

Discovering God

Part 5: How to let go of FEAR.

John 18:28-19:16

Summary: We discover unshakable peace, freedom, and purpose when we surrender to the eternal Kingdom of God.

Main Ideas:

We try to control our fear by creating our own personal kingdoms.

Relying on our own kingdoms only creates more fear and conflict.

We are invited to let go and live in the Kingdom of God.

Fighting for our own kingdoms causes us to pick stupid fights.

When we try to rule our own kingdoms we inflate our own importance.

The Kingdom of God is God ruling in the hearts, minds, and lives of his people.

In the Kingdom of God, we are free to enjoy the king and his kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is the only Kingdom that lasts forever.

When we live for our own kingdoms we lose who we really are.

When we live for the Kingdom of God we find true life we can never lose.

Invitation:

Focus on the true King and his Kingdom by reading and praying Matthew 6:9-13

Ask: Who's kingdom am I living for? Mine or God's?

Discussion Questions:

1. What sticks out to you, encourages, or excites you about this week's message? What makes you uncomfortable, seems untrue, frustrates, or confuses you?
2. What are some "sandcastles" we try to build for a sense of control or security?
3. Read Matthew 6:9-13. How could reading and praying this regularly help us let go and live in and for God's Kingdom?
4. What's one area of life where you feel God is calling you to let go of control?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Raise your hand if you've felt some fear in the last month or so...

World seems out of control

- Wars
- Politics

Maybe your life seems out of control

- Job/family/health/relationships/finances
- 1 step forward 3 steps back.
- Future?

It's frustrating/scary b/c it's true... most of these things are out of our control...

What do we do... try to get control back!

We try to control our fear by creating our own personal kingdoms.

But in reality, what we rely on as a strong fortress is just a sand castle next to a stormy beach.

We try to build strongholds of family/image/money/education/careers/political parties/politicians hoping they will protect us from the real world...

- Adding a little bit of family sand to this wall
- The right politicians to hold up this sandy tower
- Maybe a few seashells of career and success to make it look cool

We hope these castles will protect us... but when the first big wave comes... everything crumbles and is washed away.

- Leaving behind only more fear, worry, and anger.

Relying on our own kingdoms only creates more fear and conflict.

Most of our arguments are about protecting our own kingdom/what we want/what we think keeps us safe from our fears...

There's another option... Jesus invites us to something different.

- A different kingdom of peace, joy, confidence, and purpose.
- It creates a different life. A different perspective. A different reality.

Not to escape reality...but to stare at reality (with all of its unknown fears) in its stupid, ugly, scary face with a powerful, unwavering, calm confidence.

It's an invitation to stop trying to control our lives with crumbling walls of sand and join a new kingdom...

- A powerful/all-encompassing kingdom of life, love, and light.

It's an invitation to stop fighting and pushing. To rest, trust, and enjoy the Kingdom of God.

- Even when the biggest/strongest waves of life try to knock us off our feet.

We are invited to let go and live in the Kingdom of God.

It's an invitation Jesus was giving even in the last hours before his execution.

GOD: Jesus made some enemies... had threatened some personal kingdoms...

Primarily the Jewish leaders.

- Called them out on their mistreatment of their authority

- Their abuse of the people under the guise of being God's spokesmen.

They had enough and started looking for ways to get rid of him... for good.

But Jesus was constantly surrounded by crowds who thought he was a prophet and possibly the king God had promised.

The leaders couldn't be seen to be the ones who killed Jesus.

Then an opportunity falls into their lap... Judas agrees to betray Jesus.

He leads the temple guards and some soldiers to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night where he is alone with his disciples and the crowds are gone.

Jesus is arrested, and taken to the religious leaders who question him and become even more convinced he's a threat that needs to die, but a public stoning won't work... the people might revolt...

So they take him to the Roman governor of the area... Pontius Pilate.

And in this scene, we see the difference between the sandy kingdoms we create for ourselves and the true strength of the KoG.

We see the two major powers of the area squabbling over who has the most control.

But both sides have shaky foundations...

- Religious leaders were allowed their authority by the permission and good graces of Rome... and the people looking to them for leadership.
- But Pilate is not in the good graces of his higher-ups... caused a few riots that he overreacted to... killing a lot of people. On thin ice...
- And both know the other is vulnerable.

This whole scene is dripping with petty power plays... **V. 28-32**

So dumb and petty.

Fighting for our own kingdoms causes us to pick stupid fights.

Pilate and the religious leaders, both aware of each other's weakness, squabble over who has the most authority...

- Revealing the frailty of their 'kingdoms' in the face of true power.

Who already knows what's going to happen...

Jesus said he would be lifted up... leaders could've tried to get a mob stoning going but wanted a public execution... only the Romans could do that by lifting up their victims on crosses.

Pilate doesn't want to cause too much trouble... relies on these leaders to keep the people calm... so after flexing his muscles he relents and brings Jesus in for questioning

V. 33-35 Pilate tries to play his role as judge and questions Jesus... and Jesus immediately turns the tables on him by asking his own question...

Doesn't treat him like a Roman governor but like a normal human being.

Jesus turns Pilate's question back on him, asking, 'Do you want to know, or are you just doing your job?

- Are you willing to see what's really going on here? Are looking for something more?"

Pilate doesn't take the invitation... "Who do you think I am? I don't care about your little Jewish arguments."

- Can't see who is really standing before him

When we try to rule our own kingdoms we inflate our own importance.

So Pilate tries again... "What have you done?"

Jesus again takes control of the conversation...

V. 36 Jesus doesn't answer his question... but he gives the answer Pilate needs.

"Pilate you're asking all the wrong questions... Here's what is really happening... see it if you can..."

- My kingdom is nothing like your ideas of kingdoms.
- My kingdom isn't about territory or petty power struggles... it isn't so weak you have to keep defending it."

Kingdoms of our world, whether political or personal, are built and maintained by fighting anything that seems like a threat or hindrance.

- Leaders spill the blood and sacrifice the lives of their people to hang onto their power/control.
- In the KoG, the King spilled his blood and sacrificed his life for the freedom of his people.

The KoG isn't about conquering countries/territory, getting enough power to force God's law on others...

The KoG is God ruling in the hearts, minds, and lives of his people.

- It's a kingdom of the heart... that transforms lives from the inside out
- A kingdom that creates peace in the biggest storms
- A kingdom where enemies are defeated for good by being turned into loved images of God.
- A kingdom of freedom... from fear, freedom to be our true selves, freedom to love w/o fear of being taken advantage of.

In the KoG we don't have to fight for our preferences, safety, importance, recognition, or power.

In the KoG we don't have to fear the walls being invaded by some outside, evil force.

In the Kingdom of God, we are free to enjoy the king and his kingdom.

Listen... There is no such thing as fighting for God's kingdom. The fight has been fought and won.

This means when we think we are fighting for God's kingdom... we are most likely fighting for the preferences and control of our sandcastle kingdoms.

Pilate doesn't have the imagination to see what Jesus is talking about...

V. 37-38a [...Pilate asked.]

Jesus: "You say I'm a king... that's your word. With your definitions... I'm so much more than that."

"I came into the world..." meaning he existed before he came into the world.

- And he came out of that pre-existence to testify to the truth.

This truth is more than just knowing some intellectual concept.

- It is the truth that there is a true King of the entire cosmos...
- He showed the world who he is by entering into our dimension of existence.
- Revealing himself through the God/Man Jesus.
- Showing humanity a way into the KoG
- Not by force but by trusting in the love of their Creator God

Jesus invites Pilate to investigate this truth... "All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

- "Do you love the truth Pilate?"

Pilate closes off his mind... for him there is no kingdom but the kingdoms we make for ourselves.... "What is truth?" he says.

He takes Jesus back to the leaders and says he sees no reason to execute Jesus.

But tries to placate them by saying I'll release to you either Jesus or a dangerous criminal called Barabbas and they shout, "We want Barabbas!"

Pilate still tries to spare Jesus...he has him beaten, mocked, and humiliated hoping that will be enough to satisfy the religious leaders.

And takes Jesus to the leaders again... But they already have seen their chance to protect their own kingdoms and are having none of it.

19:6-11 Pilate: Jesus... I have the power here, let me save you...

Jesus: What you think is YOUR power is only yours b/c God has given it to you... in reality it's nothing but sand... I have the true kingdom.

- **The KoG is the only Kingdom that lasts forever.**

Pilate seems desperate to get out of the corner he's stuck in... but he's too afraid of losing his position/authority...

19:12-16

Both groups here are chained to protecting their own sandcastles... doing everything they can to hold the waves back... and in the process they lost who they were and ultimately their one sandy kingdoms were completely washed away.

Pilate's fear of losing his power/kingdom kept him from delivering true justice and doing what he knew was right.

- Kept him from seeing that God himself was standing in front of him.
- And ultimately he loses his power, is recalled to Rome, and fades from history.

And to protect their own kingdoms, the religious leaders sell their souls and denounce their true king, God.

They shout back... "We have no king but Caesar!" Directly going against their own scriptures they said they so loved...

O LORD, our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us,
but your name alone do we honor. (Isa. 26:13)

And eventually Rome sacks Jeru,salem destroys the temple, kills thousands including many of the religious leaders/priests.

When we live for our own kingdoms we lose who we really are.

YOU: So what does this all mean for us?

No matter how hard we work... no matter how successful we think we are... no matter how much sand we collect... our own kingdoms will always fall apart and will never give us what we want and need...

- Life/Peace/Purpose.

Every ounce of effort we use trying to build our own kingdoms is as wasteful as throwing sand at the sea trying to stop the waves.

What would happen if we stopped trying to control our own kingdoms and fully embraced and trusted in God's kingdom?

We don't have to fight for it... it's already here... just have to choose to join it and live in it.

- Give up your own kingdom and live for the only true kingdom.
- Trust the true King and Allow his love to transform you

How? Focus on the true King and his Kingdom by reading and praying Matthew 6:9-13

And then in your days... When angry/scared/worried/confused...

Ask: Who's kingdom am I living for? Mine or God's?

WE: Fear doesn't have to drive our lives.

We don't have to exhaust ourselves trying to hold back the waves with crumbling sand.

In the Kingdom of God, we find everything our sandcastle kingdoms can't offer: security, love, and peace that withstand every storm.

When we are free of the fear of losing our own kingdoms we are free to live for God's Kingdom...

- And we are free to invite others to join with us... offering them the same lives we have discovered.

When we live for the kingdom of God we find true life we can never lose.