

Week 7: Work in the Kingdom

Objective: Identify the primary purpose of Citizens in the Kingdom on Earth and understand how each person can uniquely contribute to the purpose.

Focal Passage: Matthew 28:19-20

1. What is the purpose of this life? This is a question that has been central to many a thinker.
 - a. What's the point of it all? This nagging question highlights a deep-felt need at the center of our existence. We long for a purpose or reason for being that is bigger than ourselves. Part of being made in the creator's image means we long for more than mere survival.
 - b. We have in our American citizenship, certain responsibilities that bring about purpose. Can you think of any? (voting, serving in the military, serving in the community, following the laws)
 - c. One of the greatest truths of Kingdom citizenship is the call to purpose. I would suggest that it is a greater purpose than any nationality can provide.
2. We can be tempted at times to think that citizenship is only something that we receive and hold onto. It is just something that is for us and this is the end game that God had in mind.
 - a. However, this is not a teaching of the scriptures. Going all the way back to creation in Genesis God gives man work to do. Think about that in the perfect garden with perfect life, perfect relationships, and food everywhere God still says man needs a job. (Genesis 2:15) We are wired to need work to find our purpose and fulfillment.
 - b. Examine a few verses 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 15:57-58; Ephesians 2:10
 - c. What I hope is becoming inescapably clear is that purpose and fulfillment are found in work or doing things. That's why retirement can be difficult for some because for years their job was it and they are left to navigate a new purpose. The good news for us as citizens God gives us greater work to do than any job and, in that work, we can find true and lasting purpose and fulfillment.
3. The question is what is that work, what does it look like, and how do we do it? Well, remember that nothing in life is that simple and the reality is that it seems that there are 2 answers to this question or perhaps 1 answer on 2 different levels.
 - a. Read Matthew 28:19-20 If you have been around church long enough you are familiar with this call. In church of Christ circles, we love the part about baptizing but this command from Jesus is filled with Macro purpose or what we may call the 30000 feet view of what God wants His citizens to do.

- i. You might be tempted to quickly say just evangelism, but this is much bigger than that. Jesus doesn't want just converts he is seeking followers, disciples, or as I heard it recently apprentices.
 - ii. See conversion in step 1. There is an active operation behind that. Make disciples and then teach them. Walk together, grow together. What's cool is Jesus is telling His followers to go make followers of their own and teach them the same way.
 - iii. The striking thing about this to me is one that yes we should be reaching the loss don't make it seem like I am underplaying that at all but the teaching of the disciples is ongoing whether we have been walking on this journey for a couple of months or 40 years. Paul puts it differently in Ephesians 4:11-16. So our work is to make disciples, as well as, support and teach each other as we walk our journey of sanctification.
- b. Okay cool you may be saying to yourself but what does that look like on the street level, where I live? What does my work look like on the day today to bring this beautiful picture about? Truth be told I do not know, but don't get discouraged because here is where it gets cool.
 - i. You are unique. You are wired differently from others, raised differently, around different environments and situations. What this means is that God has from before you were born now formed you for the work He has prepared for you. I don't know about you but I think this is so cool. I remember reading a couple of testimonies of hardship and struggle early on and how they didn't know then but God was getting them ready for where they are now. They wrote God doesn't let anything you have been through go to waste. Take heart because God has got things uniquely for you to do and because of how He made you and what you have been through you are the right person for the job.
 - ii. Part of discovering what that is part of the journey with Him. It is a beautiful mystery for you to discover with Him. Think about it like a scavenger hunt. Often we just want the result but in a scavenger hunt, the fun is in the quest. It's in figuring out the clues to the next one. At each clue, you learn something new. Our journey with God is much the same way. I believe God delights in this journey together as we discover new things about Him and ourselves and our unique work while we are here. It's a beautiful mystery of a relationship with the creator.
 - iii. Oh okay great but practically how do we engage in this with God? We know that we have different gifts we get all that but how do I walk into this work that leads to purpose? There is no secret here, no shortcuts or passwords. The nuts and bolts way is to get out of the boat of safety and go for it, get involved, start doing, and quit waiting for someone to tell

you because it's a mystery I think by design. Here are some action thoughts for the week and I dare you to meet God in the mystery of life.

- c. Things to think and do this week.
 - i. Evaluate who you are, and honestly what are your skills, talents, and gifts? If you don't know start trying them out, and throw the comfort zone out the window. Find things that match up to who God has made you.
 - ii. Ask what moves you. What stirs your spirit to compassion like Jesus? Maybe it is marriage reconciliation, maybe it is addictions, maybe it is children. Does any of your life experience skills, or talents lend to these areas? If so get connected and go.
 - iii. Evaluate yourself, for some of us we are already moving and working as citizens, and let's take time and be grateful for the purpose and fulfillment that surpasses all others and the opportunity to work in His Kingdom.