

# Kingdom Keys

March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017

I've shared with you before about a flight I was on between Frankfurt, Germany and Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Uzbek Airlines.

- It was nearly 25 years ago. Now, traveling on Uzbek Airlines may seem frightening... but it really wasn't.
- In fact, they had their own waiting room in the airport that was filled with paintings and artifacts from Uzbekistan. They even played Uzbek music!

Once I boarded the jet, they began showing films about **all the famous places** in Uzbekistan...

- from the **ancient Mosques of Samarkand & Bukhara**, to all the remnants of **Tamerlane** and the **Mongol Hordes**.
- Once we were in the air, a steward with an Uzbek accent **served us tea...**and then **a dinner of Uzbek food**.
- I wasn't even in Uzbekistan... and yet, **I was experiencing a taste** of my destination.

Well, for us as Jesus-followers, every moment we share with the Father... experiencing for ourselves His **love & goodness & nearness**;

- Each and every time we **experience His power...** seeing the **lost saved**, for example, the **sick healed**, the **demonized delivered**...
- Each and every time, **we're being given a taste** of *our* final destination.

You see, even in the midst of "**this present evil age,**" as Paul describes it in Galatians 1,

- We're told in **Hebrews 6:5** that, through Jesus Christ, we're able to "***taste of the power of the age to come.***"
- And the truth is, in **these days of disbelief and growing cynicism**, the need for something more than this world has to offer has never been more important.

One way or another, the world around us... our neighbors, our co-workers, our family members...

- They *need to know* that the Good News of the Kingdom that Jesus came to preach is STILL Good News.
- You know, it's a little amazing to me. We're told over and over again in the Gospels that ***"Everywhere Jesus went, He went preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God."***

In **Luke 4**, after preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing all kinds of sickness in Capernaum,

- the people begged Jesus to stay with them. But, in **verse 43**, he replied saying, ***"I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns too, because that is why I was sent."***
- In fact, even **after Jesus appeared to His followers** after His resurrection, we're told in **Acts 1:3** that He continued speaking to them about the Kingdom of God.

This was Jesus' core message! And yet, very few believers understand what the message of the Kingdom of God is.

- **Just to prove a point**, I went onto an online sermon database a few years ago that contained over 150,000 sermons,
- and there was **only one sermon** on the Kingdom of God... And, it was mine... a sermon I uploaded a number of years ago!
- If Jesus' core message was the Kingdom of God... then **what exactly** is this message of the Kingdom?

Well, to understand this, we need to go back to Luke **chapter 4**, where, at the beginning of His public ministry,

- Jesus **stood up in the synagogue** in Nazareth and recited these verses from the prophet Isaiah:
- ***"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."***
- When he was done, He put the scroll in its place and sat back down. And then, with every eye fixed toward Him, Jesus said, ***"Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"***.

To me, these are some of the most powerful words spoken in history... perfectly expressing both the **message** and the **mission** of Jesus...

- To ***proclaim*** the Good News that, through Him, **the rule and reign of God had now come** into this world in fierce opposition to the ruler of this world...
- and that **He, Jesus, was the Anointed One** set apart to ***not only*** destroy the ultimate powers of this world... Satan, sin and death...
- But to **redeem humanity**, the crown jewel of His creation, back into intimate relationship with the Father.

So, the, **what is the Kingdom of God?** It is the rule and reign of God in the world. And what is the Good News of the Kingdom of God?

- The Good News of the Kingdom is that Jesus has ***not only*** launched the greatest rescue mission the world have ever seen by invading the kingdom of darkness...
- But that **He's triumphed over the Kingdom of Darkness** once and for all... redeeming humanity back to Himself.

***“For He has rescued us,”*** we're told in **Colossians 1:13**, *“from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.”*

- That is why, Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, *“If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation. Old things have passed away. All things have become new.”*

But Jesus came to ***not only*** proclaim the good news... but ***He also came to demonstrate the good news*** by giving sight to the blind and releasing the oppressed.

- In all that ***He said***, Jesus communicated that the “Kingdom of God was at hand...”
- And, in all that ***He did***, Jesus also communicated that the “Kingdom of God was at hand...”
- As He **walked** on water, **calmed** the storms, **multiplied** food, **healed** the sick, **delivered** the oppressed... and so on.

Jesus' proclamation & demonstration of the Kingdom, that **God had come to restore His Kingdom rule & reign** was like a sledge hammer swung at the face of Satan,

- who had, from the time of the fall, **set up a counterfeit kingdom, with humankind as its subject.**
- The battle line was drawn right from the beginning.
- **Right after Jesus was baptized by John** in the River Jordan, He was sent out into the desert to do battle with Satan.

After 40 days without food and water, Jesus had made His point... that He means business... that **unlike Adam, He would not be swayed** by the serpent.

- In fact, do you want to know the first thing Jesus did after those 40 days in the desert?
- In **Mark 1:15** we're told that Jesus went into Galilee, again **proclaiming** what? **The good news of the Kingdom!**
- *"The time has come," he said. "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!"*
- That was the proclamation. Now look at **verses 21-28** for the **demonstration...**

*<sup>21</sup>They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup>The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.*

*<sup>23</sup>Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup>"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are... the Holy One of God!" <sup>25</sup>"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" <sup>26</sup>The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.*

*<sup>27</sup>The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."*

You see, before this time, you could walk through Capernaum or Galilee and see people being controlled and manipulated by evil spirits.

- **But no one could help them...** because up until this time, Satan's counterfeit kingdom had existed virtually **unthreatened & uncontested.**

- When that demon said, “*I know who you are—the Holy One of God*” he knew something was up.
- So he asks Jesus, “*Have you come to destroy us?*” Believe me, that demon already knew the answer.

He knew that Jesus had come as God’s champion to, as **1 John 3:8** says, **“To destroy (or undo) the works of the evil one.”**

- In all that Jesus said and did He was making an **outright declaration of war** against the counterfeit Kingdom of darkness.
- But, before I get into that, **let me set this whole thing up** a little bit starting from the creation account in Genesis 1 & 2.

Actually, if you’ve read **Genesis 1 & 2**, you probably noticed that the creation story is essentially told twice.

- The first account, starting in Genesis 1:1, **focuses on this magnificent God, Elohim**, creating the Heavens & Earth.
- The word used in **Genesis 1** for “create” is “bara,” which speaks of God’s power to create with just a thought.
- The imagery is of God **sovereignly speaking** the waters and stars and wildlife into existence from His heavenly throne. **Let there be...** and it was.

But then, **starting in verse 4 of chapter 2**, the Creation account is now being told through the vantage point of God’s creation,

- Which is why this section begins with the expression “Earth and Heaven” instead of “Heaven and Earth”.
- But there are other differences as well.

The word for “create” that is used in **chapter 2**, for example, is different from “*bara*” in chapter 1.

- You see, unlike God majestically creating from His throne in Heaven by mere thought,
- we now see Him on the scene, intimately engaged. **In fact, the word used here is “yatsar”**, which means to form or to fashion.

In fact, it's here in chapter 2 that we see God **breathing His own breath** of life into Adam & Eve...

- whom we're told were "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" in His very own image.
- And the name for God used here isn't the more generic name, Elohim, **but rather, Yahweh,**
- which is the personal name God gave to Moses when He said, "I am who I am."

God loved them and walked in intimacy with them each and every day.

- This is what we were created for; to forever walk together with our God in intimacy & friendship...
- and to **serve, with His delegated authority,** as His **stewards** over the rest of creation.

You see, if you want to know what the Kingdom of God looks like... it's right there in Genesis 2...

- Where God not only dwelt in intimacy each day with the crown jewel of His creation...
- but where humanity, living life under the reign of God, **dwelled in unity & love & peace** with one another as well.

In His creation of humanity, God was creating for Himself a unique Kingdom community...

- a **people made in His own image** with whom He could dwell forever.
- And yet, **into this Kingdom scene** comes this **evil intruder.**
- Once a glorious angel, satan was cast out of heaven because he purposed, as **Isaiah 14 says, "to raise up a throne above the stars of God."**

And **with that as His aim,** Satan set up a counterfeit kingdom here on earth... the **very antithesis of God's Kingdom.**

- We saw in **Genesis 2** a picture of God's Kingdom, where the **Father dwells as loving King** over his treasured creation.
- We see beauty, intimacy, peace, and health.
- And yet, as soon as Adam and Eve are **seduced into Satan's rebellion** against God,

- we see death, sin, murder, shame, fear, and sickness overshadow all God had established for humanity.

Immediately, they became subject to satan's rule... with satan **usurping the authority God gave them to rule** as His stewards over the earth.

- **Satan can now rightfully assume the authority God had given solely to humanity...** to rule over His creation.
- And, from that time, Adam and Eve, and all those who would come after them,
- would be **subjects of a new ruler**, of a new kingdom... the Kingdom of Darkness.

The fact is, everyone who's come after them has been **hurt by its power**.

- **We've all** been sold a bill of goods; We've all been **lied to** by it, told all kinds of terrible things about ourselves by it, **used & abused** by it.
- Everything got messed up because of this counterfeit Kingdom... **fear, shame, brokenness, abuse, depression, and disease** to name a few.

But, this **isn't the world** God created for us. We've **all been raised** in a world system that is in complete Rebellion against God...

- and willingly or unwillingly, **we've all be caught up** in this rebellion.
- But thankfully, **history didn't stop there**.

No sooner did Adam and Eve fall to satan did God declare in **Genesis 3:15** that He would **one day send someone** who would deal a fatal blow to satan and His Kingdom...

- So, when Jesus came into this world, **He came as God's Anointed One to deal that death blow...**
- to ultimately restore, back to Himself, that Kingdom community usurped at the Garden.

You see, when Jesus spoke those words from Isaiah that the "*Spirit of the Lord is on me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to release the oppressed,*"

- He was letting the kingdom of this world know that **the time had come for God to take back what was His...** you and me.
- And that He wouldn't stop until, as John wrote in **Rev 11:15**, **"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."**

But while the Kingdom of God was striking back at Satan's counterfeit kingdom of darkness, **Satan would do everything he could** to hold onto his death grip.

- After all, Satan is described in **2 Corinthians 4:4** as the **"god of this world."** He was not about to lay that down without a fight.
- In **1 John 5:19** we're told that the **"whole world lies under the sway of the evil one,"**
- In **Ephesians 2:2** he is described as the **"prince of the power of the air."** Guys... this isn't to be taken lightly.

When Jesus was in the wilderness for those forty days (Luke 4:6) and **Satan offers to Jesus authority to rule over the nations**, Jesus never said, *"Who are you to offer this to Me?"*

- You see, Jesus isn't denying the authority Satan had over the **earth** and its **inhabitants** and **institutions**.
- And yet, through all Jesus *said* and *did*, He was announcing His intent to **take that authority away!**

In other words, **while He wasn't denying Satan's claim...** He was **denying Satan's power & right to hold on to that claim.**

- There was a "new sheriff in town!"
- And so, while, in **John 14:30**, Jesus cautions His disciples that **"ruler of this world approaches,"** He then **tells them flat out, "He has no power over me."**

That's why, in **John 12:31**, Jesus says, *"The time for judging this world has come, when Satan, the ruler of this world, will be CAST OUT. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."*

- It was a clash of kingdoms unlike anything the world had ever known.

When we were a bit younger, Joyce and I had traveled to Holland a couple of times. We spent a few days in Amsterdam... and went to Ann Frank's house.

- As I sat there in front of that house, I could almost see & hear the Nazi soldiers marching through those streets...
- going from house to house **forcing friends, neighbors, and family members** onto those horrible boxcars **that would so often** lead them to their deaths.
- Can you imagine the fear that this would cause them day after day? Wondering if this was the last day they would see their families?

But then, imagine hearing news that a **huge invasion force** was being mounted against that great evil that has left you in all alone in fear.

- What if you knew that this **evil around you** was about to be **challenged & destroyed?**
- No doubt, the sting of that darkness and tyranny would begin to lift.

Well... when **John the Baptist announced** in **Matthew 3:2** that the *"Kingdom of Heaven was at hand..."*

- When **Jesus read** from **Isaiah 61** in the synagogue that day, announcing that *"today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing..."*
- What they were doing was **offering a declaration of war...** that the power of **darkness, evil, deception, and murder**, was about to be broken...

That the **Kingdom of God has come to strike back at the kingdom of darkness...**

- and that **God was about to take back what is rightfully His.**
- This is why, **wherever Jesus went**, demons seemed to manifest.
- Spiritual confrontation with the enemy comes wherever Jesus goes because **Jesus has come as a liberator, laying siege against satan's work, setting us free.**

And when **Jesus rose from the dead** and when the **Spirit was poured out at Pentecost**,

- He ***not only*** restored the Kingdom Community He gave birth to at the Garden...
- But... He gave back to us **the same authority we were always meant to have as children of Adam & Eve...** the authority snatched from us at the Fall.
- **And it is with this restored authority** that Jesus called the disciples... and us...
- to go and **proclaim & demonstrate** the Kingdom of God to our world.

The disciples understood this. In **Luke 9:1-6**, we read that “*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... <sup>6</sup>So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.*”

- Paul shared in **Acts 20:24-25** that it was his mission... his assignment to preach the Kingdom of God.
- In other words, the good news of the Kingdom was **not only the central message/ministry of Jesus...**
- it was the central message & ministry of the apostles and those after them... and must be for the church today.

But there is an **important aspect of the Kingdom** that we need to understand: That **while the Kingdom is here**, the reality is that it hasn't yet come in its fullness.

- We know this... because **Satan is still reaping havoc** in the world.
- Though we can experience victory over **sin**, over **demonic opposition**, over **disease**, the truth is...
- we **won't be completely set free** from the effects of sin & demonic opposition & sickness **until the fullness of the Kingdom** comes... at Jesus' second coming.

**So, there is a tension.** Jesus clearly announced, in **Matthew 12:28**, that the Kingdom is here!

- In **Luke 11:20**, He said “*But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.*”
- And yet, many other verses describe the Kingdom of God as a glorious *future* reality as well.
- For example, Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:24** that “*the end will come when He delivers the Kingdom to the Father after destroying every (earthly) rule, authority, and power.*”

In other words, what we see through the New Testament is that the Kingdom is both here... and not yet here.

- This **tension is commonly referred to as the already/not yet** paradox of the Kingdom of God.
- So, the Kingdom was **inaugurated** when Jesus broke the power of Satan, sin, and death there at Calvary.
  - o **Colossians 2:15** tells us that through His death, “*Jesus disarmed principalities and powers*” and “*made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them...*”
- And it will be **consummated** when Jesus comes again to rid the world, once and for all, of Satan and his counterfeit kingdom... after destroying every rule, authority, and power.
  - o **Revelations 12:10** says, “*Then I heard a loud voice in Heaven say, ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down...*”

You see, we’re all living now in a period between the **Inauguration** of the Kingdom and the **Consummation** of the Kingdom.

- While we have **total victory**, Satan will do everything he can to oppose us.
- But, unlike before, **because of the finished work of Jesus at Calvary**, we know, as John writes in **1 John 4:4**, that **“greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.”**

As people who have been **set free from the kingdom of darkness...** as a people with **spiritual authority in world...**

- We've been made, as Peter writes in **1 Peter 2:9**, a "*chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God.*"
- And, "*as a result,*" he continues, "*you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*"

In other words, as God's Kingdom people, we've been called to not only bear His message...

- but **continue His ministry** to the world around us... **showing others who don't yet know Him**, the goodness & power of God.
- That's why, in **Luke 9**, we read that Jesus sent His *followers out "to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick."*

In fact, Jesus tells them, in **John 20:21-23**, "**As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**"

- In the same way the Father has sent Me, with the same authority given me, with the same power,
- **so I send you to proclaim and demonstrate** the Kingdom of God. But, they couldn't do it in their own strength.

So, in the next verse, **Jesus turns to them and, according to John, breathes on them** so they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

- *And then*, empowered by the Holy Spirit, they went out not only teaching what Jesus taught
- *but doing what Jesus did*... healing the sick & setting the captives free.

You see, as the church, we are part of that Spirit-filled Community of the King, called to **bear Jesus' message** and **continue His ministry** to those who have not yet come under His rule & reign.

- So that they too can, as I shared earlier from Hebrews 6:5, "*taste of the power of the age to come!*"
- And as we go out, continuing the ministry of Jesus, we can expect the miraculous because the Kingdom of God is already here!
- And **even though the crippled counterfeit kingdom** is still opposing the words & works of Jesus (b/c the Kingdom is *not yet consummated*),

- we have the promise of Matthew 16:18 that, as we go out, the **very gates of hell will not be able to prevail** against us.

But here's the problem... too much of the church has found their home in the not/yet...

- forgetting the power and authority we have been given as the church to proclaim and demonstrate the "already" presence of the Kingdom.
- This is why Jesus said what He did in **John 14:12**, that **"Anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father."**

He wanted to remind us that He has **given us both authority & power** to continue His ministry.

- In **Matthew 11:12** we read that *"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."*
- What Matthew is saying here is that as we **purpose to live Kingdom lives... living and praying expectantly... seeking first His Kingdom...**
- then **we will see the manifest presence of the Kingdom** break in... both in our lives and in our ministry.

And **every time a sick person is healed**, for example, Satan's counterfeit kingdom experiences a major setback.

- Every time a **demon is cast out**, every time a **soul is saved**, every time people of **difference races live together** in love and harmony,
- every time **injustice is exposed and righted**, every time we choose to **live together in community** and in forgiveness...
- **Jesus' words are echoed even louder...** that His Kingdom has come...
- and that **Satan's counterfeit kingdom has been defeated and will soon be destroyed once and for all.**

**Daniel** prophesied this long ago in **2:44-45**, *"The God of Heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed... It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."*

And as His Kingdom Community, Jesus has invited us into this story. In **Matthew 28** He tells us that He has given us all authority to GO...

- to go into the neighborhoods and into the nations... **proclaiming & demonstrating** the Kingdom of God.
- In **Luke 10:19** He says, **“Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.”**

What an incredible privilege we have as a church and as a *community of the Kingdom*...

- to proclaim the Good News that God has come for us and wants to bring us back into intimacy with Him.
- And yet, even though the Kingdom is present, **it can still be rejected.**

That’s why, in a world like ours today where the truth is in the seeing... **proclamation must always come with demonstration.**

- That’s why, like Jesus, our **message must always be paired with our ministry**... our **words must always be paired with our works.**
- It’s not enough that we believe in Jesus’ power to heal the sick, we need to pray for the sick.
- It’s not enough for us to believe in the power of prayer, we need to pray!

Remember, **in giving sight to the blind**, Jesus is showing the world the depth of the Father’s love and compassion.

- *When we pray for the sick, we are demonstrating to those we pray for not only our belief that God is real... but that God cares.*
- When we pray for those who are experiencing demonic attack or oppression;
- When, in Jesus’ name, we set the captives free, we’re simply affirming the reality that we’re on the winning team.

Through all these “signs & wonders,” we’re essentially giving the world around us a taste of what our final destination can be.

- **Casting out demons signals** God’s invasion of the realm of Satan, and Satan’s final destruction.

- **Healing** bears witness to the end of all suffering
- Miraculous **provisions of food** tell us about the end of all human need.
- Engaging the injustices of this world speaks to the fact that **never again will someone suffer at the hands of another.**

Jesus' **restoration of the broken** speaks of the fact that one day there will be no more **tears**, no more **pain**, no more **fear**, and no more **shame**.

- Bottom-line, these miracles show us what the Kingdom of God is like...
- it reveals to a fallen world **a mirror into the past**... of what we were created to have...
- and a **window into the future** revealing what we will one day **have** as His people... perfect joy & peace as we sit beside our Father in Heaven.

You see, guys, what we believe about the Kingdom, will impact every part of our lives as a community.

- That's why the Good News of the Kingdom is listed on the back of every bulletin as one of our five core values as a church.
- It reveals **why we were created**... why there is such **suffering**... why **Jesus came into this world**... and **why we exist as His church** today.

As a Kingdom Community of Hope to dark and hurting world, we have the potential to impact the world around us in ways we could never imagine.

- Can we do it? Can we really make a difference as a Kingdom community?
- Along with the promise of His presence, God reminds us, in **Matthew 16:18**, that He has given us the **"keys of the Kingdom."**

If we are committed to seeking God with all of our heart, where our **greatest passion and ambition** as a church is to worship Him...

- If we purpose to **walk in humility** with surrendered hearts...
- If we're willing to **pray & cry out** for more of Him... **if we dare to embrace both the message and ministry** of Jesus with expectant hearts...

- Than I have absolutely no doubt that we will *not only* experience renewal in our lives...
  - but that we will impact the lives of those around us more than we could ever imagine.
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### **Acts 4:30-31**

“Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.”