. Take away the goodness of creation, and you have a judgment where the world is thrown away as so much garbage, leaving us sitting on a disembodied cloud playing disembodied harps. Take away judgment, and you have this world rumbling on with no hope except the pantheist one of endless cycles of being and history. Put creation and judgment together, and you get new heavens and new earth, created not ex nihilo but ex vetere, not out of nothing but out of the old one, the existing one.*

*And the model for that is of course the resurrection of Jesus, who didn't leave his body behind in the tomb and grow a new one but whose body, dead and buried, was raised to life three days later and recognized by the marks left by the nails and the spear.*

*Easter is the beginning of God's new creation. We don't have to wait. It has already burst in. And the whole point of John 20 and 21 is that we who believe in Jesus are to become, in the power of his spirit, not only beneficiaries of that new creation but also agents.*

## **Friday Devotion: Resurrection Has Begun**

### **Read 1 Corinthians 15:58**

*I end with an extraordinary verse, 1 Corinthians 15:58. Now what is that exhortation doing at the end of a chapter on resurrection? For Paul, as is clear throughout 1 Corinthians, the resurrection means that what you do in the present matters into God's future. The resurrection, God's recreation of his wonderful world, which began with the resurrection of Jesus and continues mysteriously as God's people live in the risen Christ and in the power of his Spirit, means that what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last and be enhanced in God's new world.*

*I have no idea precisely what this means. I don't know how my planting a tree today will relate to the wonderful trees that will be in God's recreated world. I don't know how my work for justice for the poor, for the remission of global debts, will reappear in that new world. But I know that God's new world of justice and joy, of hope for the whole earth, was launched when Jesus came out of the tomb on Easter morning: I know he calls me and you to live in him and by the power of his Spirit, and so to be new-creation people here and now, giving birth to signs and symbols of the kingdom on earth as in heaven.*

*The resurrection of Jesus is the reaffirmation of the goodness of creation, and the gift of the Spirit is there to make us the fully human beings we were supposed to be, precisely so that we can fulfil that mandate at last. What are we waiting for? Jesus is coming. Let's go and plant those trees.*