

KINGDOM COME Podcast - Week 3

This week we focus in on Jesus as our king and learn more of his character.

Monday, October 5 - Morning

Matthew 23:1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ² “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³ So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴ They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. ⁵ “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. ⁸ “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Comments:

This week we will be building on our podcast from last week and learning more about the leadership of Jesus. When I was in college, I became exposed to the leadership teaching of Robert Greenleaf. He wrote an essay that captured the attention of business leaders in 1970 on the topic of servant leadership. At the time, Greenleaf saw a leadership crisis in America. He found a model for leadership stretching back to Jesus. He said there is a kind of leadership that puts followers first. It can often be seen in listening, empathy, healing, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Now, though Jesus led in this way, American business and political leaders were aggressive, hard-nose, determined to win and often out for themselves. This is true of the leaders in Israel that Jesus confronted. Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus directly confronted the corrupt and self-serving religious leaders of the Jewish people. Jewish and also Roman culture at the time was an honor culture. That meant leaders were all about building their power through creation of honor for themselves. The Jewish leaders used the law to control the people; they used their clothing to signal their superior status and their positions to take care of themselves. Jesus calls the whole arrangement a fraud. These leaders didn’t have the right to speak for Moses by applying the law in people’s lives as they saw fit. In so doing, they were placing crushing burdens on people’s shoulders, making life even more difficult, and keeping people from genuine fellowship with God. Jesus calls them hypocrites. Of course, they do everything for show. They are not really practicing what they preach, but instead, they are building their own honor-status in the eyes of everyone. On the other hand, Jesus was out among the people, finding ways to meet needs and bringing hope and healing to common people, people without status and titles. The contrast couldn’t be more obvious. The religious leaders must be seething as they hear this message of Jesus. This message is often titled the seven woes because Jesus pronounces judgment on them, explaining what will come upon that generation because of the misuse of their positions of leadership. Some people say it was this incisive and honest sermon that convinced those leaders they needed to kill Jesus. Jesus provided them an opportunity for soul-searching that could open the door to repentance and life. They, instead, chose to put Jesus to death. Jesus, always the servant, laid down his life out of love for his people and faithfulness to the Father. When Robert Greenleaf’s teaching came out,

a school was formed to provide leaders the opportunity to learn a new and different way. Many joined the movement, but most did not. They had succeeded at the highest levels of business with an approach where servanthood just did not fit. We are grateful for Jesus, our true shepherd and faithful king.

Let's pray:

Lord God, you are sovereign over our world, yet you have given us dominion here on earth. You have all things mapped out, yet you listen to us when we pray. Your majesty and glory are revealed by your faithful love, your goodness and your kindness toward us. I come to you today praising and worshiping you. Amen.

Monday, October 5 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Our all-sufficient God, when I think of who you are, I am amazed that you would seek fellowship with us. You are immense, and we are small. You know all things, and our knowledge is so limited. Yet, you pursue us with your love and you have revealed yourself to us in your creation, in your word, and in your Son. As I consider this, provide to me your joy today as I walk with you. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Monday, October 5 - Evening

Matthew 18:1-4

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.³ And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Comments:

While in a graduate school philosophy course, I was directed to the works and life of Simone Weil by the professor. She was a French Christian philosopher that died at the age of 34. As a young woman, she came to faith in Jesus and then lived a life of utter devotion, making reflecting the love of God in every way her goal. She believed that the love of God is manifest when people give personal attention to those that otherwise seem invisible, anonymous, or non-existent. In Jewish culture, that would have been a perfect way to describe children. That is what makes the attention Jesus gives to children surprising. In his day, children didn't much matter until they reached adulthood. Most children did not live to see it. But Jesus repeatedly used young children to teach his disciples about his kingdom. Here is one of those scenes. Jesus shows the utter dependency of a child and then tells his disciples that they must be like a child to enter the kingdom. Everything about Jewish culture was to prepare the child for adulthood. Jesus says that the child best illustrates what fits a person for his kingdom. Jesus never commands us to be adults. Instead, he describes his kingdom for the weak, the left out, and as Simone Weil could see, the invisible or non-existent. Here Jesus is also showing us what loving leadership looks like. Jesus consistently provides life to the broken, the excluded, the overlooked. In our world, as people grow in leadership they ascend. They don't descend. They find their way into more and more exclusive circles of society. They become more important. But this is not the way it is with leadership in the kingdom of God. Jesus is constantly descending. He is seeking people at the margins, loving people on the fringe of society. In the end, Jesus is

washing feet, a practice rejected by self-respecting Jews. Who can even speak of the cross? Here was Jesus descending to the most shameful death out of love for his people. What is leadership in your mind? Is it ever increasing positions and power and status? Or, is it service and sacrifice and an ever increasing descending deeper into costly love? Here is what happened to Simone Weil. As WWII was progressing, she so deeply bonded with the distressed and broken that she stopped eating. How could she take food when so many people she loved, people that were forgotten and invisible, were without provision? She died for lack of food. I was so thankful to my professor for introducing me to the life of Simone Weil, but even more grateful that she helped me better see Jesus and the costly love that characterizes his leadership.

Let's pray:

Lord God, we overlook the weak and easily forget the unconnected. There are people walking the streets of our city that go unnoticed and unloved. Forgive me for buying into our world's way of seeing. Open my eyes to love as Jesus loves. To the praise of your grace, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 6 - Morning

Mark 10:42-45

⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Comments:

My dad raised three boys, and he did not like to find us fighting. One day I was fighting with my younger brother, and my dad got a length of rope and tied our arms together. (Today, if a neighbor saw this, they might call child services!) He told us he was determined that we would learn to love each other. And, he told us if we untied the rope, he'd tie us together again. We would always be brothers, and we needed to know how to love each other. Jesus had a similar problem with the disciples. As Jesus was nearing Jerusalem, two of his disciples, James and John, were angling for positions of authority in Jesus' kingdom. They asked for the seats of honor, ruling with Jesus. When the other disciples heard what James and John asked of Jesus, they were furious. Who were they to think they were better than the others? Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach all of the disciples about earthly power and the way it works. The rulers of the nations, Jesus explained, lord their authority over their subjects. They have the power and they use it to solidify their position and even to gain more. But this is not the way of Jesus' kingdom. His kingdom is one of service, not domination, not one of grasping but of emptying oneself. Likely, the disciples had never heard anything like this. Everyone is familiar with the way power is exercised in our world. At this time in Israel, Roman soldiers were everywhere, showing the power and prominence of Rome. Leaders of the Jewish people use their power in much the same way. They are sad they don't have more of it. But Jesus came as a servant, not the sort of leader or messiah the people are looking for. If the disciples of Jesus are to represent him, they need to learn about power from a different perspective entirely. Position and authority lay upon one the responsibility of service. It is not a license to dominate or control. Jesus demonstrated this most clearly when he went to the cross for the sake of the world. Where can you find leadership like that? Now, the disciples were soon to see what Jesus was talking about. Jesus will hang from the cross no more than a week later. This sacrifice is what Jesus has in

mind as he teaches the disciples: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* Now, all those years ago my dad was right. My brother and I became the best of friends. We had our share of disagreements for sure, but something new came to be born of love for each other. Our dad was trying to teach us just that.

Let's pray:

Lord God almighty, we seek power and position, but Jesus seemed to always be looking for ways to lay it aside so that he might be able to serve. We want a crown, and Jesus has a towel wrapped around his waist, ready to wash our feet. What an amazing savior! Teach me this way of love, I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 6 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving Father, we are enduring a season of strife and competition in our world. There is a frantic competition for power and position. In the midst of this time, help me to see Jesus, the one that laid down his life for me. Help me to live by faith in him in all that I do. May his kingdom of love and light shine brightly into our world, for Jesus is our hope and strength. For we pray in his name. Amen.

Tuesday, October 6 - Evening

Mark 10:17-22

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Comments:

Have you spent much time around anyone that is extraordinarily wealthy? Sandy and I were once invited to a birthday party hosted for an extremely wealthy man. This man had not earned his wealth but had instead inherited it. I remember being at the party and having the realization that we were among the few there that did not work for this man. I found myself wondering if this man had any true friends, people that loved him and not his wealth. Our text today tells us about the encounter between Jesus and a man called the rich young ruler. To many it might seem like this man has everything, but he comes to Jesus asking about eternal life. Financial wealth and status can make possible many things, but it cannot give you life. There is always something missing, and this man knows it. What is interesting is that Jesus is extremely poor, yet he is the one that is truly rich. Jesus asks this man about his moral life. Has he kept the law? Yes, he has, but notice the part of the law addressed here: *You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.* This is all from the second table of the law, our duty to our fellow man. The religious people often gauge their spirituality from their faithfulness to the second table. If you haven't committed adultery or murdered someone and so on, you must be a good person. We

also tend to judge others on this basis as well. The man tells Jesus that he has been a good person his whole life. But then, Jesus asks this man a question from the first table of the law. Has he put his wealth before God? Has it become his idol? Is he willing to sell everything, lock, stock and barrel, and then follow Jesus? Here is where the problem comes. We can be pretty good people, trying to do what is right, but still have an idol standing between us and God. Often, this is the case. This man seems so desperate to find eternal life, but his idol has a stronger grip on him than his desire for God. We are told of him: *He went away sad, because he had great wealth.* Now, before we finish up, I want us to see Jesus. This man approached Jesus. The rich young man ran up and fell at his knees. Notice what we are told about Jesus: *Jesus looked at him and loved him.* First, Jesus was never going through the motions. He was always completely engaged with those around him. Second, Jesus loves this man. We are told this just before Jesus pressed the man to let go of his idols. Imagine Jesus looking at this man and seeing the trap of his wealth and wanting for him to be free, to let it go. This is our loving savior. John, in his gospel, tells us that God didn't send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. (John 3:17) Back at that party all those years ago, we celebrated the birthday of the rich man, but we were also sad, sad that his wealth had cut him off from true friendship. But I think Jesus looked at him and loved him.

Let us pray:

Our ever-loving Lord, we so easily get caught in the trap of idolatry. Things that look good to us become far too important in our hearts. When that happens, we miss you. We miss life. Lord, show us the things we must walk away from, the things that must be put in their proper place, so that we might have life. For we pray in your name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 7 - Morning

Philippians 2:6-8

⁶ Who, being in very nature¹ God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.

Comments:

My advisor in seminary was one of the most humble and loving men I have ever known. Soon after meeting him through one of his classes I was attending, he did not show up for class. A teaching assistant was present and told us they he would be leading class that day. Our professor would never had told us where he really was. He was too humble for that. But we found out that the US State Department had flown him to Washington, DC to introduce the President of the United States to the new president of South Korea. We didn't know it, but our professor was one of the most respected men in South Korean and therefore uniquely equipped to make the introduction. We also didn't know that our professor had himself been president of a seminary in Korea, and that he had served the church in China as well and was fluent in Chinese, Korean, French, Latin, Greek, and a number of other languages. He was also a man devoted to prayer. He and his wife prayed each day, a page at a time, through the student directory, lifting up to God each student by name. This professor became a good friend and lent his encouragement and prayers to Sandy and me when we were church planting. Though his courses were well taught, his character had a far greater influence on me than anything else. The passage I read from Philippians is a well-known text about Jesus and his character. These

words had become part of one of the earliest Christian hymns. What we have here is not a celebration of Jesus' assertive power. No, Jesus became a humble servant of the plan and purposes of God. He didn't grasp power or position. He emptied himself. Of course, the greatest demonstration of the character of Jesus was his willingness to go to the cross on our behalf. We speak of the cross easily enough today, but that was not so during the time of Jesus. The cross reeked of shame and failure, of weakness and defeat. Polite conversations could include no mention of the cross. It was the worst sort of torture that could be inflicted on a human being. It was meant to strip away all dignity and humanity. But Jesus made the cross the epitome of his mission to redeem us and to do the will of his Father. Now, what kind of king would do that? Yes, Jesus. My professor and advisor in seminary never allowed us to think him the hero though he had led an amazing life of sacrifice and service. No, he wanted us to know it all came from Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. What might our lives be like if we would learn this way of Jesus? That's another purpose of this ancient hymn. Our relationships should be like that of Christ Jesus.

Let us pray:

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we wanted someone to defeat our enemies, and you sent Jesus, the one that defeated sin and hell and death on our behalf. We wanted victory, and you gave us a cross and then an empty tomb. Enable us, by your Holy Spirit, to trust in your ways in all things and to learn the way of Jesus. For we pray in his name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 7 - Midday prayer

Let's pray together:

Abba, Father, you reveal to us each day that your grace is sufficient for us. We become afraid, and you love us still. We fall on our faces, and you love us still. We doubt you, we question you, and you love us still. Thank you that there is no place your grace cannot reach. Let your grace reach to me this day that I might see Jesus. For I pray in his name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 7 - Evening

John 13:12-17

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Comments:

One of the people that most taught me humble service was my mentor. He grew up in the south in a poor family. His size and athletic ability opened up the way for him to attend college on a football scholarship. But money was always tight. Even getting through college required him to work odd jobs. While in college, he took classes but also worked as one of the plumbers on campus. For one important dance on campus, he so much wanted to take a girl he liked. But instead, he had to work. That night there was a plumbing emergency on campus, and he ended up having to unclog a sewer line. As the dance was ending, the students passed near the smelly and foul work he was having to do. Some students noticed him and laughed. It might have been

heartbreaking to be made fun of in this way. But it wasn't for him. He was grateful to have the opportunity to be in college and to have a future. I think of Jesus on the night he was betrayed. He did something as unsavory as clearing a sewer line when he washed the feet of the disciples. They were stunned when Jesus greeting them at the Passover dinner with a towel around his waist. Without complaint, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples one by one. Later, when dinner was served, Jesus told his disciples to follow his example. As their lord and master, he was asking them to learn his way of costly service. Here Jesus was revealing the nature of his kingdom and also his character as our king. He doesn't ask us to do anything he has not done first. Jesus calls us to service, and he laid down his life to serve us. Jesus asks us to love our enemies, and Jesus called on the Father to forgive the ones that mocked him and crucified him. This week as we have been learning about the character of our king, Jesus has also been calling to us: Come and follow me. Do as I have done. Love as I have loved. In this way you will show yourself to be my disciples. That was what discipleship meant at the time of Jesus. It meant learning everything from your teacher so that you might become like him in every way.

Let us pray:

Lord God, we scramble to get the best seats in life, and then we see Jesus waiting tables. Teach us your way of love, I pray. By your Spirit enable me to love others. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, October 8 - Morning

Luke 6:12-16

¹² One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Comments:

Years ago, when a church I was serving was building its first building, I was given the opportunity to take a seasoned Korean pastor to see the property. The church building was under construction. The walls were up, but the roof had not been completed. As we drove by and I pointed out the structure, the pastor asked me to pull off the road. Then, unprompted by me, he entered the construction site. We walked through the building, into what would become the future sanctuary. He asked me to tell him where the congregation would sit, where the pulpit would be, how the building would be arranged when it was completed. Then, he knelt where the pulpit would be and prayed for the congregation that would worship there in the future. He prayed for the worship services that would take place there and sermons that would be preached from that spot. I was drawn into this prayer time, and it became a holy moment for me, a time to look forward to what God would accomplish in that place. Jesus was a man of prayer. Leadership for Jesus meant a deep communion with the Father. Luke's gospel tells us more about Jesus' prayer life than any other gospel. The scene we have before us today is the selection and calling of the disciples. But did you notice what came first? Yes, Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before selecting them. When was a time you spent an entire night in prayer? You see, for Jesus, prayer was not a way to get things from the Father. It was not punctuation for his life. Prayer, communion with the Father, was his life. It makes you wonder: how might our leaders lead if they bathed every decision in prayer? How might our lives be if we

sought communion with the Father in every decision we made? Prayer is critical because this is the time when we can enter into the purposes of God. We can see the plan of God. We can seek the face of God. We can enjoy communion with God. We can see what we are doing is within the sovereignty of God. You can see why prayer brings life. I was humbled that day by that Korean pastor. He didn't pray to get my attention, but because God already had his attention. He wanted to share everything and bring everything with God. After leaving the construction site, I also began thinking about all that God would do there in that place, but even more I wanted to enjoy God and engage with God in this way.

Let's pray:

Thank you, God, that in Christ I can come boldly to your throne of grace. Thank you that I don't have to convince you to hear my prayers. I know you hear them in Christ. Thank you that I have the deep privilege of sharing my life with you. I worship and praise you in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday, October 8 - Midday prayer

Let's pray:

Lord God, as the nation is pushing through an election year, help me to keep my focus on you. Remind me that you are sovereign in all things, and that no plan of yours can be hindered. Help me to trust in your purposes, and to look to you by faith. I pray for those national and local leaders; those called to protect and serve and lead. Give them a humility that helps them come to you in prayer. Cause them to seek your face for wisdom and strength. For I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thursday, October 8 - Evening

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Comments:

By the time I went off to college, I'd never spent any time on a farm. That all changed when the campus pastor at college took me under his wing. The college had a farm where students could learn the basics of farming, and the campus pastor lived on the farm. He felt it was his mission to teach me about farming. That meant starting with the worst sort of labor, doing things like raking the muck from the animal stalls and cleaning out the chicken coops. That was, by far, the worst of the chores. It was there with the animals where you could learn about the yoke. We learned that if one horse could pull two tons, two horses teamed together could pull as much as twenty. It was all about teamwork, sharing the load, and matching animals together that would work well together. Now, with the use of tractors, we are losing the knowledge of this. When Jesus saw the crowds, he saw misery and weariness. The poor in any culture nearly always carry heavy burdens. They live hand to mouth and live on the edge of survival each day. They have no margin and therefore are vulnerable. But Jesus chose to be among them. He was born to a peasant family, grew up in a poor village and never really had anything of material value. When we think that God entered into our world in this lowly state, it is shocking. Jesus wasn't a child of privilege. Furthermore, he felt the weariness of poverty. He was moved with compassion when he saw their distress and their need. Our text for today is Jesus' invitation. Come to me, he says. Why? Because we tend to do life alone. We feel like everything depends on us. No one

else will carry our load. We've gotten used to self-dependence. This leads to a deep weariness of the soul. Jesus is inviting us to be yoked to him. He will share the load so that we do not shoulder the burden by ourselves. This is a beautiful image showing Jesus' mission to give us relief and rest. How can we trust him to team with us? He shares his own resume. He says, "I am gentle and humble in heart." He isn't harsh. He won't add to the demands and expectations because he knows we are already being crushed by them. He won't dominate or control. The secret of the yoke is the power of cooperation. Animals that strive against each other will not benefit from being teamed together. Jesus loves us, and he desires to share the load. Indeed, he will carry the load. It is said that when an experienced animal is teamed with an immature and inexperienced one, the more mature animal knows how to bear the load. This is how the younger animal learns the secret of the yoke as well. This is why Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. That's beautiful. Jesus bears the yoke so that we hardly feel the burden. This is what the love and presence of Jesus in your life means. You are not alone. You will not carry the burden alone.

Let's pray:

Abba, Father, I know the truth of your love, but so often I feel I am alone. Remind me of Jesus and the easy yoke. Show me that the yoke of Jesus is light. Lord, I think there is so much to do. Remind me that in Jesus it is already done. For I pray in his name. Amen.

Friday, October 9 - Morning

Luke 13:31-35

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." ³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ³⁴ "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Comments:

In the summer, Sandy and I often take a break to the west coast of Florida on Estero Island. This little island lies just north of Naples. One of the highlights of being there is the time I have for kayaking. It just so happens that the inlet nearly has a tiny island that hosts a rookery for shore birds. It is isolated and thus a safe place for birds to bear and raise their young. Young pelicans learn how to fish, and wading birds test and strengthen their wings in preparation for their first flights. It's a magical place if you love birds. Sometimes I will sit for an hour watching them. Now as Jesus' ministry was building, the religious and political leaders saw him more and more as a threat. Here, Jesus is literally threatened by them. The Pharisees are not trying to protect Jesus. They want him to stop what he is doing. They want Jesus to be afraid. But Jesus is not deterred by their threats. Instead, he tells them that he plans to go on serving and loving people as he always has. He is fulfilling his mission, and he knows he will arrive in Jerusalem at the proper time to complete his work of going to the cross. As he looks at Jerusalem, he sees need, and he feels a deep protective love for the people that are distressed. The temple, what is meant to be the center-point of the worship of the Lord, has been politicized and oppressive for

the very people that need the Lord's presence the most. You can hear the longing in Jesus in the metaphor he uses. He compares himself to a mother hen willing to do anything to protect her chicks. Literally, the mother will raise up her wings and draw her babies close to her for protection. She faces the danger and takes the blows to provide them with security. This is the nature of our king, of Jesus, the one that has given his life for us. The people are his own, and he places himself between them and the danger they face. We want to have this image in mind as we think of Jesus and his ministry. Over the years, the life on that little island flourished. But the last time I was there, I noticed that vultures had begun to appear. They arrived to raid the nests and steal the eggs. They also showed up to take the baby birds in their vulnerability. You could see those mother birds doing everything they could to save their chicks. I thought of Jesus and all he has done for us, gathering us up and providing us safety under his wings.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, we feel that danger of our world and oftentimes feel exposed. We know we are vulnerable without you. We easily become fearful and discouraged. Remind us this day of your faithful love. Reveal your presence in my life this day that I might come to even more trust in you. For I pray in your name. Amen.

Friday, October 9 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we are weak, but you are strong; we easily forget your love but you always remember your covenant. We know the effects of fear, but you fill us with confidence. We know loss and sadness, but you give us a joy that cannot be touched by the worst of circumstances. We live by sight, and you are calling us each day more deeply into a life of faith. We worry about tomorrow, and you hold our times in your hands. Thank you that you are God and that I can come to you and trust in you. For I pray in your name. Amen.

Friday, October 9 - Evening

Luke 19:41-44

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Comments:

I remember a few years ago when my mom died, my days seemed to be filled with tears. I wept standing over her bedside when her heart gave out. I wept at the service where we celebrated her life. I wept at the grave. I have never wept so much before or since. I was surprised by this part of the experience. I found people embarrassed by my tears. There were times I was tempted to be embarrassed myself. We've been taught that men are to be strong, to face life with a stiff upper lip. I certainly did not feel strong. I felt weak and shattered. Now in many ways, the Jewish culture nurtured a far more mature and healthy emotion life. Men were strong enough to be vulnerable, strong enough not to be ashamed of tears. This scene of Jesus entering into Jerusalem reveals that Jesus himself could be immensely vulnerable. He is entering Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, and as the city comes into view he can see where

the story is going. If the people embraced his leadership, they could experience peace. But he knows that will not happen. He is not weeping over what he has lost. He is weeping because he loves the people and the city, and he knows what will happen to them. Now, in Greek, there are a variety of words used to speak of tears. The most intense word is used here. Jesus is sobbing with the kind of weeping that causes your chest to heave. Jesus is deeply emotional, overflowing with love to the extent that it grips his heart. When he is rejected, he doesn't demand a following. He doesn't force himself on the people. He weeps over the city with a longing for its peace. This is our true king. He knows what is coming. Just as Jesus says, the city is destroyed in the next generation because it refused God's peace. I return to look at Jesus' tears because Jesus gives me freedom to feel deeply, to love deeply, and yes also to weep. Seeing Jesus doesn't, however, make me sad. It reveals to me the depth, the magnitude of his love. Such tears accompany love. God is teaching me more about this every day. We are loved and in him.

Let's pray:

Lord God, it is true. Often, we despise our tears because we believe they reveal weakness and vulnerability. But we know the tears of Jesus show forth his great love for humanity. Lord, give me a freedom in Jesus to live wholeheartedly and to learn this way of love from Jesus. For I pray in his name. Amen.

Saturday, October 10 – Morning prayer

Let us pray:

Lord God, thank you for sending Jesus to us, our true and faithful prophet. We find our world immersed in lies and distractions. News coverage fills our airwaves, filling our ears with spin. It feels like there is a desire to divide us from others and to cultivate disrespect, fear, and anger. Enable us, O Lord, to ground our hearts in your truth and to see clearly your kingdom in the midst of many counterfeits. We want to give our heart-devotion to you alone. Provide your Holy Spirit that that might be so. For we pray in the name of the one that is the way, the truth and the life. Amen.

Saturday, October 10 - Midday prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, you have sent to us Jesus, our great high priest. He has met us in our need and come to us in our sin. Jesus has revealed the depth of your love and accomplished salvation for us. When we feel alone, Jesus enters in. When we are lost, Jesus seeks us out. When we are afraid, Jesus guards our hearts and makes us secure. Enable us this day to find our peace and joy in Jesus, through the power of your Spirit. Amen.

Saturday, October 10 - Evening prayer

Let us pray:

Abba, Father, we need someone to lead us, and it seems we will turn to anyone that steps forward. Thank you that Jesus is meek and lowly, and in him we find rest for our souls. Thank you that we have such a king, one that did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. By your Holy Spirit, grant me a ruthless confidence in your Lordship, in your plan to redeem the world and in your purposes at work in my life. For I pray in your name. Amen.

SUNDAY, October 11 – Worship

Please review guidelines below for in-person worship. If you are ready to come back, reserve your seat using the link below. Seats are limited; RSVP is on a first come, first served basis.

RSVP here: <https://granadachurch.com/rsvp/>

9am - Heritage Service

11am - Contemporary

1pm - Spanish Worship

Our services may also be accessed at one of these platforms:

granada.online.church

[Facebook Live](#)

[YouTube](#)



granadachurch.com



YOU ARE READY TO COME BACK IF:

- You (and your children) are able to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth for the entirety of the service.
- You understand your risk involved in public meetings and are comfortable with it.
- You have not had any cold or flu-like symptoms in the past 14 days.
- You have not had contact with a positive case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.



YOU SHOULD WORSHIP FROM HOME IF:

- You have traveled or left the country in the past 14 days.
- You feel ill.
- You have had cold or flu-like symptoms in the past 14 days.
- You have had contact with a positive case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- Feel uncomfortable with the risk of meeting people in public.
- Have a previous condition that would put you at high risk from COVID-19.
- Your children would not be comfortable wearing a mask through a service.
- Not willing to follow social distancing guidelines at Granada.