

## **Luke 17:20-18:8**

### **The King is the Hope of the Kingdom**

It is not often that we get to observe the transition of “power” in a monarchy. Being part of a republic, we have presidents and leaders, but we choose them and change them often. But due to Queen Elizabeth’s long life and reign, we haven’t witnessed, in many of our lifetimes, a change.

In a moment the nation’s anthem went from “God save the Queen” to “God save the King.” King Charles III is king.

While he is actively king NOW, we await his coronation. The public moment the crown is lifted on his head and the scepter placed in his hands. His kingship is already inaugurated but not yet coronated.

While we don’t have much personal experience with earthly kings, we know what it’s like to long for a better kingdom. A good government (as we define it!) More than rhetoric, action. A more perfect union. In all our longing these earthly princes keep failing. So many of us lift our eyes. To catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, the perfect government, the eternal King.

We are not the first to set our hopes on this Kingdom. From the garden, from the flood, from the exodus, from the establishment of Solomon’s temple, from exile, from the silence of 400 years; the hope has been carried through generations.

The perfect place. The perfect people. The perfect King.

And in that hoping, the image dreamt of took on colors shaded by human hearts and lives. Then came a Rabbi preaching that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

He was more than a preacher. He was working miracles confirming his ministry. He was of God. And his description of the Kingdom was different. Something beyond expectation.

We then look at this account not as nostalgic observers but as people longing for this Kingdom and what we see shapes how we wait.

### **The King is the hope of the Kingdom.**

At this point of Luke's gospel we are on the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus and his followers are traveling and teaching. And here, in response to another question from the Pharisees (the religious leaders of the day) Jesus both tells of the Kingdom's already and not yet expressions.

In doing so, he gives a glimpse of a coming day that to many can be disconcerting. But he gives us what we need to not lose heart while we wait.

### The Kingdom is in the King

The Pharisees ask the question. They should because they had an expectation. We actually see this a lot in Luke. The Gospel is heading toward an interaction where even Jesus' followers will be corrected about what the Kingdom of God is and what it looks like.

The Pharisee's expectation though was one of political rule. The throwing off of Roman occupation. A return of the nation-state of Israel. A place just for them, where they get to be in charge. So when is this coming?!

**Luke 17:20–21** “he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, [21] nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” (ESV)

It's not coming in ways that you are expecting and people won't say “look” here it is. As if they won't have eyes to see it... “Jesus apparently means that the arrival of the kingdom of God will not be accompanied by spectacular signs in the heavens but rather that the kingdom will come quietly, evident only in the change in people's lives.”

But he says something confounding. “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

There is some divergence on translation here.

“Within you,” is one option, but he is answering the Pharisees, those that have been rejecting his teaching on the kingdom, so it is not likely in them.

“Within your grasp,” is better, you can be part of it, it is around you, close enough to touch.

“In the midst of you,” we can take that rightly to give the sense that where the citizens of the kingdom are it is there. So it is in the followers of Jesus.

But I think it is best to this as conveying that Jesus is in the midst of them. And where the King is, the kingdom is.

We can give them a little grace for maybe missing it... he has yet to be lifted up, with a sign declaring he is King of the Jews. But we know that Jesus is King.

He is the promised one.

**Isaiah 9:6–7** “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” (ESV)

Jesus calls it his kingdom before Pilate.

**John 18:36** “Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (ESV)

We can know the hope to which he has called us when we have eyes to see... Ephesians 1:19–23 “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all

things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (ESV)

It is even tattooed on his body!

**Revelation 19:13–16** “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. [14] And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. [15] From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. [16] On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (ESV)

This is the King in their midst.

“In other words, the kingdom is present in the person of Jesus. He is the sign of the kingdom, but he is more than the sign of the kingdom; he embodies the kingdom. The Pharisees want to see the kingdom, but even more important than the kingdom is the king, who is standing right in front of them. When one is in the presence of the king, the kingdom is present as well.” Tom Schriener

What he has invited everyone to that has heard his preaching, that has heard of him in preaching by others, is to his way, to his rule in our lives.

Where his rule is, the kingdom is. And the Pharisees might miss this, we should not.

“In a significant sense Jesus also was and is the place of the kingdom of God. The Old Testament images of locality—the garden of Eden, the promised land, the city/Zion, the temple—all reach fulfillment in Christ, because in the New Testament the locality of the kingdom is Jesus Christ himself (cf. John 1:14; 2:21; Acts 13:34). Jesus replaced the temple, and thus those indwelt by Christ become the place of God’s rule (cf. Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17).<sup>4</sup>” Preach the Word Commentary

This is where we live now. We prayerfully ask God to build the radical kingdom ethics of the Sermon on the Mount into our lives. Above all, we must be radically

Christ-centered, for then we become the people of God, our hearts the place of God, and our lives examples of the rule of God. We the kingdom!

“The truth is, though Jesus has been gone for over two thousand years, “the kingdom of God is in [our] midst”! If we have trusted him and are in Christ, we are his people, living in his place (Jesus the temple), living under his rule. We are children of the kingdom.”

We have also been given much to carry us through. The Holy Spirit to teach us all truth, the pour the love of the Father into our hearts. Union with Christ our King. All that is his becomes ours. The kingdom is now. It’s why we gather. Why we serve each other, protect each other, serve the least, and search for the lost.

But the kingdom is also on its way...

### The Kingdom is in the Return of The King

Jesus shifts his audience and speaks to his disciples. They have yet to experience what we have... they don’t know where the story is going.

Days are coming when you will desire to be with Jesus again but you will not see it. There will be people saying “look there, look here” as if Jesus has returned but don’t follow them.

The Son of Man’s day, his return, will be clear.

[Why is “Son of Man” significant? We don’t recognize it. But the crowd would have.]

**Daniel 7:13–14** “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. [14] And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (ESV)

Jesus is claiming this prophetic promise for himself. He is the Son of Man. And when he returns, when his kingdom comes in full, you will know it.

Jesus will not return in secret. His coming will be as obvious and as pervasive as lightning that fills up the entire skyline, which means that his coming will be an unmistakable and public event.

But first... **Luke 17:25** “But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” (ESV)

Jesus must go to the cross. To give himself in our place. Take on all condemnation and answer it with his blood. Fully and finally.

“Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, has won for us the riches of his glory. We have perfect acceptance with God in Christ. And even more, there is nothing that we will possess in glory that we do not now have in Christ.”

Eternal life. Righteousness. Purity. Identity as sons and daughters, citizens of his kingdom. Salvation and transformation.

And for those that call him King, in the waiting, we can't lose sight of him.

Then he gives the image of the Day of the Lord, of his return.

**Luke 17:34–37** “I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. [35] There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.” [37] And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” (ESV)

From that of timing, the question shifts to location. “Where Lord?” Where it will be visible, as you see the vultures circling.

We see this ‘taking,’ and we wonder whether it is positive or negative. Rapture or judgment. Other Gospel accounts give more of this picture.

I tend to see this, in the context, taken as judgment - for those that have rejected the King.

But more importantly, it's about what we live for as we wait for his return. Holding things loosely for his glory...

As in the days of Noah... going about life without regard for the Lord.

As in the days of Lot... buying, selling, planting, and building. As if those things were our hope.

**Luke 17:30–31** “so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. [31] On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.” (ESV)

It will be a surrender of all that. We should not look back (remember Lot’s wife). The warning is that if we cherish the things of this world more than the King at his return we will miss out.

**Luke 17:33** “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.” (ESV)

Life in the kingdom waiting for the King... willing to lose what we will lay behind, holding it all loosely as tools for eternal hope rather than hope itself. That we could see the King when he comes.

“The question regards what humans seek and desire; if they desire to preserve life in this world, then, like Lot’s wife, life will be lost in the eschaton. But those who lose their life for Jesus’ sake, who long for his return, who love Jesus as their greatest treasure, will find their lives (cf. Matt. 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25) and will be delivered as Noah and Lot were.” TS

Jesus reminds us that when we live by faith alone and find our joy and happiness in him, we will gain our lives because of our joy in Christ. We never ultimately lose anything. We gain everything.

**Colossians 3:1–4** “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (ESV)

**Titus 2:11–14** “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (ESV)

On that day all the sad will come untrue. Eternity with our King will break forth. Glorious beyond what we can imagine. As things were meant to be. Forever.

Oh the ache for that day... and how long we have been waiting.

Jesus doesn't leave us hanging alone through the waiting.

**Luke 18:1** “And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” (ESV)

### We the Kingdom Persist

United with him by faith we are the kingdom and we anticipate his return. But we don't wait in silence.

We always pray so we won't lose heart.

Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow. Widows are among the least in first-century culture. Routinely taken advantage of by ruthless men. And she goes before an unrighteous judge who doesn't give a rip about God or man. Yet she persists in asking for justice against her adversary.

For a while he refused, but afterward, he gives her justice so he wouldn't have a black eye from her persistence!

God is not an unrighteous judge - but even if that character relents, how much more will the God of love give justice to the elect? To his people. We don't have to frantically assault his door or nag him for a response, but we can trust that because of who God is, he will hear us and answer us.



**Psalm 121:1-8** “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? [2] My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. [3] He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. [4] Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. [5] The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. [6] The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. [7] The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. [8] The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.” (ESV)

Because Jesus has come, because he has given himself for us, because of his resurrection, it’s all true. He has us. He is for us. We can cry out to him.

Prayer is fundamentally not a duty but a confession that strength comes from the Lord, that disciples cannot make it on their own, that we need grace every day.

And as we wait, we persist in asking for justice because we have nowhere else to go, no one else who can save.

“We need to be told this because our frailty and brokenness make us lose heart and cease to believe this about our God (v. 1). Our perspective is limited and our vision is clouded (1 Cor. 13:12). Scripture continually reminds us that God is truly for us in Jesus (see Rom. 8:31–33). We need this constant reminder of God’s kind heart and great power toward us as we fight against our inherent unbelief. We now belong to him. He is our advocate. He delights to care for us and to defend us.”

And it feels far off. Even so it is soon.

**2 Peter 3:8–10** “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.” (ESV)

“God is not reluctant to give, as the judge was. He longs to give to his children. Still, the parable clearly teaches that believers are to “cry” out to the Lord “day and night” for justice. Believers are to continue to voice their desire for justice, for the coming of the kingdom—not because God is hesitant to grant our requests but precisely because he promises to answer our prayers.” TS

We can still be discouraged by God’s seeming silence as we wait. Even so, we need to learn that in the silence our loving God is answering, whether we see his working or not, for he delights to answer his children’s prayers.

In that faith we live.

**Luke 18:8** “I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (ESV)

Yes! Because we’ve experienced his grace, the gift of faith, and the empowerment of his Holy Spirit to live, to cry out for justice, to stay awake waiting for that day.

Our King has come, he has made you his treasure, to care for you and keep you, and he is coming again to set everything right. To end sin and death, to heal the nations.

**The King is the Hope of the Kingdom.**

***Believe in Him*** - That Jesus is Savior and King. That he lives in your place, obedient to the Father, gave his life for you, so that now you can live free from condemnation.

***Live in Him*** - Be made new and give your life away.

**2 Corinthians 5:17–21** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21]

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (ESV)

David Cassidy “The great commission, far from being a call to take power, is a call to renounce self-interest for the sake of others, for the stranger and alien, for the 'outsider', to break free from the defining boundaries of this age for the sake of the Kingdom not of this world. The ethnos, the nations, await those who will bring them the good news of God's saving mercy given in Jesus for all peoples in all places and times. Let's seek first Christ's kingdom, not ours, and remember that here we do not have a lasting city, we seek the one to come.”

***Look to Him*** - Pray boldly and don't lose heart. Be reminded of our King in community; keep going, together, and lift your eyes as you wait. Be persistent. The King is the Hope of the Kingdom.

We have a King - a good King, rejoice, he is coming again, and we can't imagine the splendor of his coronation. When he wipes every tear from our eyes and justice is fully and finally done.

Take heart, he is for you. Now live!