

Matthew 3:1-2 *Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."* John was a cousin to Jesus, a herald of the coming Kingdom. John tried to make people better – telling us to act better on our own will. But Jesus came to make people different by the ability that comes through the power of the cross. We can be good on our own effort, but when we are different because of the cross, we cannot help but be good. We can self-improve but can't be different without the cross. The cross has the power.

As Christians, our mouth and our word should be different than the world. The Kingdom was never about being good enough; it was all about accepting the sacrifice that was sufficient for all we have done. Have we become too focused on what is "good"? When we focus on being good, it has me at the center. When we focus on the Kingdom, we put God at the center. Believers today are arguing about the "words" of this virus – the right and wrong.

James 3:10 *from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.* **Romans 3:23** *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.* Everything in history to this point was about being good enough to earn a place in Heaven. Jesus declares that the Kingdom of God is a gift and a part of who we are. Jesus' purpose of the Kingdom is to restore our original nature so that we look different than the world in which we live. It was to restore the original nature in you and me. It wasn't apart from us but needed to be reborn in us.

What if the message of the Kingdom is more about death than it is about life? What if in dying, I find my living? What happens when I die to my own desires? What happens when I willingly surrender my preferences in order to prefer others?

Acts 20:35 *In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

Matthew 20:20-28 Jesus fully expected the disciples to rule on this Earth. Rulership was not the issue, but how they ruled was the issue. They wanted to be elevated – it was about a position and having authority over other people.

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.* God made us with the DNA of the Kingdom inside of us, not something to attain to. God and man have a kinship; man is built to obey and enjoy that kinship; it is man's natural way to live.

Matthew 20:25 *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them.* In describing the Kingdom, Jesus laid out for them a very different understanding than what they had imagined. They were to be servant-minded rulers. He expected them to rule the world in the name of and in the spirit of this new order – the Kingdom of God. The problem was that they were still getting their cues for how the Kingdom of God should work from the example that the world provided – not unlike what we are experiencing today. Jesus came with a reversal of what had become the prevailing thought for the day.

The world emphasized the one with the most servants, the one with the most stuff, the one who possessed the most land. Jesus emphasized the greatest as the one who served the greatest number, gave the most up, and surrendered.

How can we serve the greatest number of people during this time: by holding onto my preferences or by surrendering my preferences in favor of His promise? Jesus says,

- If you want to be great: be the servant of all
- If you want to be first: be a slave to all

The Son of man surrendered His life as a ransom for all. The greatest King surrendered. Why? So that we might have the fullness of the Kingdom of God within us. The cross made the Kingdom a reality.

Why are we so bound up by all of this that is going on? It's because we are consumed with being right about our stuff. We are consumed with our way, our thoughts, our desires. Jesus said it was never about those things. Jesus made it very clear that was the way to ruin: focus on you and be miserable. Focus on others and find peace. The moment we become more concerned about being right, about forcing other people to feel and think the way that we do, then the greater disappointment, frustration, and fear we are bound to have.

Philippians 3:8 *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.*

Everything else is worthless when compared to the infinite value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. The solution to finding peace is knowing Jesus more! Today, it's not about just our opinions of the virus, but about our jobs, our marriages, our parenting, differences in theology, our relationships – can we willingly lose? This is the answer to finding peace - willingly lose in order to gain.

I never lost anything that I was willing to give! Jesus didn't lose his life – He gave His life for me! Kingdom Eternal is bigger than my preferences. Kingdom ambition:

- leads us to serve with joy
- to live above worldly thinking
- to be transformed
- to be quick to listen
- to be slow to speak
- to be different by the power of the cross

Why go back to an antiquated system of right and wrong when the Kingdom offers us something so much better? Why get frustrated conforming to a system of worldly thinking when we are so obviously called to live above those things and be constantly transformed by the renewing of our mind?

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

What is the Kingdom way? To be a servant to All and to follow the footsteps of the one who gave up everything that you and I would be drawn to His presence.

Confess that Jesus is Lord and find Kingdom peace within this prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that on that cross You took my guilt, my sin, and my shame and You died for it. You faced hell for me, so I wouldn't have to. And You rose again to give me a place in Heaven, a purpose on Earth, and a relationship with Your Father. Today, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sins to be born again. And now, God is my father, Jesus is my Savior, The Holy Spirit is my helper. And Heaven is my home. Amen.*

How is the message of the Kingdom is more about death than it is about life?

What happens when I die to my own desires? Do you have examples to share?

How would you explain Kingdom DNA?