THE CULTURE OF THE KINGDOM
John 14:12-18; John 16:13-15

What a marvelous promise given to us by Jesus! If we simply believe in Jesus, the works that He did, we will be able to do as well. And He goes on to say, “greater works” than these will we be able to do because He has returned to His Father and our God and He has sent the Holy Spirit to us. He will be with us and He will be in us!

This Holy Spirit has come to be our comforter, our helper, our intercessor and advocate. Jesus said He will lead us into all truth only speaking what He hears from Him and the Father.

Last week we discussed the Person and Purpose of the Holy Spirit. By way of a brief review we learned that:

• The Holy Spirit is a real person, not a feeling, a mist or a ghostly apparition. He has a mind, emotions and a will, and He is alive and active in the earth today.
• Jesus’ purpose in sending the Holy Spirit was the restoration of the Kingdom upon this earth, “let thy kingdom come and thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

The office from which he will affect this restoration is that of a governor. Bringing the earth (the colony) back under the rule and reign of the Kingdom and its king, Jesus.

• He will accomplish this by the reintroduction of the culture of the kingdom into the world that was overtaken by the curse as a result of Adam’s fall.
• On the cross Jesus destroyed the power of the ruler of this world, and now the Holy Spirit was given to teach us how to live in the triumph of Christ’s victory and to transform us into the image of the King.

That is what we are saying when we speak of heaven coming to earth. God the Holy Spirit has come to teach us how to speak, behave and live as people of the Kingdom. He is the governor bringing the influence, customs and character of the King into our lives and our world. He has come to instruct us as to what we should value, how to worship and how to manage the resources entrusted to us by the King.

So, what exactly is the culture of the kingdom? What has God, the Holy Spirit come to impart to us who are the sons of God? I have been using the metaphor of a colonial governor but its better to think of Holy Spirit as a divine mentor, a school master and friend, commissioned by our heavenly Father to school us in the language, manners and values of His Kingdom.

I. CULTURE DEFINED

A. So what is culture? Culture may be defined as:

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)
4. The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, behaviors and practices that characterizes an institution or organization

B. In his book Anthropology: The Study of Man, Adam Hoebel defines culture as: an integrated system of learned behavioral patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not a result of biological inheritance.
1. The philosopher Edward S. Casey: "The very word culture meant "place tilled" in Middle English, and the same word goes back to Latin colere, "to inhabit, care for, till, worship." To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place ... intentionally to cultivate it - to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly.①
2. That last definition speaks succinctly to what the Holy Spirit has been given to man to accomplish.
3. He has come as the governor to cultivate our hearts and conform our lives us to the image of Jesus.

C. The culture of the kingdom is the character, values, and behaviors that have their foundation in the person of God, reflecting the nature and attributes of Jesus Christ the King.
   1. In Jesus the fullness of the Godhead dwells and He Himself, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”
   2. Therefore, everything the Father is we find in the person of Jesus Christ.
   3. The Holy Spirit’s job is to teach and share with us everything He hears from Jesus about the Father, his rule reign and Kingdom.

John 16:13–15 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

D. It you remember, a governor sent by the ruling kingdom to a new colony to change the culture of the colony from that of the indigenous population into the culture of the king he represented.
   1. That is exactly what the Holy Spirit has be sent to earth to do; to change the culture of fallen man, that has corrupted this world into the culture of heaven.
   2. So what is the first thing the governor would want to change upon his arrival in the new colony?
   3. He would change the language to …

II. THE LANGUAGE OF THE KINGDOM
A. Think back to the illustration of the Caribbean. There are many islands and many different languages and cultures because they were colonized by many different nations.
   1. Myles Monroe said, “All the Caribbean islanders are distant African cousins but they can’t talk to each other any more.”
   2. Why? Because the Spanish, Dutch, French, and English governors had come requiring them to learn the language of their respective kingdoms.

E. Let’s go back for a moment to the Genesis account of the history of mankind. It wasn’t long after the fall of Adam and his expulsion from the garden that things took a turn for the worse.
   1. Murder and violence began to increase and man’s rebellion festered and grew to the point that God commissioned Noah to build an ark and the flood destroyed all who were not inside.

F. In Genesis chapter 11 (approx. 200-250 years after the flood) we find the story of the tower of Babel. The very first verse of this chapter reveals something profound to us.

Genesis 11:1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.
   1. It appears as man multiplied after the flood they stayed in close proximity to one another. With a common language men quickly realized they could accomplish almost anything they set their minds too.

① Intercultural Communication: Globization and Social Justice, Kathryn Sorrels
Genesis 11:2–4 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 3 Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

G. The power that held them together was common language. You might be thinking, “That’s a really good thing! Think of all the good they could accomplish together!” But there was one thing the flood didn’t wash away, the corrupt nature of a fallen man’s heart.

1. Building the tower wasn’t the issue; it was their desire to do it without regard to God and His commands.
2. Pride was their sin, the desire to build a name for themselves independent from God.
3. So to frustrate their efforts, God confused their language and destroyed their ability to communicate one with another.
4. Building anything, much less the kingdom becomes impossible without the ability to communicate one with another.
5. Think about it; divide a people’s language and you destroy the strength of the nation and culture.

H. The Holy Spirit’s first responsibility as governor, was to bring the language of the Kingdom to the colony. To un-confuse our tongues and unite us once again with common language.

1. In the Kingdom there is one Spirit, one faith, one Lord and one language. (It's not English!)

Acts 2:1–4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

I. The Bible commentator Robert Jamieson said, “By one miracle of tongues men were dispersed and gradually fell away from true religion. By another, national barriers were broken down—that all men might be brought back to the family of God.”

1. When the Governor returned to earth on the Day of Pentecost the first evidence of His arrival was a rushing mighty wind, tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples and a new language, the language of the Kingdom.
2. It was the language of the Kingdom coming back to earth.

J. Around the world when believers gather together in worship there is a common language that erupts unifying, and edifying the Body of Christ. Regardless of nationality, race or creed it is the language of the Spirit, speaking directly to God, giving glory, honor and praise to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1. Why else would there be such controversy that surrounds speaking with tongues?
2. This issue of tongues is the source of great disagreement and even hostile division within evangelical Christianity. Which begs the question: “Who do you think is the author of that strife and division?” It certainly isn’t God!

K. Yet consider the possibilities; What if every believer on the face of the earth would join as one in fervent, spirit-empowered worship and intercession? Heaven only knows what kingdom advancement might take place.

1. There are immeasurable benefits to be realized in the personal life of the believer and the
corporate influence of the church through those who pray in the Spirit.
2. Speaking with tongues is a spiritual resource, a benefit intended for and available to every born-
again believer who will ask for and open [their hearts] to it.  
3. In the culture of the Kingdom, language is an important aspect but not the only thing the
governor came to impart.

III. THE CULTURE OF KINGDOM
A. We have compared the coming of the Holy Spirit to a colonial governor whose primary
responsibility was to bring the influence and culture of the kingdom to the newly acquired territory.
   1. The Holy Spirit was purposed with bringing the culture of heaven to earth and so what does
   that look like?

B. I had been working on this and had compiled a long list of things when Wednesday night in our
time of prayer the Holy Spirit spoke a simple verse to me that is a concise summary and the very
essence of what Kingdom’s Culture is and looks like. Obviously this is not all it is but it’s a great
place to start.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in
Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

1. Love: “For God so loved the world…”
   a. The scriptures declare that God is love, it is His nature and from that nature He loves.
   b. One of the hardest things for fallen man to come to accept is that God could love him, even
   while we were dead in our transgressions and sins.

Romans 5:8 (AMP) But God shows and clearly proves His [own] love for us by the fact that while we
were still sinners, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for us.
   c. [And yet] God’s motivation toward people is love. God’s love is not limited to a few or to one
   group of people but His gift is for the whole world.  
   d. The Culture of His Kingdom reflects that which is inherent in His character and nature, love.

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who
abides in love abides in God, and God in him.
   e. This is the first and most powerful thing that separates those who have been born into this
   kingdom and are now under the rule of its governor, from every other religious culture on earth.
   f. It is by our love that we are identified with our King, not as subjects, nor citizens, but as sons.

John 13:34–35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that
you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one
another.”

2. Generosity: “…He gave His only begotten Son,”
   a. The heart of the gospel itself is one of generosity manifest in the Father’s willingness to give His
   only Son for the redemption of a rebellious world.
   b. The Father gave His Son and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to release the blessing, power and
   provision of the Kingdom here on earth.

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3 Jack Hayford, The Beauty of Spiritual Language
Proverbs 11:25 The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.

c. The culture of the kingdom is one of generosity and giving; not with the intent to receive but because it is the nature of our King.

d. Giving with a generous heart, in obedience to the command of the Word and directed by the Holy Spirit releases the abundance of God’s kingdom into our lives.

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

3. Sacrifice: “He gave His only begotten Son”
   a. This is the complement to generosity, for is only when our giving becomes sacrificial that we truly understand the culture of the Kingdom.
   b. Our Father didn’t have to give His Son, but He chose to. The widow didn’t have to give all that she had and Mary didn’t have to break the alabaster jar pouring out all of the oil, but she chose too.
   c. The principle of the Kingdom here has nothing to do with our money or possessions, and everything to do with our hearts.
   d. We are called to present ourselves, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God which is our reasonable service. (Romans 12:1-2)
   e. When we come to accept everything we have was given to us by God and in reality we own nothing, it is all His, it frees us to begin to give sacrificially and live generously, preferring other over ourselves.

4. Faith: “that whoever believes in Him should not perish”
   a. Faith, believing, trusting, relying on and clinging to God alone, above and beyond all others things is the foundation of the Kingdom culture.
   b. It is by faith Paul tells us in Romans 1:17 that “The righteousness of God is revealed” and by faith in Romans 5:1–2 that we have “…been justified,” and “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
   c. In Ephesians 2:8–9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.
   d. It is a faith that believes in Christ, trusts in the infallibility of His character and Word and rests wholly upon Him. A faith that determines to believe what God has promised regardless of what outward circumstances look like.
   e. Kingdom culture simply says, “If God said it, I believe it and that settles it!”

5. Life “but have everlasting life.”

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live
   a. Through His atoning death the King of Kings has triumphed over all the kingdoms of this world.
   b. Life has conquered death, light has dispelled darkness and His peace overwhelms the anguish, strife and despair of this world, and the really good news is, it never ends!
c. His goodness and provision for us reaches from our present reality into an eternal future of grace, peace and provision.
d. To live in abundance speaks of so much more than material wealth and prosperity but it does include that.
e. The life of the Kingdom’s culture is a life that is fulfilled and provisioned to the place of overflow.
f. Abundance for the purpose of sharing not owning and hoarding. Abundance for the sake of advancing the life and influence of the Kingdom.
g. If we truly get this then it begs the question: what are we afraid of? What are we worried about?
h. If we “believe” then even when we die, we live! Paul said, “To die is Christ to live is gain.”
i. God so loved us that the gift of His Son has purchased for us an eternal inheritance that fades not away so why don't we share it?

Conclusion

It would be impossible to cover every aspect of the Kingdom’s culture in one message (which might lead to a series) but we have made a start. I want to close with a scripture from Romans that will serve to encapsulate some key characteristics of the kingdom not unlike John 3:16 did for us. Yet I want to be sure not to take it out of context.

Paul is dealing with those who were judging one another with regard to their eating and drinking habits but then he raises the conversation to a higher level. His readers were all the loyal subjects of Christ in the kingdom of God. In that sphere the real concerns are not externals such as diet but the spiritual realities motivating life and shaping conduct.  

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

In this context “righteousness” is … the right conduct to which the believer is called in obedience to the will of God. Peace is the peace of God that passes all understanding when our hearts and minds remain focused upon Him. And joy is the overflow of our right relationship with God and the peace that comes from knowing we are accepted in Him through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit has come to produce Kingdom culture in us that is not measured by the material and physical world although it directly influences the world in which we live.

The Holy Spirit is at work within, orienting and aligning every aspect of our lives to the image of our King Jesus. Changing us from glory to glory and faith to faith until where we are looks just like where He is.

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6 Ibid