

## Clash of Kingdoms

This past Sunday we began a new sermon series called “Journey To The Cross.” Each week leading up to Easter, we’re going to explore Gospel passages that contain clues about why Jesus was killed.

1. Warm up question. Jeff mentioned that, when growing up, his favorite board game was *Clue*. What’s your favorite board game?
2. In Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her son “will be great, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David . . . , and of his kingdom there will be no end.” In other words, Jesus was destined to establish a “kingdom.” On Sunday, we explored what kind of kingdom Jesus sought to establish and how his kingdom would impact the kingdoms of this world. We began with a passage known as “Mary’s Magnificat” – words Mary spoke celebrating the impending birth of Jesus. Read Luke 1:46-55.
  - a. Mary was a teenage girl and found herself pregnant before marriage. Most of us, if in that situation, would likely react with a lot of stress and negative emotions. But Mary seemed to react differently. What do verses 46-48 tell us about Mary’s perspective and attitude while pregnant with Jesus?
  - b. Throughout history, various governments have banned the public recitation of Mary’s Magnificat because of the words she speaks in Verses 51-53. What do these verses tell us, in general, about how God works in this world and, in particular, about the anticipated impact of Jesus’ life and ministry? Why do you think governments have felt the need to ban these verses?
  - c. What clues do verses 51-53 offer about Mary’s view of the world and her political perspective? How do you think her perspective may have shaped Jesus during his formative years? Do you think Mary’s attitude and perspective might have been a reason why God chose her to be Jesus’ mother?
  - d. Typically, we tend to picture Mary as a gentle, tender, soft-spoken maternal spirit. How does the passage we’ve just read affect how you imagine her?
3. Mark 1:14 describes the launch of Jesus’ public ministry like this: “After John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’” In other words, establishing a new “kingdom” – the kingdom of God – lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry.
  - a. Suppose you were King Herod, appointed by the Romans to rule a territory that encompasses much of Israel. When you heard that someone named Jesus, called the Messiah, was gathering large crowds and promising the birth of a new kingdom, how would you likely respond? In our time today, how would you respond to someone promising the birth of a new nation?

- b. To better understand Jesus' vision for this new kingdom he came to establish, read Luke 6:20-26. What do these words tell us about the kingdom Jesus envisioned? What do you think Jesus meant when he said to the poor, "Yours is the kingdom of God"?
4. For further insight into Jesus' perspective on the poor, let's read Luke 14:1 and 14:12-24.
  - a. In verse 15, someone mentions how wonderful it will be to eat bread together in the "kingdom of God" (vs. 15). Jesus responds, starting in verse 16, by telling a parable to illustrate what banquet feasts in the kingdom will be like. What point do you think Jesus is trying to make with this parable?
  - b. Look again at verses 12-14. Do you think Jesus literally meant for us to do what he says here? If so, have you ever done it? If not, why not?
  - c. Jeff said, "The basic ethic of every earthly kingdom that has ever existed can be summed up as: Every man for himself. But then along came Jesus, seeking to establish a kingdom built on a radically different ethic: Every man and woman for each other." In what ways does Jesus' kingdom vision threaten the kingdoms of this world? Does it threaten the order and structures of our own nation?
5. If we wish to claim our place as citizens of the kingdom of God, we have a responsibility to live into the values of that kingdom. So let's think about what that means for how we respond to poverty.
  - a. Based on what we've looked at, as followers of Jesus, what should be our posture and attitude toward the poor? Should it affect how we vote?
  - b. Does every follower of Jesus have an obligation to take action on behalf of the poor? How much action? How much is enough?
  - c. On Sunday, we heard about a number of different options for helping the poor and vulnerable in our own city. Which, if any, of those options most resonated with you?
  - d. Jeff invited us to envision us hosting a literal Luke 14 banquet at our church in three years, inviting all the friends we make through our outreach to LGBT youth, immigrants and refugees, the homeless, and the impoverished neighborhood of Martindale-Brightwood. How do you feel about that kind of banquet? How do you think it would impact us as individuals and as a church?