

“Living Into the Kingdom”

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Isaiah 9:1–4; Psalm 27:1, 4–9; 1 Corinthians 1:10–18; Matthew 4:12–23

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Today’s Scriptures are bathed in the language of *light*: the dawning of hope in Isaiah... the psalmist’s confident cry, “The Lord is my light and my salvation”... Jesus stepping into his public ministry as a great light shining in the land of deep darkness.

And I don’t know about you, but in a world like ours, where fear and division feel louder than kindness and mercy, light still feels like a miracle.

But Scripture tells us something even more astonishing: this miracle is not only something God does *for* us. Through Jesus Christ, this miracle is something God does *in us* and *through us*.

The Kingdom of God is not just a future promise; it’s a present calling. Not just a belief we hold; it’s a life we embody.

Our scriptures tell us Christ is the Light that finds us where we are. (Isaiah 9:1–4). Isaiah speaks to people who have been bruised by life—people who have been overshadowed by fear, uncertainty, and loss. He calls their land “a land of deep darkness.”

And yet he says:

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

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Not because they changed their situation.
Not because they got their act together.
Not because the world suddenly fixed itself.
But because God *came to them*.

God entered their darkness and lit it from within.
That's the kind of God we have:
A God who steps into our shadows long before we step into
the light.

I think of a story a friend once told me about losing
electricity during a storm. She lit one single candle in her
kitchen, and she said it stunned her how much of the room
that one small flame illuminated.

“It didn't fix the storm,” she said. “But it kept her grounded
long enough to find her way.”

That is Kingdom light, God's light, steady enough to guide us,
gentle enough to calm us, strong enough to break the yoke of
fear.

Psalmist sings of a heart that actively, intentionally seeks
God's presence. (Psalm 27)

The psalmist says: “One thing I ask... to dwell in the house of
the Lord... to behold the beauty of the Lord.”

The psalmist wants *God's presence* more than God's solutions. More than safety. More than victory. More than certainty.

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Just the presence of God.

And maybe that is the beginning of Kingdom living—not striving to control outcomes but choosing to center our lives on the One who is already our light and salvation.

A pastor friend once shared how every morning she begins her day by sitting in silence with her hands open, palms up. “It’s my way of saying, ‘Lord, here I am. Shine your light in me before you shine through me.’”

Maybe a Kingdom life begins with an open Kingdom posture; An attitude of openness to God’s call on our lives.

Paul speaks of unity, a people united in Christ’s Love (1 Corinthians 1:10–18)

Paul writes to a fractured church, one with arguments and factions and wounded feelings. They are divided over leaders and opinions and preferences. And Paul speaks right into that messiness and says:

“Let there be no divisions among you... be united in the same mind and the same purpose.”

Paul isn’t saying, “Stop disagreeing.”

People disagree. That’s human.

He’s saying, *Don’t forget what holds you together.*

Because Christ is not divided.

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And the Kingdom is not built on winning arguments.
It's built on love, self-giving, self-emptying, bridge-building
love.

I think we have all observed communities that have gone
through a season of conflict. But during our Seder Meal a few
years ago, I watched something beautiful: The sharing of the
marrow, two people who had been on opposite sides of a
painful time came together again, in trust and friendship.

That moment?

That's the Kingdom of God.

Not when we agree, but when we love anyway.

When we let Christ's grace be bigger than our pride.

“Follow Me” is an invitation into the Kingdom. (Matthew
4:12–23) When Jesus begins his ministry, the first word out
of his mouth is: “Repent.”

We often think that means “stop doing bad things.” But the
word really means: *Turn around.*

Reorient your life.

Change the direction you're walking.

And then Jesus gives the invitation that changes everything:
“Follow me.”

Not “Admire me.”

Not “Agree with me.”

Not “Believe the right things about me.”

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“Follow me.”

Walk where I walk.

Do what I do.

Love as I love.

Live the Kingdom I’m bringing.”

I often picture those fishermen dropping their nets. Imagine the sound of those nets hitting the sand, heavy, ordinary, familiar.

Their identity, livelihood, expectations, falling away.

They didn’t know what the future held, but they knew who was calling them.

And friends, we follow that same Jesus today.

The Jesus who heals.

Who feeds.

Who frees.

Who brings light where the world insists on darkness.

We are called to live the Kingdom here and now!

So, what does it look like for *us* to live into this Kingdom?

It looks like kindness.

The kind that listens deeply and quietly.

The kind that slows down enough to see someone’s pain.

It looks like mercy.
The kind that forgives.
The kind that chooses relationship over being right.
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It looks like love.
The kind that is courageous.
The kind that stands up for the vulnerable.
The kind that builds bridges instead of walls.

Sometimes the Kingdom is dramatic and miraculous.
But more often? The Kingdom looks like small, faithful acts
of love.

A meal carried across a driveway.
An offer to babysit.
A phone call to someone who's lonely,
A cup of coffee with a friend whose been going through a
tough time.
A prayer offered at just the right moment.

When we live this way, we become guideposts of God's new
world order, a world where light is stronger than despair,
unity stronger than division, and love stronger than fear.

We are called to become Kingdom people, people of the
Light.

And The Kingdom of God is not a distant dream.
It's not a someday thing.
It's here.

It's breaking in.

Christ started it, and the Spirit empowers us to carry it forward.

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Like Isaiah's people, we may still walk through shadows. Like the psalmist, we will still have days of fear or uncertainty.

Like the Corinthians, we will have disagreements and misunderstandings.

But we follow the One who is *Light itself*.

And as we follow him, step by step, act by act, kindness by kindness, the Kingdom grows in us and through us.

We are called to be people of that Kingdom.

We are called to shine with that light.

And may the world see Jesus in the way we live, and love.

Amen.