

**The Kingdom
Without the King**
King Jesus, Pt. 4
Genesis 11:1-9 & Exodus 32-33

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I. PRAYER

- i. The Nations
 1. Venezuela
 2. Iran

II. INTRODUCTION

a. **Last week I was in the Dominican Republic but it is good to be back with you and we are going to continue our series called KING JESUS.**

- i. This is a series where my goal is to convince all of us from the Bible that your joy is found when you submit your whole life to Jesus as your King.
 - So, what we're doing as we make progress in this series is we are building a theology.
 1. We are putting together these simple statements that are going to help us summarize what we believe about God and what we believe about ourselves.
 - So, if you remember from our first week, we studied creation and the first statement that we inserted into our theology was this: **"IN LOVE, GOD CREATED ME NOT TO BE THE CENTER OF MY STORY."**
 1. God created humanity in his image. In other words, He made us with the ability and the purpose to represent him in everything that we do.
 2. He is the center of our story and he is the point of all creation.



- Then the next week, we studied the fall of mankind into sin and we inserted this next statement into our theology: **"IN SIN, I HAVE ABUSED GOD, CREATION, AND OTHERS IN ORDER TO BE THE CENTER OF MY STORY."**
 1. The essence of sin is that we reject our purpose as being image bearers of God so we could be image bearers of ourselves.
 2. We've become inherently selfish people who care more about ourselves than God or other people.
 3. And this has broken creation, this has brought evil and suffering into our world, and God has exiled us from His presence because we are now enemies.
 - So, if you missed either of those first two sermons, go listen to them on our website or on our podcast.
 1. You are going to want to wrestle with those theological statements as we continue in this series.
- ii. But this morning, we need to do more work to understand how we are now wired as fallen humanity to make ourselves the center of our story and why that is offensive to God, destructive to our world, and robs us of our joy.
- So, here is our statement for the morning: **"THERE IS NO JOY WHEN I AM THE CENTER OF MY STORY."**
 - So, let's repeat all three all together (get used to this):
 1. **"IN LOVE, GOD CREATED ME NOT TO BE THE CENTER OF MY STORY."**



2. "IN SIN, I HAVE ABUSED GOD, CREATION, AND OTHERS IN ORDER TO BE THE CENTER OF MY STORY."
3. "THERE IS NO JOY WHEN I AM THE CENTER OF MY STORY."

b. Joy is a word that we say a lot around here...that is because the vision of our church is to be a church where all people can find joy in Jesus.

- i. We believe that your joy is only found in Jesus...and that's a lot of what we're going to talk about today...but what do we mean by the word joy?
 - When we use the word joy, are we just talking about the feeling of happiness?
 1. Are we talking about always being in a great mood?
 2. What is joy?
 - Here is my definition of joy: we experience joy when all of our needs and desires are fulfilled.
 1. We can truly rest and live in joy because we are full with no lack.
 2. See, joy is something different than happiness.
 3. Happiness is more circumstantial.
 4. You can be having a great day, got a promotion at work, it's beautiful weather outside and feel happy. But, what if you get rear ended on the way home from work...happiness gone.
 - See, joy is more a state of being that is deeper in the soul and transcends circumstances.



1. Joy is one of those things that helps you interpret life circumstances and put them in perspective.
 2. Even though you may experience really hard things in this life and suffer greatly, you can still have joy despite your circumstances.
- And the Kingdom of God is this place where our circumstances and our relationships are not a threat to our joy but contribute to it.
 1. If you haven't noticed, where we live today is not the Kingdom of God.
 2. I believe that we can experience true joy in this life, but we live in a fallen world and our circumstances and our relationships can be a threat to our joy.
- ii. **So here is the deal, here's what we all need to understand...ever since you were born, every single day of your life, you have pursued joy and the Kingdom.**
- You have pursued a life where all your needs and desires are fulfilled, and you have pursued an environment and place where nothing threatens that pursuit of joy.
 1. This is how God created us. This is how we are wired.
 - And if you want to know where you truly believe your joy is found, look at your decisions and if you want to know how you pursue the Kingdom, look at what you complain about.



- iii. My alarm goes off every morning at 5am. And when I get out of bed to turn off my alarm, I immediately begin to make a decision based off of what I believe will bring me joy.
- Now if I am thinking rightly, I know that my day will be so much better and productive and joyful if I stay out of bed, spend time with Jesus, go for a run, eat a good breakfast, and spend time with my family before I get out the door to go to work.
 1. But at 5am, many times my calculations tell me that my joy is found in more sleep...and I usually regret that.
 2. Either way, I am pursuing joy.
 - And, usually what happens if I go back to bed is my kids will eventually wake up and come and jump into my bed.
 1. And if both Kim and I are still in bed at that time, one of us complains...WHY ARE THEY AWAKE?!?
 2. Ah, now we're pursuing the Kingdom! We want an environment where nothing threatens what we believe will bring us joy.
 3. And if sleep is where our joy is found, then it is wrong for anyone to threaten that!
 - We've made a decision on where our joy is found and we're complaining that our environment or other people are working against it.
 1. Because we are always pursuing joy and the kingdom.



- iv. But if you want to know what you believe will bring you joy, look at your everyday decisions...
 - Look at your bank statement and how your money is spent.
 - Look at your calendar and what you say yes to and what you say no to.
- v. And if you want to know how you pursue the Kingdom, look at what causes you to complain.
 - How do you express what you find wrong in the world around you and how would you change it?
- vi. Here is what I want us to understand...God has wired us to pursue joy and the Kingdom...that's how we're built.
 - But we're fallen now.
 - The lens through which we make our calculations on what will bring us joy and what the Kingdom is like is broken and faulty.
 1. We were created by God to bear His image, to represent Him in everything that we do in our life.
 2. That's where joy is. That's what the Kingdom is like.
 3. But in sin, we have decided we'd rather bear our own image. Represent ourselves. Cut God out.
 - And Romans 1:22 says we thought we were being wise but we became fools.
 1. We think our joy is found in being all about ourselves, even at the expense of others.



2. We think the Kingdom is when everyone else gets on board with what brings me joy.
3. And the truth is, the only thing we are bringing into our own lives and this world is brokenness.
4. In love, God created me not to be the center of my story but in sin, I have abused god, creation, and others to be the center of my story.
5. And there is no joy in bring the center.

c. So, this morning, I want to show you two places in Scripture after the fall of mankind into sin, where we see examples of how when we make ourselves the center, we only invite brokenness into our lives.

III. GENESIS 11

a. The first is in Genesis 11.

- i. We're a few chapters after the fall and Genesis, in great detail, records how the fall of mankind into sin brought incredible evil into the world.
 - Everyone was pursuing joy in sinful, evil, counterproductive ways now.
 - Genesis 6:5 says - *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*
- ii. So, in Genesis 11, we read about a very clear example of mankind doing something that's remarkable but with a heart that is sinful.

b. Read Genesis 11:1-9



- i. **So, in this example, we see mankind do something remarkable.**
 - They had advanced in technology by making bricks and mortar.
 - 1. They had unified under a common goal and purpose.
 - 2. They had built skills and abilities to be able to build a tower.
 - Mankind was subduing the earth as God commanded Adam and Eve to do.
 - 1. But what was the purpose? What was the goal?
- ii. **Let's make a name for ourselves. Let's do something so grand that we might even become superior to God Himself.**
 - In our effort, in our technology, in our skills, in our plans, let's bear our own image.
 - If we think about our work...whether you work in a vocation or you work in the home...how much of our effort and our drive is motivated by making a name for ourselves?
 - 1. How much if our drive and motivation is to represent God and His ways in our work?
 - This is how we begin to look to our work as the source of our joy and our pathway to the Kingdom...not God.
- iii. **And in God's graciousness, He went down and confused their languages and spread them throughout the earth because accomplishing great things for the glory of man is sin and God thwarted them from going to far.**



IV. EXODUS 32

a. **But turn over to Exodus 32. I want you to see another example in order to show you how pervasive this is in our hearts.**

- i. Genesis 11 was an example of how we tend to make ourselves the center of our work.
 - But in Exodus 32, we are going to see how we can tend to make ourselves the center of our religion and worship.

b. **In Exodus 32, the nation of Israel had just been rescued from their slavery to Egypt and they are camped out at Mt. Sinai in the desert.**

- i. And while they were camped there, Moses, who was their leader, had climbed up Mt. Sinai to meet with God because God was giving Moses his Word engraved on tablets and the people were at the bottom of the mountain waiting for Moses to return.

c. **Read Exodus 32:1-9.**

- i. The people of Israel watched God perform countless miracles in order to free them from their slavery in Egypt.
 - They walked across the Red Sea on dry ground with walls of water on each side of them because God split the sea.
 - Then God brings them to this mountain, summons Moses up so they can talk, and the people of Israel have to wait.
 - And this is what it took to cause them to abandon God...impatience...waiting.



- And they decide to create a different god and worship it and give that false god credit for saving them from Egypt.
 - And they worshiped passionately, danced, shouted, and it even said played in the presence of this hunk of medal.
- ii. **How quickly do we begin to question God when he doesn't do things the way we think He ought to do them or in the timeframe that we think it ought to be in?**
- How quickly do we begin to question God when he does things that we don't understand or even agree with?
 - And what that reveals is that our sinful nature can be so pervasive that even our faith can be motivated by our desire to be the center of our lives.
 - That even our faith is just a tool we use to make ourselves the center.

V. KINGDOM WITHOUT THE KING

a. But here is what Genesis 11 and Exodus 32 have in common.

- i. In both Scriptures, you have a group of people, who out of a desire for joy and the Kingdom organize themselves to build something that they think will bring them that joy and the Kingdom...and it was all in spite of the King.
- You have people in both Scriptures who desire the Kingdom of God without God.
 - The Kingdom without the King!



- They want the benefits of utopia without any external authority who can tell them what to do.

b. Here is what I want all of us to understand this morning: THIS IS THE DEFINITION OF SECULARISM.

- i. Secularism is the belief that humanity can achieve the Kingdom, or Utopia, by elevating self and shedding off external authority.
 - And we live in a context right now where secularism is leaking into our faith and just wrecking havoc.
- ii. Think about it...we live in the most wealthy, technologically advanced, culturally diverse, interconnected place in all of human history.
 - We have instant access to global information.
 1. You can live broadcast 4K video to the world from the device in your pocket.
 2. You can drive five minutes down the road to Dulles and be anywhere in the world in a matter of hours.
 3. You can get on the device in your pocket, order any product in the world, and have it at your doorstep by tomorrow.
 - And all of this wealth and advancement puts us in a context kind of like the tower of Babel where we begin to believe that joy and the Kingdom is within our reach without having to submit to the authority of the King.



- iii. Even our political and ideological context puts us in a precarious position to allow secularism to influence our faith.
- Whether you like it or not or know it or not, both major political ideologies in this country are after the same thing. Our wealth allows us to have this debate...
 1. Conservatism preaches liberty, rights, the freedom for you to make or break your life, that everyone has the same opportunity in this country, and we need to fight against the external authority that is government from limiting our liberty and opportunity.
 2. Liberalism preaches the same thing just in a different way. They preach self-expression, justice for the oppressed, and the need to help everyone have the same outcome in life. All we need to do is fight the external authority of tradition, morality, social institutions.
 3. Both look to shedding authority and the elevation of self as the pathway to the Kingdom.
 4. Neither are biblical.

c. And this is how secularism has influenced our faith...it's made it extracurricular, supplemental, a way in which we elevate self, not deny ourselves.

- i. The way we practice Christianity has turned into a Sunday morning experience and you are free to decide how serious of a Christian you want to be.



- If it contributes to your life, great, but if it gets in the way, we try and limit that authority.
- Our faith has become compartmentalized where our faith doesn't intersect and govern other things in our life like our work, our leisure, or our relationships.
- Commitment to the local church is a convenience not a calling. Something to consume, not something to own and take responsibility for.
- We don't see our faith as our pathway to joy and the Kingdom as much as other things.
 1. As Mark Sayers says: *"[We] attempt to retain the solace of faith, whilst gutting it of the costs, commitments, and restraints that the gospel places upon the individual will. [We] intuitively yearn for the justice and shalom of the kingdom, whilst defending the reign of the individual will."*

VI. EXODUS 33

a. **And if we go just one chapter over in Exodus 33, it's interesting because God essentially tells Moses...your people can have what they want.**

- They can have my Kingdom without me and they can live their lives however they want.

¹ Sayers, Mark. *Disappearing Church* (p. 16). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.



i. **Read Exodus 33:1-4.**

- God essentially tells Moses that he will make it easy for Israel to get to the promised land, he will take care of any enemies that attack them, and they will have this fruitful land full of milk and honey.
 1. They will be wealthy, secure, and well fed.
 2. The Kingdom...but God said he would not go with them.
 3. And this was a disastrous word...because there is no joy without the King. There is no true Kingdom without the King.
- Look at Moses response to God - **Read Exodus 33:15-17.**
 1. Moses said that they cannot proceed without God because it is the presence of God in our lives, his authority in our lives, His Word that we trust in, that makes us distinct from the world...that allows us to have the joy that the world longs for.
 2. And Moses declined the offer. The offer for all the goods of the Kingdom and yet no King.

b. And it forces us to ask the question if we would take the offer.

- i. If God said, I will give you everything you want...
- Money, experiences, great food, companionship, pleasure, no enemies, matrix...
 1. You can have all that, but you won't have me.
 2. Would we take that deal? Where do we believe our joy is truly found?



3. Is it found in bearing the image of God, being His people, and submitting to His authority?
 4. Or is bearing our own image, being your own person, shedding off all authority?
- ii. **What parts of your life has secularism convinced you to keep God out?**
- That God doesn't want you to have a faith that costs you something and ties you down?

c. This secular age wants to convince us that joy and the Kingdom is within reach.

- i. And sometimes we might be convinced.
- ii. I have a pastor friend in the area and about 10 years ago, his son, who was 2.5 at the time, was diagnosed with Leukemia
 - They fought it and beat it. He went into remission and just very recently was giving a clean bill of health from the doctors.
 - And it's moments like that where you can be tempted into thinking we don't need God...look at what we can do now...we can beat cancer.
 - They found out this week that the Leukemia is back...12 year old boy.
 - It's incredible what we are able to do medically and how we have advanced in knowledge, but we are not in the kingdom and sometimes we get hard reminders of that.



d. We need a joy that transcends our circumstances and a hope that one day we'll be in God's Kingdom where nothing will threaten that joy.

- i. We can live our lives here all alone...trusting in ourselves...holding tightly to our lives...believing the preaching of the secular culture.
 - Or we can be God's people...we can be people who entrust our whole lives to God's leadership and authority...and we can be people who have joy and peace even when we face suffering and death.
- ii. And that joy is only found in Jesus because it is Jesus who not only makes us right with God but it's Jesus who changes our heart...
 - Who gives us a heart that sees the beauty in not rejecting the King but in submitting to the King with our whole lives.
 - A heart that wants to be distinct from the world, to be his.
 - A heart that believes that there is not one aspect of our lives...
 1. Not one relationship...
 2. Not one conversation...
 3. Not one expenditure...
 4. Not one business deal...
 5. Not one weekend...
 - Where God does not claim MINE!
- iii. And the paradox of the Kingdom of God is that our joy is found in surrendering our lives, not controlling our lives.



e. And Jesus has invited us into this joy and peace by surrendering his own life on the cross for us.

- i. And maybe this morning is the morning where it is time for you to surrender yours.
- Maybe your entire Christian faith has been a kind of golden calf experience where you're faith was just a way of making you the center.
 1. And this morning is the morning where you confess that to God, stop questioning Him, and begin to submit to His Word and His authority in your life.
 - Maybe your faith has been left to the sidelines of your life and you've spent your life trying to make a name for yourself.
 1. And this morning is the morning to lay that at the foot of the cross and invite God into all of your life, not just Sunday morning.
 - But we need to make a decision...are we all in as God's people or are we going to believe the secular narrative?
 1. Because we can't have both.
 2. Who is our King?
- ii. **And God has called Grace Hill Church to be a local community of people who reject the preaching of secularism, who submit to King Jesus, who taste the Kingdom of God together, and point our suffering world to the only source of true joy, without apology.**

VII. PRAY

