

JESUS' KINGDOM

Jesus' kingdom values, *Matthew 5:2-10*

We believe that the rights and opportunities afforded to citizens of our nation draw people to our country. We believe that citizenship in the United States ought to be prized but we also recognize that citizenship is a legal status not directly tied to one's character. Thus, someone may love our country, strive to live by its ideals, and follow its laws but never be granted citizenship while citizens may choose to squander their rights and privileges and never lose their status.

Jesus established a kingdom and announced the blessings that awaited citizens of his kingdom. But Jesus determines citizenship by different criteria than does our nation – he offers citizenship on the basis of one's embrace of his kingdom's values. But...

Jesus' upside-down kingdom is motivated by values different than the values that motivate the kingdoms of our world

This lesson continues our exploration of Jesus' kingdom and his expectations for those who claim citizenship in it by considering the values that define his kingdom and what those values look like in the lives of its citizens.

Jesus' kingdom values

- Jesus, responding to the faith of a Roman centurion, drew a contrast between his fellow Jews and the Roman and announced that God would welcome people like the centurion into His kingdom while “the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness”¹ (*Matthew 8:5-12*).
- Jesus' comment about the centurion fits into a larger pattern of teachings about kingdom citizenship – ***Jesus grants citizenship to anyone who believes, and obeys, him***; he does not grant citizenship on the basis of race, ancestry, or proximity (*cf. Matthew 6:21-23; 21:28-44*).
- But ***believing and obeying Jesus involves accepting the values he taught***, the values that shape the character and agenda of his kingdom.
 - Jesus, for example, taught that those who follow him must embrace values like:
 - Sacrifice and selflessness over rights (*Matthew 5:38-42*).
 - Peace over conflict (*Luke 6:27-36*).
 - Generosity over the wealth (*Luke 12:13-34*).

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- Service over power (*Matthew 20:20-28*).
- Embracing Jesus' kingdom's values requires the adoption of other, connected kingdom expectations like:
 - Love alone properly motivates Jesus' values (*John 14:18; Matthew 22:34-40*); improperly motivated values fail to qualify as kingdom values (*cf. Matthew 6:21-23*).
 - Life is defined by more than merely the contents and circumstances of this life (*Luke 12:15, 23*).
 - Jesus rules with absolute sovereignty and wisdom (*Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 2:3; cf. Revelation 1:12-16*).
- This brief consideration of the Jesus' kingdom values reminds us that, just as Jesus' kingdom and kingship differed from the kingdoms and kings of his world, so too do the values of his kingdom differ from the values promoted by our world.

Living Jesus' kingdom values

- To begin thinking about living out Jesus' kingdom values requires us to recognize that our society immerses us in its values.
 - Our society promotes the values of beauty, money, power, fame, pleasure, freedom and rights.
 - Our society promotes a set of materialistic and existential values that reduce life to the contents and circumstances of this life.
- ***Living out Jesus' values, therefore, proves difficult, not because we do not understand his values, but because they stand in opposition to the values advocated by our society.***
- The tension between Jesus' values and the values of our world requires us to make deliberate, and often difficult, choices. Choosing to live out Jesus' values, for example, requires us to:
 - Define ourselves in relationship to him rather than in relationship to our nation and the rights and freedoms it guarantees us.
 - Entrust our life and wellbeing to Jesus rather than entrusting it to our nation's military, economic, scientific, or political resources.
 - Believe that Jesus' concerns, expressed through his kingdom values, prove more important than our individual concerns.

Jesus has established his kingdom and sent out an open invitation for citizenship. He only asks that those who take up residency in his kingdom believe and obey him. Jesus' citizenship requirements ought to motivate us to ask what the contents of our daily lives reveal about our belief in, and obedience to, him.