CULTURE AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD
Mark 1:14-15

Before we move into our message let’s refresh our memory from last week with our definition of culture and then we will talk about the kingdom.

Culture: 1.) The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; a particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc. 
2.) A refined understanding or appreciation of these. 
3.)The characteristic features of everyday existence shared by people in a place or time (i.e. popular culture or southern culture)

According to Jesus, it’s impossible for Christians to properly understand the practical nature of the Christian life without properly understanding the nature of their citizenship in God’s kingdom. In fact, one of the primary biblical descriptions of Christians is that they’re citizens in God’s kingdom.

So let’s now let’s answer this question: what is the kingdom of God? Sinclair Ferguson defines the kingdom as “the rule and reign of God, the expression of his gracious sovereign will. To belong to the kingdom of God is to belong to the people among whom the reign of God has already begun.” George Eldon Ladd defines the kingdom as “the realm in which God’s reign may be experienced.” Simply put, the kingdom of God is a kingdom where God’s appointed King—Jesus—is presently reigning in and through the lives of His people, accomplishing His will “on earth as it is in heaven.”

The presence and purpose of God’s kingdom undergird the teaching of the whole Bible, exhibiting God’s plan—past, present, and future—for this world.¹

The best kept secret in the Christian life is that everything we do matters to God. Many believers have the idea that pastors and missionaries are doing “kingdom work,” but the rest of us are not. They are mistaken.

I believe every dimension of human life and culture—that is our work and leisure, our art and science, even our politics, economics, sports and education—are ripe with potential to honor God the King. Every thing we put our hand to do, everything we involve our selves in through the course of daily living has this potential; to advance the kingdom and bring glory to its King, Jesus.

In order to further expand our understanding of this, I would like to present four biblical truths:

¹ What is the Kingdom of God; Tullian Tchividjian, www.gospelproject.com
Biblical Truth #1. We live in the midst of a great struggle between the kingdom Christ and Satan, the kingdom of light and of darkness, and between truth and error.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

At the risk of being redundant, we all know there is and has been a war going on throughout the ages, but there has been a winner!

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

Jesus Christ has won, yet the struggle in this realm continues as the fallen culture of this earth wars against its ultimate defeat.

This great struggle has manifested itself in many different ways throughout human history. In the current societal culture of the United States, one way this struggle manifests itself is the increasing rejection of Christian morality. Because of our beliefs on matters of life and death, and human sexuality, Christians are often viewed as morally inferior and even morally reprehensible.

We are living in the hour prophesied thousands of years ago by Isaiah when he pronounced woe upon men who would call evil good and good evil. (Isa. 5:20)

There are many examples; if we had the time we could demonstrate ways in which the arts and sciences, politics and economics, sports, education, and even concepts of family and homemaking have been corrupted and misdirected by the kingdom of darkness. (We were all homeschooled, just in the wrong home. ~ Dan Mohler)

The very things created by God for His glory and our enjoyment, have suffered corruption as a result of the fall of Adam. Since that time, Paul tells in Romans 8:19 all of creation groans and travails, eagerly awaiting the sons of God to regain their dominion through the finished work of the cross and bring the influence of the kingdom back into this earth.

Our second Biblical Truth:

#2. God created all the realms of culture and has good intentions for each one of them.

Ephesians 3:8–9 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

9 and
to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

**Revelation 4:11** “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

If we go back to the creation account Genesis we see the methodic process of the creator as He formed the world and everything in it, then, He created man to have dominion over it. But also notice just how different the creation of mankind was from every other living thing:

**Genesis 1:26-27** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

“Image” (šēlem) is used figuratively, for God does not have a human form. Being in God’s image means humans share (imperfectly and finitely), in God’s nature, His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.²

We were made in His image and likeness and we share all the attributes of His nature, intellectual, spiritual, volitional, and His ethical capacity.³ These are what set us apart from all the other creatures on earth, but there is more, man has the ability to create.

It has been rumored throughout the evolutionist camp that only a slight DNA difference exists between the chimpanzee and humans. In actuality there are only slight similarities and the differences are vast.

Allow me to quote Dr. Jeffery Tompkins Ph.D., a faculty member in the Department of Genetics and Biochemistry at Clemson:

“While it is true that there are sections of the chimp genome that are very similar to humans, this is not the complete picture. DNA sequence comparisons that include all the relevant data plainly show that the human and chimp genomes are not nearly identical at all. Instead, they are as distinct as one might expect based on the obvious differences in the resulting anatomies and behavioral capacities.

Hypothetical evolutionary processes cannot explain the extremely broad differences between chimp and human DNA when the whole genomes are considered. The similar regions between genomes are easily interpreted as the basic reuse of

effective code—a concept very familiar to software engineers. Such evidence points to a Master Designer who has orchestrated all the wondrous diversity of life on Earth after its own kind.”

I’m not sure what you might be reading, but I’ve never read any literature or heard any musical masterpieces written and composed by chimpanzees, have you? Have you seen any cities they’ve built rising from the jungle or perhaps their latest scientific discovery, or their greatest chess champion… you get the picture, right?

God has created and ordered this world. God created man in His image, giving humans the ability to do what only He can do, create. The purpose was to bring glory, honor and joy to Him through our artistic creation, scientific research and discovery and the overall betterment of the human condition.

God who made us capable of advancing ourselves and improving our lives through politics, economics, and education. It was our Father who shaped us with the spiritual, intellectual and emotional capacity to enjoy all the pleasures of this created world. And, it is God’s desire is for us to undertake all of these activities in a way that glorifies him.

1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

And yet, these realms have been hijacked by the kingdom of darkness. They have been corrupted and misdirected toward wrong ends.

Biblical truth #3: God has declared His Son Jesus Christ to be Lord of all and over all of the realms of creation and culture.

Acts 10:36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—

Philippians 2:9–11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Sometimes Christians think and live as if Christ is Lord over their “churchly” lives but not over their “worldy” lives. As if to say, our quiet times and church attendance matter to God but our social, cultural, and political lives do not. That somehow our lives have become compartmentalized and the spiritual is separated from the natural and physical, and some parts belong to God and some parts to us.

But this mistaken view neglects the Bible’s teaching that God has given Christ authority over all the domains and dimensions of creation, of everything in heaven and on earth.

**Matthew 28:18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

**Colossians 1:15–20** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. \(^16\) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. \(^17\) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. \(^18\) And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. \(^19\) For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, \(^20\) and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Jesus Christ is the creator of all things, and He is also the redeemer of all things therefore, it makes perfect sense that He is also Lord over all things. No part of our lives, secular, spiritual, personal or emotional can be sealed off from Christ’s Lordship. Often Christians have attempted to justify an individual’s lack of sanctification and sinful behavior by saying they had accepted Jesus as Savior, but not yet made Him Lord. He is Lord of all or not at all.

Every facet of our being, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional belongs to Christ and was made to honor him. We are not our own for we have been bought with a price… His precious blood.

**Biblical truth #4.** God desires for us to shape our words, our thoughts and deeds; the entirety of our lives towards him.

**1 Corinthians 10:31** Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Obedience to him involves not only speaking about him but showing what He is like in the manner that we live our lives.

**1 John 4:17** … because as He is, so are we in this world.

That means not only in our “churchy, spiritual” activities but in all we do, in every cultural pursuit or “worldly” activity that we involve ourselves in.
There is a principle that somehow been lost through the ages of Christianity. We like to separate the supernatural and spiritual from the natural, but no such separation exists. Everything we do is spiritual and should be done as unto the Lord. In fact, if you only think about Christ and worship Christ when you gather on Sundays, it is doubtful that you belong to Christ. (We become like those we behold. And we are always mindful of those we love!)

So how does our Christianity matter in things like art or politics, education or raising a family and making a home? How can we shape the entirety of our lives toward Him?

The first step is one of learning. Before we can live a life dedicated to His glory we must discover that which honors Him, that which He loves and that which His heart rejoices over and the place to find the revelation of who He is and what He delights in is the Word of God. We cannot live a life that reflects His until we discover how He lived.

To bring the influence of the kingdom into our present culture we must discover what the culture of His Kingdom is. Last week we looked into John 3:16 and found the culture of God’s kingdom is one of love, generosity, sacrifice, faith and life.

The next step is one of living. If we will inject these five things into our everyday lives, our art, our politics and our home life, there will be a profound and powerful transformation that takes place. In every one of these realms we can worship Christ and by our actions and our lifestyle can promote the gospel of Christ.

Conclusion
The best kept secret in the Christian life is that everything we do matters to God!

We don’t have to be pastors, missionaries or Sunday school teachers in order to please the King and do work on his behalf. We can be farmers, teachers, businessmen, homemakers, or artists who shape our lives and the culture of our day toward Christ, by bringing all those realms under his Lordship.²

We have been called to this city to make a difference, to make an impact by bringing the influence of our Lord, Jesus Christ into every home, every classroom at every level of our society. With the help of the governor, the Holy Spirit we can see heaven touching earth, right here, right now.

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² Adapted from Bruce Ashford’s “The Culture of the Kingdom”