

Kingdom Come

Epic

There are two ways of looking at life: one worldview is that life has no intrinsic meaning and there is no real destination (the atheist worldview). The other is that life has a purpose and a destination (the Judeo-Christian worldview). The way we approach life and suffering...and even joy and love...will be greatly influenced by whether or not we believe that The Story of our life means something. If life in the Kingdom of God is a story that means something, what kind of story is it? What does it mean? Living in the Kingdom of God is the chance to be a part of an epic story. The kind of story filled with meaning even when we don't necessarily know why "this" or "that" is happening. The epic of life in the Kingdom carries with it incredible responsibility as well. Jesus reveals that our lives will be judged based on how we take part in this story; whether we serve others or ignore them...whether we miss our scene or play our part.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a favorite "genre" of story? Drama? Action adventure? Suspense? Romance? Sci-Fi? What is it about this kind of story that "grabs" you?
2. Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl once wrote, "Those who have a 'why' to live can bear almost any 'how'." Human beings seem "hardwired" for meaning. We are the only creature that we know of that asks "why?" Have you ever considered that? Why (pardon the pun) do you think that is?
3. Does your life make sense? Put another way, do you find it to be a difficult or an easy thing to remember that you are not an accident? While accidents do happen (things that God does not directly will, but allows to happen because He created a world outside of Himself), you have been created "on purpose". Share your thoughts on that. Feel free to be honest(!).
4. In the Bible, God's Kingdom is rarely drawn in "clean, straight lines". Almost every story in the Bible contains people making bad decisions, getting hurt, sinning, and even dying. And yet God's will is able to come out of all of this bad stuff. Can God's will be done in the story of your life even if there is bad? Discuss.
5. Have you ever felt like you "missed your scene" in God's story? Was there a time when, after the fact, you realized that you should have acted? How did you know? What might you be able to do next time so you are ready?
6. Jesus clearly tells us "That which you did for the least of these you did for me". Do you know of anyone in your life whom you are called to serve as Christ? How can you do this?

God in Real Life

- I. Many people who take God (and His Story) seriously are afraid of “missing their scene” (AKA “missing out on God’s plan for their life”). And yet, there are practical steps a person can take to guarantee (yes, *guarantee*) that they won’t miss out. First, make sure you are in a state of grace. Make an examination of conscience and, if you are aware of mortal sin, get to Confession. Second, do your daily duties. These are the tasks that we have to do according to our state in life and the commitments we have made. Third, take time every day to pray. This prayer should have at least *some* time of meditation and “active listening” to God’s voice (in case He has something He needs you to hear. If you do these things, you are opening yourself up to God’s voice and His Spirit in a powerful way.

Be Transformed

The entire Bible is a collection of stories (among other things). The following stories had a meaning far beyond what those in the story knew:

- A. Read the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. At first glance, it seems like an impossible situation and a meaningless test for Abraham. Then consider the story in light of John 19:17 and Hebrews 11:17-19 (special emphasis on verse 19).
- B. In Second Samuel 6:9, the Ark of the Covenant (where the Presence of God would abide) was brought before David. He exclaims and leaps for joy as the Ark is brought into Jerusalem. Now read this story in light of Luke 1:39-44.
- C. The story of the prophet Jonah might strike us as being kind of a strange children’s tale. But when read in light of Matthew 12:40 and 1 Corinthians 15:4, it seems that God was writing something epic from the beginning.
- D. The Bible contains many stories about people who were faithful in small ways. Ananias may not have been called to *be* Paul, but he allowed God to work through him so that Paul could be Paul (Acts 9:17). Barnabas was Paul’s traveling companion and fellow apostle, but he was most appreciated for his gift of encouragement and friendship (Acts 4:36 and Acts 9:27-31). (Mary (Martha and Lazarus’ sister) was praised for simply choosing to sit at Jesus’ feet and *be with Him* (Luke 10:38-42).)

To the Heart

“You were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you once lived following the age of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the disobedient.

All of us once lived among them in the desires of our flesh, following the wishes of the flesh and the impulses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.
(Ephesians 2:1-10)