



Citizens & Strangers (Part 4) – The Entry and Death of Jesus

Matt Chandler – March 25, 2018

[Video]

Female: The kingdom of God is as multifaceted and mysterious as our Creator, a kingdom we only see now through a glass darkly. Though we can't picture it fully, God's kingdom is the story told in Scripture, from the garden to the city, and in the middle of the story God chose to reveal his kingdom in a new way.

The gospel is not only Jesus coming and dying to save us from our sins; it's also the story of God establishing his dwelling, dominion, and dynasty in the world. We live as both citizens and strangers, prisoners of hope in this shadow kingdom, all while knowing it's not our true home, that something better is coming, that God's perfect kingdom *is* coming.

[End of video]

Good morning! If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Hebrews, chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. I want you to grab that. I want us to look at this text we'll be in together.

Today is Palm Sunday. Historically, the church has celebrated Palm Sunday as a day of celebration coming off of the Lenten season, which introduces us into Holy Week, the last week of Jesus' life (depending on how you operate with the liturgical calendar) ending in a Maundy Thursday service or a Good Friday service on into the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We're going to read that passage about the triumphal entry here in a moment, but I want to lay my cards on the table so you know exactly where I'm going, because I think the thing I want most to click in your soul today is a bit ethereal. It's an idea that maybe you've thought of, maybe you haven't thought of, but I think it's really, really important. All right?

If in the middle of the sermon you're like, "This feels a little bit nebulous," I'll try to get us to a place of application at the end. If at any point today you think, "This sounds like heresy," I want you to just give me a second to finish building it out. Then you can decide, all right? With that said, here's what I want to do.

First, I want to make sure you're living your life right-side up. Then the second thing is I want to help us see the cross of Jesus Christ as the enthronement of Jesus Christ. Here's why I think that could be challenging. I think most of us think of the resurrection or the ascension of Jesus as his enthronement, and yet I think the picture the Bible is painting is that Christ is enthroned on the cross.

Let me dive in, and let me get some help up front from my boy, John Calvin. By the way, when I read this quote (no lie), I sprinted down this corridor right here, punched that wall, and then ran back to my office and finished studying. "For although in the cross, there is nothing but curse..." Let me stop there. Look at me. We'll get back to John here in a second. The Romans had perfected the most torturous, shameful, despicable way to kill a human being imaginable.

You're stripped naked. You're nailed to wood so you're in a position that the only way to breathe would be to push up on a nail that's been driven through your feet, gasp, and then collapse back down with the weight of your body on those nails, which is why if you had not died by a specific hour, they'd come by with a club and smash your shins so you couldn't prop yourself up on that nail anymore, all the while, by the way, you're stripped naked and being mocked and belittled by the most despicable human beings imaginable.

Have you ever thought who comes out to a public execution? Have you ever thought about that? Let me tell you: no one with the gift of compassion. Let me tell you who is *not* in the crowd: high mercy folk. Have you ever been around high mercy folk? Let me tell you who is *not* watching someone be crucified: anyone with compassion and mercy. Who comes out to a public execution? Really broken, twisted people.

What we see in Jesus and what we know historically as the Romans used the cross as a tool of intimidation to quell any thought of rebellion... I mean, there are all sorts of kind of historical places where the Romans would crucify sometimes up to 10,000 people outside of cities along the roadway leading into the city. Their purpose in that was, say...

If you watched *Red Dawn*, you know as the invasion came, there was a group who kind of ran into the hills and would try to kind of sneak back in for supplies. What they would have to sneak through was the agonizing moans of thousands of men, women, and children brutally having their life sapped from them.

This is what Calvin means when he says, "For although in the cross there is nothing but curse..." There is nothing you can look to in the cross and go, ""Well, that's redeemable about it." He is saying if there was ever a picture of depravity, brokenness, and evil, it's the cross. Nothing but curse in the cross!

"...it was, nevertheless, swallowed up by the power of God in such a way, that it has put on, as it were, a new nature. For there is no tribunal so magnificent, no throne so stately, no show of triumph so distinguished, no chariot so elevated, as is the gibbet..." Which is a post. "...on which Christ has subdued death and the devil, the prince of death; nay..." Which is a word I want to try to bring back. "...more, has utterly trodden them under his feet."

I love this. Calvin is getting worked up about how big of a deal the cross is. He says he has subdued sin and death, the prince of death; nay, he has utterly trodden them under his feet. In...what? In the cross. This is what I want to try to get across to you today: the cross is the enthronement of Jesus Christ.

Now let's look at this together, and then I'll tell you in the end why this really, really, really, really, really, really, really matters. Matthew 21, starting in verse 1. You stay there in Hebrews 2 if you will. We'll get there.

"Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord needs them," and he will send them at once.'

This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."' The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'"

Now if you've been here through this series on the kingdom, JT did an excellent job of what's going on in this phrase "the Son of David." Jesus, the son of Abraham, the son of David. This is tied to the promise that God is going to fix the brokenness that occurred when the kingdom fell. The people in the crowd, seeing Jesus come in on this colt, are taking off their outer cloaks. They're laying them on the road. They're cutting branches off trees.

Hosanna means, "Save us!" As Jesus is coming into Jerusalem, the crowd, in a frenzy, says, "Save us, Son of David!" Their hope is in the enthronement of Jesus the Christ. **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, 'Who is this?' and the crowds said, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.'"**

What you see in this picture looks like a coronation. We have a man coming in on the back of a steed (or in our case, a colt and donkey). People are waving palm branches. They're like, "This is the leader who can save us. This is where our hope has been placed. He is here! He is coming to the throne." Surely this jives with the rhythm of Jesus' life and what has been taught about Jesus before his life and throughout his life.

In Matthew 2:2, Jesus is declared king at his birth. He is anointed as king and empowered by the Holy Spirit for his kingly mission in Matthew 3. He is recognized as king in his ministry by his disciples in John 1. His enemies call him king in John 19. He himself calls himself king in Luke 23. If you were here last week, Jesus' teachings on the parables are about the kingdom of God of which he has brought at hand.

The miracles of Jesus are about the power of the kingdom breaking through the fallenness of this present darkness. What we see here is Jesus' entire ministry being about the announcement of the kingdom of God. Now on Palm Sunday, we have Jesus heading toward the temple. Do you know where kings are enthroned? In the temple.

You have Jesus coming through town. The crowd is shouting, "Hosanna, Son of David! Save us, Son of David!" **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"** Headed toward the temple... The hopes of the people of God are stirred. Here we are on Palm Sunday. King Jesus, the son of Abraham, the son of David, looks to be on the cusp of being enthroned.

Again, if you were here last week, what does this mean? Once Christ is enthroned, then that rock Daniel saw that turns into a mountain that fills the whole earth, here we go! I mean, everyone is really kind of losing their mind about this right now. It's why they're taking off their outer garment and throwing it on the ground. They're screaming out, "Hosanna!" because Christ is going to be enthroned. The kingdom of God will fill the earth, and evil ones will be turned to chaff and be blown away at the coming of the kingdom.

Then the unthinkable happens, even though it shouldn't have been unthinkable. It's everywhere, but you and I have the privilege of looking backward. Jesus is arrested. He endures multiple trials. Many of those trials were actually illegal according to the law of the day. He was beaten severely (*brutally* beaten) and then murdered.

How are we to make sense of this long line of King Jesus ending up nailed to a Roman cross, being belittled and mocked, scorned by the very people Christ has come to rule? What kind of king goes to a cross? No, no, no, no. Kings *send* people to crosses. They don't *go* to crosses. Right? What's happening here? Again, you're asking good questions. Let's look at this. Hebrews, chapter 2. You're going to have to give me some time to get us where we're going. Hebrews, chapter 2. I'm going to pick it up in verse 5.

"For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, 'What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.'"

By the way, the writer of Hebrews just quoted Psalm 8. **"Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus..."** This is huge! **"...crowned with glory and honor because..."** It's not *in*, not *of*.

"...because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Praise God! "For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering."

Now let's start with this. The writer of Hebrews is saying who gets to rule the world to come. So let's chat a little bit about the world to come. When the text is talking about the world to come, they're talking about the world of our final salvation. Here's what we know about it. We know there's no death. We know there's no disease.

The Bible tells us the deserts will bloom with roses. The mountaintops will produce sweet wine. The wolf and the lamb will lie down together. The lion will chew hay like the oxen. All sad things will become untrue. There will be no more remembrance of the former things, the broken things, the heart-wrenching things. There will be no remembrance of those.

All things will be made new. This is the world to come. I've quoted often (I'll do it again just because it's my favorite quote) Augustine (a bishop in northern Africa) looking out at the Mediterranean Sea, and he is watching the sunset. He says, "If these are the beauties afforded to sinful men, what does God have in store for those who love him?"

This is the world to come. No death. No mourning. No need for tears. I don't know if you've ever had a *good cry*. You don't need good cries in glory. This is the world to come, but here's the question: *Who rules it?* Now don't let Sunday school bust out of you, because Sunday school is, "Jesus!" because Jesus does everything. You can just always answer *Jesus*, and you're somewhat right. You can somehow say, "Well, I mean, yeah, but doesn't Jesus empower that?"

That's not where the author of Hebrews goes. As much as our heart goes, "Jesus rules the world to come. Jesus does," that's not what the writer of Hebrews said. The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8. Do you know about who Psalm 8 is? Look right at me. Psalm 8 is about *you*. Psalm 8 is about *me*. Who rules the world to come? Look at me. *We do*.

Put your pitchfork away. Let me do some work. I know some of you are guests, and you're like, "We will not be back here." Let me do some work. This is not the first time this idea is present in Scripture. Here's the apostle Paul writing to the church at Ephesus through his disciple Timothy. **"The saying is trustworthy, for: if we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we**

endure, we will also..." What with him? "**...reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us."**

One of my favorite phrases. "**If we are faithless, he remains...**" What? "**...faithful...**" Do you see it? This isn't the only place. The apostle Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, says this: "**Do you not know that we are to judge angels?**" By what criteria? Here's my theologically informed answer. I have no idea. I have no idea, but here's what I know. Glory is not me on a cloud playing a harp, singing forever. Glory is me in the full face of Jesus Christ ruling and reigning alongside of him forever.

This is the dynasty we've been talking about. This is the ammunition we have about the shallow, vain promises of this present world. You want me to trade that for what? This dirt? It was Johnny Cash who called it his empire of dirt. Actually, that was Trent Reznor covered by Johnny Cash. We don't have time.

This is what's happening here. With this in view (that I'm going to rule and reign alongside Jesus Christ forever), you want me to trade that for...what? What does this world have to offer me in comparison to what I have coming? This is what the apostle Paul means in immense suffering when he says, "Hey, what I have coming for me in the future makes this suffering not worthy to even compare to it."

This is our dynasty. We don't ever talk about this stuff, right? It might prop us up, might have us walk in with swagger. Well, we'll get to that more. We'll get to the solution to that here in a second. Who rules the world to come? We do alongside King Jesus. Now listen. This reigning already has some firstfruits in your life if you're a Christian.

If you're a Christian, even now you're to reign over your sinful passions. The Holy Spirit dwelling inside of you has given you authority over sin in your life. You are not a slave to sin. I'm not saying you don't give yourself over to it, but you do that...look at me...*willingly*. You're not a slave. You will *choose* sin now in a way that you didn't *choose* sin before the Holy Spirit of God dwelt inside of you.

Now that the Spirit is in you, you reign and rule over sin by the power of God, the Word of God, the will of God empowered by the Spirit through the Word. We can say *no* to sin. I'm not saying we *do*; I'm saying we *can*. This is you being trained in reigning. No, no, no. Reigning and ruling alongside Jesus Christ.

I'm saying *no* to that in the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit because of his revealed will in the Word. This is the dynasty we've been talking about, but then I just love the honesty of the Bible. Look what happens right at the end there of verse 8. **"At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."**

Yes and amen! At the present, what I can do is look around and see a lot of heartbreaking loss, a lot of hurt, a lot of pain, a lot of suffering. Man, we see now not that... That's where our hope is. What we see now is the brokenness of the world, the sadness of loss, the weariness of brokenness.

Saturday morning at 8:33 a.m., our brother and friend (longest member of The Village Church), Tiff Cothran, went home to be with the Lord. Let me chat about Tiff just because I think he is someone to emulate. I met Tiff Cothran when he was in his seventies. He died in his eighties. I met him when he was in his seventies. As a 70-year-old man, he had done just about everything you could do at a church. He had worked with the kids' ministry. He built the Martin Building with his hands.

Have you ever been over to our old campus and been in it? In fact, one of the cool things about his funeral (which I believe is going to be Wednesday of this week) is we will have his life celebration right next to a building he and many other men built with their hands so the people of God known as The Village might have a place to worship.

In his seventies, he was visiting prisoners in prison. He was running down to Mexico. How often, John Lowe, do you think Tiff was heading down to Mexico? Like monthly? I mean, it just seemed like he was all jetting down to Mexico to do ministry, to build schools, to be involved in. Here's one of my favorite things about even the story of him going home to the Lord. It happened very quickly. Like he was up talking and being Tiff, and then within 24 hours he made a hard turn and then went home.

He had slipped into a bit of a coma, and then Dorene (his wife of 60-plus years) and his daughter, Tonya, were just talking about, "Do we turn his defibrillator off? Do we turn all these machines off?" There was this, "What do we do here?" Tiff, by the grace of God, just came to. With his last burst of energy, he called the hospice nurse over. He said, "Turn everything off. I don't want Dorene to have to make this decision."

That's the kind of man I want to be. You can keep your emotive, cupid, ridiculous nonsense. You give me *that*. You give me, at my last breath after 60 years of covenantal faithfulness, "I don't want my wife to have to make this call. I'll make it for her. Turn it off. Let me go home."

That on top of what I could literally say are about 40 other things that have happened this week are weighty, difficult things. We have this thing going on where future hope and dynasty... But you can look right now and go, "This is not what we see right now." Then the good news is what we *do* see... Let's look at what we *do* see. Verse 9:

"But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering."

We see in this text that Jesus is crowned *because* of suffering and death. Let's chat about this. At the cross, we see God's justice through the judgment of sin. Do you want to know what God thinks about sin? Look to the cross. There are no little, small sins. Any act of treason, rebellion, against his kingly reign can be seen. He is not indifferent. He is not like, "Oh, I get it." You look to the cross if you want to see how much God hates sin.

We also see God's love through the forgiveness of sinners. We see God's power through the defeat of Satan. Nay, the trampling of Satan under the feet of Jesus. We see God's wisdom in his upholding of holiness yet making a way for sinners. We see shame as transformed into glory, foolishness into wisdom, humiliation into exaltation. The cross becomes the throne by which Christ rules the world.

Where was Jesus when the temple veil tore from the top to the bottom, revealing to the world the presence of God would no longer be for a group but for all? While he was on the cross! It wasn't at his resurrection the temple veil tore. He was on the cross when that thing (if you were here for our study of Exodus), that curtain in the tabernacle that separated the Holy of Holies from the people of God, was torn from top to bottom while Jesus was on the cross.

We see here if we think about Holy Week that all of Holy Week looks like a Roman caesar ascending to his throne. In his triumphal entry, Jesus was entering his throne room. That's certainly how Jews

would have thought of Jerusalem. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus institutes the rehearsal of the kingdom of God.

I don't know if you realize what's happening when we do the Lord's Supper. Too many of us have a little bit too much Baptist in us. Let me try to explain that. Don't be offended. I've never been a part of any church *but* Baptist churches, but I'm not naïve enough to think we've cornered the market on all that's true, right, and good.

What's going on in the Lord's Supper is not just symbolic, but the very presence of Christ is there as we rehearse the kingdom. Here's what I mean by "rehearse the kingdom." What we celebrate as citizens and strangers is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

When you take that piece of bread and you take that little cup of juice (in our case), you chew it, drink it, swallow it, and it enters your physical body, we're being reminded by the Spirit of God in the act of celebrating that simple ordinance or sacrament that Christ is in us, that the temple veil has been torn, and we are now empowered and embedded with the Spirit of Jesus himself.

Sweet rebuke. That's why you shouldn't jet out of here to try to get into the parking lot first or grab your kid really quickly. That's why you should sit in and try to remember these things are true. These things are true!

In the Lord's Supper, Jesus institutes a rehearsal of the kingdom of God. Before Pilate, Jesus shows he is not a king like other nations. Listen to this Bonhoeffer quote. "A king who dies on the cross must be the king of a rather strange kingdom." I mean, yes! Yes! More on that in a second. "For while the kingdoms of this world are built by force, the kingdom of God is founded on grace." In his crown of thorn and purple robe, we see him adorned as a king. In his crucifixion, Jesus takes his rightful throne on the earth. So Jesus is reigning on the cross.

Okay, so here's where you have to be like, "Okay, maybe, but what does that mean?" Again, I feel like we're so in sync today. Because Jesus is reigning from the cross not just in his resurrection and ascension (which are both incredibly big deals, but we'll cover those in the weeks to come), if Jesus reigns from the cross, then you and I must learn to...

1. *See kingdom power rightly.* You and I must learn to see and live kingdom power rightly. We don't see through the lenses of Rome. It's easy to get confused here. I'm so hard on Peter. He is always

screwing things up in the New Testament. I just feel like if I get to heaven and he is allowed to punch me, he will.

But here's where I want to give Peter a break. You have this moment outside of Caesarea where Jesus comes to his disciples and says, "Who do people say I am?" They're like, "Well, yeah, we were in the market. Here's what we heard. Some people think you're Elijah reincarnated. Some people think maybe John the Baptist or maybe one of the other prophets."

Then Jesus asks them another question. "Okay, but what about you guys? Who do you guys say I am?" Awkward silence. Not Peter. Peter doesn't need to think about stuff. He just says it. Peter says, "You're the Christ. You're the Messiah, the Holy One of God." Then Jesus says, "Blessed are you, Simon. Peter, great job. God had to reveal that to you. You didn't see that." Then Jesus says, "I have to go to Jerusalem, and I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be killed. I'm going to be put on a cross, delivered over by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the rulers of this day."

Peter can't have this! Instead of being confused and quiet, he is confused and loud. He says, "May it never be!" He rebukes Jesus. Why? Because this is confusing. Kings don't die on crosses. Kings send people to crosses, in Peter's view. Do you know who was going on crosses? Rome! Rome is going to the cross, not King Jesus.

For the believer in Christ, we must learn to see divine kingdom power through the lens of Jesus' cross. What does this mean? I think the temptation many Christians encounter is we're buying into the lie that what we need to be is strong and powerful. No, no, no, no. That's not how Jesus reigned. You want power? Get on the cross. You want to walk in kingdom power? Look at me! Die to yourself. You want kingdom power? Serve others. You want kingdom power? Empty yourself of you.

Now to do that, you have to have a self. You can't be a narcissist, but you want the power of God flowing in and through you. That's about humbling ourselves, considering others better than us, serving others, taking the lowest seat, picking the worst seat in the sanctuary, parking the farthest from it, taking the task nobody else wants at work. It's about emptying ourselves over and over and over and over again so the power of God would flood into that emptiness and show God to be mighty.

I just have said this for years. This is not new. The more you make the world about you, the more you're living in the upside-down world and not the world Christ turns right-side up by getting on the cross. The invitation to you from our King is, "Take your cross, and follow me. Die." It's not, "If you have time on the weekends..." No, no, no. You want to be citizens of the King? We die to ourselves.

Now think about how counterintuitive this is, not just to our natural flesh but also to the whole evangelical world. Why is it that we don't fast as the people of God anymore? Why is it that's such an outside...? Didn't Jesus clearly say, "The reason my disciples don't fast is I'm here. When I'm not here, they will"?

"Man, I don't like to fast. I have blood sugar issues. I'm a mean person if I don't get a sandwich. What kind of metabolism do you think I have? This brother doesn't need to fast. He needs to eat more." No, no, no. It's a, "Less of me, less of me, less of me" desire that sees the power of God start to flow through you.

So the, "More of me, more of me, more of me," the more you should not expect the power of God in and through your life. How does kingdom power work? It works on the cross. It works by dying to self. The number one way people choose churches now is not whether there's truth being preached. It's not whether or not genuine discipleship occurs. It's not whether or not there's a seriousness about God and his mission. It's chosen by the amenities the church offers.

If you hear people talk about church, they'll oftentimes talk about how much they enjoyed the music or, "Man, I like that he is so funny." Or, "You know, I really love... They have this building, and here's what the building does. It's just magical. I get to go in in flip-flops and my underwear. I just drink a latte. There's not a lot of introspection that goes on. I don't really have to think about myself. I just get this kind of, 'You're a good person. Go get 'em!' kind of sermon. I start to feel warm. I love it!"

Yet what's the way to power? The way to power is not, "Cater to my needs. Recruit me." The key to power is death to self. Do you feel how quiet and awkward it is right now? From where does Jesus rule? The cross. Where is power made available to his people? This is crazy. Suffering, sacrifice, service. It's the right-side up kingdom.

Now listen. I know that's confusing because we think weakness and strength don't cohabit, and yet they do in Christ. It's actually in weakness that strength is found, which is why if you are weak,

you should rejoice. It's counterintuitive. It's right-side up kingdom. We're going to get into this. Let's listen to some of Jesus' teaching about what it means to live as citizens of this kingdom.

"Blessed are those who mourn..." Now that feels to us like upside-down, right? "Oh, you're mourning? Oh my gosh! Let me cheer you up! Have you watched *this* on Netflix? Oh, what? You have a sad heart? Let's fix that." Jesus says, "No, no, no. Blessed are you when you mourn." Mourning is awful. Look at me. Mourning is awful. I hate mourning.

I'd much rather rejoice, and yet my experience in mourning (which has been burying friends, which has been struggling with disease, which has been seven years of a really rough marriage before the Lord so graciously began to heal) has been that in mourning the presence of Jesus is really sweet.

"Blessed are those who mourn..."

How about this one? **"Blessed are the meek..."** "That doesn't sound right. Blessed are the charismatic! Blessed are the loud! Blessed are the confident. Blessed is the swaggery, 'I know all the answers.'" No, no, no. **"Blessed are the meek..."** Happy are the meek. Blessed are those who show mercy. Tell me we're not in a mercy-depraved moment in human history.

"Blessed are the peacemakers..." How about this one? "Blessed are you when you are persecuted and people say all sorts of evil things about you for my name's sake." That's right-side up kingdom. What's the Roman way? The Roman way is, "Might equals right." The Roman way is, "I'll be strong, and no one will ever hurt me." The Roman way is, "I'll be loud to hide my insecurity."

I don't know where I read it one time, but I heard one time (maybe it was a movie or something), "The loudest one in the room is the weakest one in the room." I don't know if that's true and what it says about me if it is, but... You have this kind of idea that if you stop for a second and you think about the Roman way of doing things... You're talking about power in the way the upside-down world (don't go *Stranger Things* on me) kind of thinks about things.

What you're seeing is the Roman way of operating in power always does damage to the human soul. It always robs the human soul of joy. It makes the human pretend and project in a way they could never truly be loved and never truly experience peace because they have to protect the projection. What does Jesus say? "You're weak. I know you're weak. I'm strong. You should come in here and let my strength cover your weakness." Not *solve* your weakness. Come *into* your weakness. You have to learn to see this.

Again, we must reign and rule like Jesus, which is, "Take up your cross and follow me. Die to yourself. Serve the other." Here's what makes this hard. This sounds so right to so many of you, and I'm just wondering how many of you actually take a step in this direction. That's one of the fun things of preaching. It's not that God's power is made perfect *despite* our weaknesses or *after* we've suffered. No, his power is made perfect *in* our weaknesses.

The first thing was we have to see kingdom power rightly. Then the second thing is...

2. *See suffering rightly*. Seeing suffering rightly! There is beauty not *after* suffering but *in* it. We see the glory of Christ through his suffering. God is not waiting for us on the other side of suffering, but he is waiting for us *in* our suffering. Now I talk a lot about suffering, and here's why. Look right at me. Because none of you are going to escape it.

I'm not trying to trigger you if you struggle with anxiety. No one escapes it. No one can control it. You cannot build walls high enough to keep out the brokenness of the world. It's coming. You're far more fragile than you think you are. You're far more exposed than you think you are. So you can pretend, build walls, and try to control your environment to try to soothe your soul, or you can realize you have a benevolent King who will never leave your side, regardless of life circumstances.

I have an immense amount of respect for those EMT first responders, firefighters, police. I just can't imagine what you brothers and sisters have to walk in, see with your eyes, and then try to un-see. God does not drive an ambulance. He does not show up afterward. He is a benevolent King who is with us before, during, after, and he holds us fast through it all. I'm not saying any of that makes suffering easy, but it does help the citizen and stranger understand suffering is not in vain. It is accomplishing purposes for God's glory and our ultimate joy.

Remember that dynasty we're moving toward. I know many of you (some of you even in this room) have suffered for decades. I told you a couple of weeks ago I'm earnestly praying the Holy Spirit of God might miraculously heal you in such profound and beautiful ways that we would all rejoice as a community of saints.

Yet even as I pray for that, long for that, and expect that from the Lord, I've also not closed off my heart to rejoicing in a faithful, suffering saint who cries out "Jesus is king!" in the midst of their hurt. We must learn to see suffering rightly.

Then I'll close with this. This series is called *Citizens & Strangers* because if the King is peculiar because the King was enthroned on a cross, then we're to be a peculiar people. I want to talk about this. This is where we're headed after we celebrate the resurrection next weekend. I said week one the kingdom is the lens by which we see the whole world. Everything we look at we're looking at through the lenses of the kingdom, which means I see my money, my work, my marriage, my singleness, my children.

The question is, "What says the King? What would the King have of me so that I live like a citizen of heaven, a stranger on this earth?" If the King is peculiar, his followers are peculiar. Let me ask the question: *Are you peculiar?* Look at me. We will not cool anyone into the kingdom. Listen to me. We will not cool anyone into the kingdom.

Do you know what's relevant to today? The gospel. The more we try to make ourselves look like the world around us, the more we're not emptying ourselves of ourselves so the power of God might flow through us. Look. We have a sexual ethic that's offensive. It makes us strange. We have a view of money that makes us strange. We have a way of seeing marriage that makes us strange. We have a way of seeing friendship, dedication, and wholeheartedness that's strange.

We don't back off those things in order to help people see and understand the kingdom. We embrace them. Listen to me. I'm not asking you to be a weirdo. I'm not asking you to have a bottle of oil you got from Jerusalem and like a Super Soaker gun in your office so when your new coworker comes, you're spraying them. "Your room is blessed in the name of Jesus." I'm not asking you to do that. In fact, I'm asking you *not* to do that.

However, listen. I'm strange, and it's okay I'm peculiar. When I get to know the woman who checks me out at Whole Foods, I start to ask how I can pray. Then I loop back around and ask about those things I've prayed about. As I get to know people in these different spheres in which the Lord allows me to operate, I just want to be peculiar.

I don't want to be one of the guys. I want to be just a smidge peculiar, not for peculiarity's sake but because I'm a citizen of the kingdom, which makes me a stranger in this present darkness. It also becomes a picture of freedom that only comes in dying to self that becomes the salt and light that draws men unto the Crucified King. I'm going to read this one more time.

"For although in the cross there is nothing but curse, it was, nevertheless, swallowed up by the power of God in such a way, that it has put on, as it were, a new nature. For there is no tribunal so magnificent, no throne so stately, no show of triumph so distinguished, no chariot so elevated, as is the gibbet on which Christ has subdued death and the devil, the prince of death; nay more, has utterly trodden them under his feet."

Be encouraged, citizens and strangers. Christ has overcome the world. Let's pray.

Father, we bless your name. I thank you for these men and women. I thank you for you on the cross, crucified as a picture of what it means to live in the kingdom. Give us the courage and strength to die to self. Help us understand all the more fully what it means to take up our cross and follow you. Father, I ask you to help us by the power of the Spirit see rightly and correctly. Everything else around us is giving us the information of Rome. "Be strong. Be put together. Make it happen. Get yours. Take what you need. Demand what you have to have."

Yet there is Jesus on the cross, reminding, beckoning toward the way of life. Thank you that you hate moralism and love morality. In the weeks to come, you're going to shape us as a people who live a specific way for the glory of your name, who look a specific way for the glory of your name. It's not legalism or legalistic. It's just a call to life as you designed it to be.

I pray that in the midst of all of that, you would call us up to greater mission, call us up to greater external viewable holiness, and we might embrace the peculiar call on our lives by the peculiar King of everything. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.