

The Unshakable Kingdom

October 14th, 2014, Kichijouji Bible Study
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揺り動かされない御国
2014年10月14日、吉祥寺学び会
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Matthew

6:33 But first be concerned about God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well.

[International Standard Version]

Hebrew

12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and worship God in reverence and fear in a way that pleases him.

In the last verse we just read, the expression, “a kingdom that cannot be shaken” is used. I took the title of this sermon from here. I would like to divide this discussion into three parts.

Firstly, what are the characteristics of the kingdom of God? Secondly, what do we need to do to prepare for the kingdom of God? Thirdly, how did the Lord himself prepare his kingdom of God in advance? Let me read one more verse.

Colossians

1:13 God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of the Son whom he loves,

This belief formed the foundation of the joy of the brothers and sisters of those days. Two kingdoms actually exist. One is the kingdom of God, and the other is the kingdom of the devil. Humans were created for the purpose of reigning this world just like kings. However, this purpose was supposed to be accomplished through the absolute obedience and submission to the Lord. Nevertheless, humans chose to listen to the devil and follow him. Consequently, they have become the slaves of the devil, the slaves of sins, and the slaves of their own egos. They failed to become like kings and reign the entire world, which was the intention of the Lord.

Hence, what spreads in front of our eyes today is not the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of the devil. Wherever we turn our eyes, it is filled with sins, envies, anxieties and uncertainty. We were born into the kingdom of the devil. However, when we are newly

reborn, we get a glimpse of the kingdom of God. Indeed, the kingdom of God cannot be seen through our eyes today.

When the second coming of Jesus occurs, though, it will be clearly visible to us. Jesus will come back to rule this world in the future. Not only did he open the way to the redemption for the entire human race through his sacrificial death, but Jesus also has the authority to dominate this whole world.

By the work of the cross, the devil was overcome. However, the devil is still allowed to do his evil deeds until the day of the second coming of Jesus. Still, those who accept Jesus in their lives are already privileged to experience the kingdom of God today. To learn about the kingdom that cannot be shaken, we should begin with considering the characteristics of this kingdom of God.

Romans

14:17 For God's kingdom does not consist of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy produced by the Holy Spirit.

In this verse, three things are listed: righteousness, peace, and joy. I think that there are three kinds of righteousness that are explained in the Bible.

The first kind of righteousness is the self-justification. The second kind of righteousness is the righteousness of God. And the third kind of righteousness is the practical righteousness.

The self-justification and the righteousness of God are compared in the verses 9 to 14 of Luke, chapter 18. These are very famous verses. If someone asks you to summarize what the entire Bible wants to tell us, it might be good idea to simply show them these verses.

Luke

18:9 Jesus also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves, thinking they were righteous, but who looked down on everyone else:
18:10 “Two men went up to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a tax collector.
18:11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, ‘O God, I thank you that I’m not like other people—thieves, dishonest people, adulterers, or even this tax collector.
18:12 I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of my entire income.’
18:13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even look up to heaven. Instead, he continued to beat his chest and said, ‘O God, be merciful to me, the sinner that I am!’
18:14 I tell you, this man, rather than the other one,

went down to his home justified, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the person who humbles himself will be exalted.”

After all, if you humble yourself, it is just enough. This is the point of this parable of Jesus. Isn't it wonderful? This Pharisee compared himself with the tax collector in his prayer, which revealed his arrogance and pretentiousness. He was totally blind and didn't know anything about himself. He was not aware that he was the lost one, and he was not even interested in knowing this truth.

He believed that because of his many good deeds and righteous life, the Lord God must be satisfied with the way he lived. He was certainly religious. However, because he was not connected with the true living God, he was not saved. He remained as the lost one.

In so doing, he lost the chance to realize his need for salvation; instead, he went back the way he came, as exactly the same man who began the prayer. His prayer was totally meaningless. Why was that? It was because he justified himself.

Contrarily, the tax collector was standing before the true living God in the temple. He realized very well that he needed redemption. He was aware that, unless the Lord God had mercy on him, he would have to be lost forever.

He had a contrite heart. He also knew that there was nothing he could do to redeem himself. So, he prayed, “O Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner that I am.” Jesus judged that this man went down to his home justified. Why did he? This man sought the compassion of the Lord, and it was granted. This is, indeed, the righteousness of the Lord God.

The third kind of righteousness is practical righteousness. Jesus explained this kind of righteousness in the well-known Sermon on the Mount, recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew

5:20 because I tell you, unless your righteousness greatly exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom from heaven!

So said Jesus. That is to say, when you accept Jesus in your life, your entire life will be different. Your faith will emerge in your new life. Your life will be changed as a result of the indwelling Jesus. Lives of those who are connected with Jesus bear fruits.

The reality of our lives may be like this: all things are controlled by injustice whichever the way we look at.

All humans try to deceive each other and are disappointed by each other. They all make efforts to exceed other people, and for this purpose, they deceive others and are deceived by others.

However, at the second coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God will emerge into this world, and it will be clearly seen in our eyes. It was already prophesied in Isaiah, chapter 11 about the kingdom that will be established by the Lord in the future.

Isaiah

11:4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, and decide with equity for earth's poor. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and the wicked will be killed with the breath of his lips.

11:5 Righteousness will be the sash around his loins, and faithfulness the belt around his waist.

What is the second thing that characterizes the kingdom of God? As I mentioned earlier, it is peace. Again, the Bible explains three kinds of peace, which are peace with God, the peace of the God himself and peace with humans.

Let us begin with peace with God. It is unimaginably important to have peace with God. It is the innate nature of all humans to oppose God. Humans, since they were born, are naturally blind to God, and deaf to the voice of God.

Regardless of whether it is consciously or unconsciously, humans can't help but show an indifferent attitude to God. However, those who seek the truth will eventually be compelled to admit that they are filled with sins. Seekers of truth will admit themselves as miserable sinners and begin to call on the grace of the Lord desperately.

Then, they will begin to humble themselves and accept the salvation of the Lord God. That is to say, in the course of seeking the truth, they will eventually accept Jesus as their personal savior. Only those who admit their worthlessness, humble themselves before the true living God, and believe in the grace of the Lord will receive peace with God.

Moreover, the peace of God himself is promised to us. Right before he was crucified, he promised his disciples of his time that he would “give them his own peace.”

John

14:27 I am leaving you at peace. I am giving you my own peace. I am not giving it to you as the world gives. So don't let your hearts be troubled, and don't be afraid.

Jesus left his own peace on this earth instead of worldly wealth such as gold, silver, or land. The peace of God is the only thing that will remain forever. Those who have the peace of God will no longer have to be affected by other people, or various circumstances.

Thirdly, let us think about peace with people. We see so many conflicts and so much disharmony among people everywhere. When humans committed sins and began to live separated from God, the unity among humans was also lost.

Cain slew his brother Abel. On the contrary, those who are connected with the living God can establish peace among the people they know. There is another thing we need to be careful about. Let us not be deceived by the devil. What the devil gives us is false peace. The devil tells you, "it is just enough for you to do the good deeds and to not fear anyone to be saved."

Of course, it is untrue. It was definitely stated in the words of God; "The wages of sin is death." If you refuse to repent, you will all have to perish. Jesus said this so clearly a number of times. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the only one who provides us with the true peace that will last forever. On that day Jesus will come back to this world in a manner that is visible to everyone; true peace will be established on earth. This is described in the Bible as follows:

Isaiah

2:4 He will judge between the nations, and will render verdicts for the benefit of many. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations will not raise swords against nations, and they will not learn warfare anymore.

11:6 The wolf will live with the lamb; the leopard will lie down with the young goat. The calf and the lion will graze together, and a little child will lead them.

11:7 The cow and the bear will graze, and their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

11:8 The nursing child will play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on vipers' dens.

11:9 They will neither harm nor destroy on my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

These verses predict what the promised kingdom of peace to come in the future will be like. About 2000 years ago, Jesus came down to this world to bring true peace. Most of the people refused to accept Jesus. They denied him and shouted, "Crucify him!" Even so,

today, those who accept Jesus will be given true peace of mind.

Let us look at the third characteristic of the kingdom of God, which is joy. The Bible describes three kinds of joy, which are natural joy, supernatural joy, and non-natural joy. We all know natural joy. For example, when you found something you misplaced, when a new baby is born, or when you attend your engagement ceremony or wedding ceremony, this type of joy comes out. However, the Bible has promised even greater joy. Peter left these words;

1 Peter

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,

Even in the midst of terrible trouble, ordeal, sickness, or persecution, the Lord is able to fill us with joy. What the spirit of the Lord provides us with is true joy. This joy has nothing to do with various worldly matters in our lives. On the other hand, the words of the Lord in this verse provide the explanation about non-natural joy.

1 Corinthians

13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

[New International Version]

However, in all actuality, there always are some people who rejoice in injustice. For example, some people derive entertainment from others' misery or never stop speaking ill of others. These people are so pitiful, aren't they? In doing so, such people are inflicting a loss on themselves. Still, on the day of the Second Coming of the Lord, this world will be filled with joy all over as is described in these verses.

Isaiah

35:2 it will burst into bloom, and rejoice with gladness and shouts of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

35:9 No lions will be there— no— nor will any ferocious beasts get up on it, and they will not be found there. "But the redeemed will walk there, 35:10 and the Lord's ransomed ones will return and enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will rest upon their heads, gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and mourning will flee away.

These verses explain the promised kingdom to come

in the future. Jesus came here 2000 years ago to bring true peace into this world. Most of the people denied him and refused to accept him. Consequently, they lost the chance to obtain true peace of mind.

As I just mentioned, God also left some words about the non-natural joy, in which we “do not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoice with the truth.”

We have discussed about the natures of the kingdom of God, which are righteousness, peace, and joy. It is the supreme treasure for us to experience the righteousness of God, to receive peace with God, and the joy of the Lord in our hands.

Now, let us briefly discuss two other points. The second point of this sermon is the preparation needed to enter the kingdom of God. If you wish to be prepared for the kingdom of God to come in the future, you need to learn to serve. In the kingdom of God, everybody is a servant. Two thousand years ago, the eternal God took the form of a human, called Jesus, when he came down to this world. It was not to be served that Jesus came, but it was to serve.

Jesus was always prepared to wash the feet of his disciples. As we can see from these words of God, in the future to come, Jesus will be serving us again in heaven.

Luke

12:37 How blessed are those servants whom the master finds watching for him when he comes! I tell all of you with certainty, he himself will put on an apron, make them sit down at the table, and go around and serve them.

Serving someone is a great thing to do as seen from the eyes of the Lord. However, it is not considered well in this world. Very often, what we consider great works may look evil and abhorrent in the eyes of God. Serving someone looks truly brilliant in his eyes. Our thoughts are totally different from the thoughts of the Lord.

For this reason, our thoughts have to be constantly renewed. It is written in Romans to “continually be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” In this world we live in, if someone succeeds to rule all others and make them obey him, it is considered a great accomplishment. However, in the kingdom of God, the one who serves all others will be called the greatest. Only those who humble themselves are praised. Why is it that this world is filled with conflicts everywhere?

It is because everybody wants to be the king of their own world. Those who are willing to make sacrifices,

and are ready to dedicate themselves, will never lose anything. This way, people will be blessed while they are in this world, and in the future they will be chosen as rulers in the kingdom of the Lord to come.

Finally, I would like to consider quickly how God himself prepares his kingdom in advance. In what way can the Lord God make people serve him in a true sense? It can be accomplished only through his blessing. The blessing of the Lord God is sufficient and it lacks nothing.

Romans

5:17 For if, through one man, death ruled because of that man’s offense, how much more will those who receive such overflowing grace and the gift of righteousness rule in life because of one man, Jesus the Messiah!

If you desire to sit on the thrones of rulers in the days to come, you need to learn how to reign every day while you are in this world. How often do we fail in our lives? It is next to impossible to control our sins.

Our ego never stops to assert itself. We are always controlled by circumstances. However, the intention of God is to let us overcome all these things. Even in the times of the worst suffering, he helps us realize the existence of the greater one. The grace of the Lord is sufficient under any circumstances.

We have been discussing the kingdom of the Lord together. To put it plainly, the kingdom of God refers to the reign of God. Where the living God reigns, the kingdom of God is revealed. It is explained in this verse from the chapter 6 of Matthew;

Matthew

6:33 But first be concerned about God’s kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well.

This is such a radical persuasion, isn't it? Usually, humans give the first priority to their personal lives before turning their attention to spiritual matters. “I need to live and I need to earn this amount of money to sustain my life.” We are preoccupied by earning money for food, and supporting the livelihood of our families. That is to say, we first secure our own lives before starting to think about God.

In contrast to this, the Lord clearly tells us to first be concerned about God’s kingdom. In other words, he is telling us to seek the connection with the living God as it should be the most important thing that exceeds all other things in our lives. It is even written that we should stop worrying about our own lives.

Matthew

6:25 That's why I'm telling you to stop worrying about your life—what you will eat or what you will drink—or about your body—what you will wear. Life is more than food, isn't it, and the body more than clothing?

Jesus said this so clearly. Needless to say, Jesus was not saying that those who worry too much would never be blessed. Jesus has neither said that those who care about nothing will succeed in their lives. Such men are simply foolish.

If someone does not care about getting food and consequently starves, it is the responsibility of no one but that person. The Bible clearly states that all men ought to work. Those who do not care about their appearance at all can neither serve as the witnesses of the Lord, which is again, their own fault. It is our own responsibility to take care of these issues.

However, those matters should not be the primary concern of our lives, but they should be placed in the second position. Those who are motivated by a desperate desire to live according to the intention of Jesus and understand the Lord better than ever will be rewarded and satisfied. And they will absolutely experience that Jesus cares about them.

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