

## Title: “It’s a verb”

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Matthew 21:43-46

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**Lesson:** *The Kingdom of God is God’s work through Jesus. It is what is done in us, and to us. It is a freedom that we can only experience through Christ. We are invited to part of His kingdom and to serve others to His glory.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This morning I would like to start at the end of the gospel passage. Starting in verse 43:

<sup>43</sup> “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”<sup>u</sup>

<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup> They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from the Jewish leaders and their anger was a reflection of what they thought he meant. In their minds they knew what the Kingdom of God was and there was no way this guy who claimed to be God would take it from them. They were the leaders of the Kingdom of Israel - a nation who had been chosen by God himself, led out of slavery and into a promised land. They were a kingdom with a history that included David, the greatest king of all time. Their kingdom had been great but now sat fractured and under the oppression of Rome. **But** they were still the people of God and he would *never* turn his back to them permanently. He would *always* rescue and return their kingdom to its rightful place of honor and glory. They were waiting for that moment - the moment when God’s kingdom would descend from heaven and align with Israel’s kingdom and together destroy Rome and any other enemy that stood in its way. In their mind, the kingdom of God was mighty and powerful and would fulfill *their* desires. It is no wonder they felt threatened when Jesus said that it would be removed from them. They would kill to protect it. And they *did* kill to protect it. They hung him on a cross because he threatened the very vision that they clung to with such passion.

But they were wrong. They were blind. They were waiting for the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God had already arrived and was staring them in the face! They were seeking a kingdom of *what* instead of a kingdom of *who*.

And so, God took it all away. He revoked it from them and handed it to other people.

But here's the question: What, exactly, did he revoke and who, exactly, did he give it to? More specifically, what, exactly is the kingdom of God and who now receives it? In the mind of the Pharisees the kingdom of God is a noun, it is something to obtain. But Jesus turned that upside down in his proclamation that the Kingdom of God is a verb - an action. And it's an action that is done not for the glory of man but for the glory of God.

The kingdom of God is the recognition that sin entered this world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, but that we have kept sin alive and healthy and strong. It's the inner conflict that we go through each day as we don't do what we should but do what we shouldn't. It's the crushing feeling of our guilt that we carry with us in our lives. And it's the realization that the physical suffering of Jesus, and the spiritual torment that he experienced on the cross was done because of us, because of our rejection of him, and not because of anything he deserved.

That is our contribution to the kingdom of God. That is *our* part of the verb.

But the kingdom of God is also restoration. It is the entrance of Jesus on this earth as fully man and fully God. It is the life that he lived in perfect obedience to the father. It is the journey that he made to the cross to reconcile us to God. It is about the salvation that he earned and handed to us.

This is his contribution to the kingdom of God. This is *his* part of the verb.

You see, the kingdom of God is not a place, it is God's work through Jesus - *that* is the kingdom. It is the forgiveness of sins that we receive when we eat and drink of the body and blood of our King. It is the renewal and strengthening of faith that we experience when we hear the word of God preached. It's a freedom - a freedom from death and damnation that we can only experience because the kingdom of God is a verb.

But the verb doesn't stop there. It's also a call to respond to this new life. Jesus invites us to be *his part* with him. God reigns through Christ and he calls us to reign with him because we live in him and he lives in us. But make no mistake, this reign doesn't look like anything the world would describe. The kingdom is a verb of service and humility. It is a verb of putting God before all and others before self. It is being kind to the poor. Giving rather than receiving. Looking to the interests of others, let your light shine. But in all times doing it for God's glory instead of your own.

So, be God's verb in this church. Find a ministry in which to serve; there are many, many opportunities and we can help you match your skills and gifts to one of them.

Be God's verb in your home and neighborhood. Bring love, selflessness, and humility to everyone you meet.

In all things, in all ways, just be God's verb. Be his kingdom.

Please pray with me.

Lord, help us be the kingdom of God to the world around us. Make us your servants and send us to serve - in our homes, in our church, and in our community. Keep us selfless in our serving so that in all ways our actions point to your glory and not ours.