

The Kingdom of God, The Church, and Buildings

This week and next week, I'm going to be preaching on topics related to the potential upcoming building project and giving campaign. Even as I say those phrases, I can imagine some people recoiling and others being indifferent while still some saying, "Is that very spiritual?"

Today's sermon title is "The Kingdom of God, The Church, and Buildings." You could hear that title and think, "What does the Kingdom have to do with buildings?" And that's precisely the question I want you to ask. But I have a basic question for you: What is the Kingdom of God? The reason I'm asking that question is because the Kingdom of God is related to the Church, but I wonder how many Christians 1) know what the Kingdom truly is, and 2) know how the Kingdom of God and the Church are related. Because many Christians do not know the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church, I think many do not understand *why* the local church matters and why we're even commanded to exhort one another daily as long as it is called today. We simply don't see the cosmic plan of God and how the Church plays into it. As a result of this disconnect, we have overly simplistic reasons for why we build church buildings.

To put this practically, our anemic view of the Kingdom of God has led people to think that church is something you go to once a week and a building is simply a place to hear a sermon and sing some songs so that we can get encouragement for the week ahead. If more people come in the doors, clearly we need to build a bigger building; but we don't have any more reason for building space than this.

Maybe some of you fall into these categories. You're wondering what is the Kingdom. You could be thinking, "I want to know more about how buildings relate to the church." I hope this is all of us here today. **My desire is to share the bigger picture of God's Kingdom so that we have a context for the Church and its local gatherings around the world and throughout time.**

Now, when I say God's Kingdom will provide the context to understand church, let me give a different illustration. Think with me about earthly kingdoms. When you think "kingdom," what comes to your mind? There are nights when I'm putting my girls to bed, and in order to motivate them to get ready quickly, I'll say, "If you hurry up, I'll tell a princess story." As soon as I say that, there's excitement. But I also know that there's context for them. They know what type of story that's going to come. They know where the story is going to take place and who may enter into the story. They know that the story always begins in the girl's room and it takes place in a castle. So, I always begin the story the same way: "Once upon a time, there was a little girl in her room playing with her toys, when *all of a sudden*. . . ." Then we continue in this imaginary world.

When we hear the word "kingdom," we think of a King and a Queen. We may think of princes and princesses. We think of a castle. We may think of peasants and people peddling on the streets. We think of castle walls and gates. Maybe we even think of dragons. This word "kingdom" has practical meaning.

Shouldn't that happen when we think of Jesus' Kingdom? I mean, on a much more important and grand scale, when we hear about God's kingdom, we should be thinking about very specific things not so that we can merely live in a make-believe land, but so that we can know how we ought to live in real, actual life today and for all eternity!

Sadly, it seems as though when we are asked, “What is the kingdom of God,” we hear birds chirping. Yet, according to the gospel of Matthew, this was the first message Jesus preached on and it was an essential theme in his preaching. In addition the word for kingdom occurs 160 times while “kingdom” words are all throughout the whole of the Bible.

I truly believe that if we understood this word, it would provide a context for so much of life – especially the importance of the local church (and even their buildings). With that in mind, let’s discover four principles related to the Kingdom. After that, we’ll then discover the implications for the local church and for church buildings! Before I share the four points, I do want to say that I am indebted to a man named Greg Gilbert for his teaching on this topic from the book entitled, “What is the Mission of the Church?” That book sheds light on many topics, and if you’re interested in learning more of the church’s mission, I’d encourage you to read it as well.

So, what is the Kingdom? Before I give the first point, let’s pray together, and ask for God’s grace and wisdom.

1. God’s Kingdom is God’s redemptive reign over his people.

In Psalm 145:11, David talks of God’s saints praising him, and he writes, “They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power. . . .”¹ In Hebrew poetry, there’s something called parallelism. And verse 11 gives that parallelism. The word “kingdom” and the word “power” are parallel. This is reiterated in verse 13, where David writes, “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.”² The word “kingdom” relates to “dominion.” God’s Kingdom starts with God himself. So, when we think of kingdom, we should think of his rule, his power, his authority. Scripturally speaking, this word relates to God’s power.

As you think about this, you might be wondering, “Does it not have anything to do with land or castles or people?” Well, first let me answer the “people” question. God’s kingdom involves people. You cannot have a kingdom without people. But who are the people in God’s kingdom? Is every human being in God’s kingdom? No.

This doesn’t mean that God doesn’t rule over everything. God does rule over everything, but the question is “what is his special kingdom?” What is the kingdom of heaven, which is also referred to as the kingdom of God? This includes people – and, it includes a specific group of people: the people God forgives and rescues.

God tells us in 1 Corinthians 6 “that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”³ Amazing grace! People who were sinners were then justified and those individuals who were redeemed, forgiven by Jesus are a part of God’s Kingdom. This point is emphasized in Colossians 1:13-14: ¹³ **He has delivered us from the**

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ps 145:11.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ps 145:13.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Co 6:9–11.

domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ⁴

If God has opened your eyes to see your sin against God and you have embraced the glorious truth that Jesus came to this world to draw sinners to the Lord through his death, then you are under God's rule. How can that be? Because whereas Adam sinned and then all humanity fell into sin; Jesus came as a new representative and he took the punishment our sins deserved on the cross. God himself in all his cosmic, kingdom power took his wrath for sinners and placed it on the Son. Then Jesus rose from the dead and conquered both sin and death! Now, Jesus calls everyone to trust in him. Your efforts to redeem yourself will never work. Things you turn to in this world for life and satisfaction and meaning, won't give it to you. You were made for God, and Jesus brings you to God.

This message, called the gospel, is the centerpiece of the message of the Kingdom. Because of Jesus' death, real people in this world can be redeemed and forgiven. So, those who have embraced the message and trusted in Jesus as their King and Savior, are those who are now a part of God's Kingdom.

So, God's kingdom relates to people, but doesn't God's kingdom also relate to a place. Well, yes and no. A specific place isn't always essential for God's Kingdom. Think about creation. In the beginning, God placed Adam and Eve where? Answer: in Eden. But then they were kicked out of Eden. Was God no longer redeeming people after that because he didn't have Eden to work with anymore? No. God worked through Noah and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Then God did have the nation of Israel and he gave them Canaan. But we even learned last week that Canaan wasn't the final rest. Once we get into the New Testament, Jesus reveals that the kingdom of God is at hand, and thus, he is going to work through the church and not one individual nation. Because of this, the Bible says that we are now "strangers and exiles" in this world.

But even the words "strangers" and "exiles" assumes there is a land to which we're headed. There's a New Heaven and New Earth that we anticipate, a greater Eden where "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."⁵

There will be a day when God dwells with his people, ruling eternally in a perfect place. Until that day, **Today we see rays of God's rule displayed through his people in this kingdom of darkness.**

So, God's Kingdom is a rule over God's people. But there's more. I've already talked some on this, but in order to emphasize, we also see that

2. God's Kingdom is the reign of the Messiah.

Remember Colossians 1:13 again: ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. . .⁶ The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven is also Jesus' kingdom. Jesus himself states that it is his kingdom. Then, in 1 Corinthians 15, we read "**Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority**

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 1:13–14.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Re 21:4.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 1:12–13.

and power. ²⁵ **For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.**⁷⁷ Today, Jesus reigns and is drawing people to himself. And it's only through him that people can enter his kingdom.

Think of gospel proclamations today where people talk of Jesus being their co-pilot or they say "Give Jesus a change." Is this the message of the Scripture? No. Acts 4:12 says, "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."⁸ Going back to the Great Commission, Jesus himself says that he has all authority!

Because of what Jesus has done in humbling himself and now reigning, he saves all who come to him for mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation with God. He is the one mediator between God and man! Will you turn to King Jesus? For those who have turned to Christ, you now have a King who is loving and all-powerful! And this leads to the next point:

3. God's Kingdom has broken into this age.

Jesus said that God's kingdom was at hand. That doesn't mean that the Kingdom was going to be enacted within a couple weeks or years or decades or centuries. That phrase "at hand" means that it's close by. Based on the context of Scriptures, I think we can say that the "at hand" also speaks to the Kingdom breaking through in this current age. So, when we go to the Great Commission, we hear Jesus saying that he will be with us until the end of the age. He rules over us until the end of *this* age and then there will be the *age to come*.

The reason we need to know this is because *if* God's Kingdom is breaking in today, that means we should expect that we have a mission to live out in this world. We should expect King Jesus to command the light of his Kingdom principles to shine through his Kingdom people in the kingdom of this world. This is precisely what we find. While we pray "your kingdom come" because we don't see it fully realized yet, we also pray his will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

With all this knowledge, we could then make a fatal flaw. We could simply say, "I'm a part of his kingdom. Yay! I'll tell others so that they'll want to be a part of the Kingdom, too." I'm not against telling people the good news of Jesus! I'm all for that. But here's my concern. You may still view the kingdom from an individualistic standpoint. We can think entrance into the kingdom is like entrance into Michigan's Adventure. You get a ticket, you walk through the turnstiles, and you don't have to know *anyone* there. Sure, you're with a lot of people, but there's no connection with them. This leads to the next point:

4. God's Kingdom is manifested through local churches until the Church is revealed.

The church refers to the *universal church* (i.e. – all believers throughout all time). But the universal church is invisible. I can't know all people. But I can know some believers, and I am called to commit to specific believers. That's where the local church comes in.

When Jesus speaks of his kingdom, he actually reveals to us the importance of the local church in his kingdom mission. In Matthew 16, he talks about instituting the church "upon this rock." This was after

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Co 15:24–25.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 4:12.

Peter's confession. And then he says, "⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. . . ." I'm not going to get into all the nuances of "keys of the kingdom of heaven," but simply note something: Jesus gives the church the keys of the kingdom. And, as we move on into chapter 18, we begin to see that the keys are to be utilized by the local church. Similar phrasing from chapter 16 is used in the local church discipline passage! Greg Gilbert writes of this, **"It's not to the government, nor to any king or pope or any other ruler, but rather to the church – to this ragtag bunch of argumentative, self-centered, struggling-for-holiness but gloriously forgiven sinners – that the keys of the kingdom of God are given."**

This is the continued emphasis of the New Testament. Think of how the bulk of the New Testament is then written not mostly to individuals, but mostly to local churches. How is the Great Commission going to be fulfilled? Through the local church. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about how he was to behave in the local church, and then he reminds Timothy what that local church was. He called the Ephesian church "the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."¹⁰ The Ephesian Christians are the pillar and buttress of the truth? Really? Yes, because as we see in Revelation, Jesus is the center of all of his churches – leading and shepherding them by the power of the Holy Spirit through the wisdom of the Scriptures. As a result, Ephesians 3:10 says that **"through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."**¹¹ God has made his church essential to his Kingdom purpose as he reigns over them in Christ.

So, what is the kingdom? Greg Gilbert defined it as **"God's redemptive reign, in the person of his Son, Jesus Messiah, which has broken into the present evil age and is now visible in the church."** Because of this, it should then make sense why Jesus said in his sermon on the mount to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. . .."¹² If you have been rescued by Jesus, then he is your gracious Master and King, and you now do not live for this world, but the world to come! We don't call the shots on our lives. Jesus does. No longer do we live for our little kingdoms. Put practically, we don't live for a bigger house, nicer cars, more clothes. It's not that those things are innately sinful, but our eyes must rise higher to seek those things which are above where Christ is seated! Seek the Kingdom and let everything else (homes, cars, clothes, food, relationships) be subservient to the Kingdom!

Oh, how our lives would change if we genuinely believed that our ruler isn't President Trump, but Jesus Christ. How our lives would change if we honestly believed that we are strangers in this world. How our lives would change if we as Christians treated each other as fellow citizens of the Kingdom of God who need each other and must live out the Great Commission to train each other to move forward until we *get home!*

I believe this is how the early church saw it. When you read Paul referring to Jesus as the Lord and Savior – in contrast to Caesar – you realize that he believed there was a greater Kingdom that Christians were to live for. People were willing to suffer and die and lose property in this life because of the Kingdom of which they became citizens. Because they were citizens of a new kingdom, they met together regularly.

Connecting the Kingdom with the local church

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 16:19.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 3:15.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 3:10.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 6:33.

But wait, because they were kingdom citizens, they met together regularly? Why is this meeting and gathering together so important? Think of it this way. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, the apostle Paul wrote, **“²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”**¹³ We are ambassadors. What is an ambassador? An ambassador is the representative of a nation and speaks on behalf of the rule of that nation. When Paul was writing to the Corinthian church, he was talking about how Jesus reconciles people to the Lord. Well, by what means does he declare to the world his saving rule? He works through his children. And, as ambassadors, we make appeals to the world.

Now, extend this illustration a little further. If ambassadors are commanded by God to gather together, what does that make the gathering? To use a human illustration, local churches are embassies of God’s Kingdom. In Washington D.C., we have 177 embassy buildings of other countries. Even though those buildings are in America, the soil on which they’re built is considered their country’s soil. If you were invited to the Japanese embassy, you would be walking into a place that is devoted to speaking on behalf of their homeland. Even as people leave the building, their purpose for being in DC is to speak for the welfare and commendation of Japan.

This is similar for the church gathered. In Matthew 28, after Jesus rose from the dead, he says, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** What does this mean of Jesus? This means his redemptive reign is now to be made visible! He conquered death and he rules! As a result, all of his disciples (even we who are disciples of Jesus today) are to **“¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. . . .”** We are to evangelize and baptize people. We are to call people to the Kingdom of Heaven. And those people are to come from all nations! But how are we to do that? We are to be **“²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**¹⁴

Verse 20 leads to the context of the local church. Again, the bulk of the New Testament books are written to local churches, revealing that the local church is to be the primary means through which disciples of Jesus evangelize and train disciples of Jesus. Through the local embassies in all the world, we are to be trained in the God and his Kingdom.

This was clearly the understanding of the early church. They were consumed with telling people about Jesus and they were consumed with gathering together. Acts 2 says that they together **“ . . .devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”**¹⁵ Luke goes on and says, **“⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”**¹⁶

Why did they meet day-by-day? Why did they eat together, fellowship and serve one another? Why did they devote themselves *together* to prayer, study and service? It’s not because it was convenient or they just had the time on their hands. It’s because they realized that Jesus saved them and Jesus is the Messiah. They realized that this life is a blip on the screen of eternity, and someday Jesus’ Kingdom is

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 5:20.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 28:18–20.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 2:42.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 2:46–47.

coming in all its glorious fullness. And they wanted to know more of the Kingdom while wanting everyone else to know of this Kingdom.

To put it another way, they realized that Jesus died for the church. Jesus died and rose again in order that there would be Kingdom outposts throughout the world until that day the Kingdom came in fullness! And if Jesus died to bring people to himself and to gather them together for God's fame to be known in the world – then we ought to be willing to give our lives for that, too!

Throughout the last 2,000 years, it seems many in Jesus' church grasped this. They recognized this world was not their home and so even though their societies and cultures murdered them for proclaiming Jesus, they knew they didn't live for earth's kingdoms. They were ambassadors of Jesus' Kingdom. And even though ambassadors died for their faith, Christ used the proclamation of the word in the gathering of the saints to draw more ambassadors to himself.

This past week I was reminded of a story of a man named John Rogers who lived in the 1500's. He was a preacher, and in that day, and he preached the gospel. As a result, he was sentenced to be executed at the stake. Now, before executing a preacher in those days, they would march the preacher through his parish and walk him through the streets between his parishioners. They would do this to shame and mock the preacher, but they would do this to shame the church as well. They would set the stake in front of the church for the congregation and the whole town to watch as a man burned at the stake.

That morning, Rogers was offered pardon if he would simply recant of his views. Rogers responded that he would seal what he preached with his own blood. And so, he went on the doomed path to death. Keep in mind, this man was married with ten children. He didn't even meet his tenth child because he was imprisoned when his wife was pregnant. But there in the crowd was his wife and all ten children. And, do you want to know what happened? His wife, children and congregation were there to exhort him to endure and persevere. There was a French Ambassador who was there at the execution, and he wrote, "even his children assisted at it, comforting him in such a manner that it seemed as if he had been led to a wedding."

Amazing, isn't it? And isn't it intriguing that it's a worldly ambassador who writes of Jesus' Ambassadors – ambassadors of the Kingdom? That local church had been growing in the Lord, in the Word and in fellowship, and they were family.

Where are we, Ventura? I'm not saying, "Where's the persecution?" I'm saying, "Are we in a position as a people where we together proclaim to the world that we live for another Kingdom, a greater Kingdom?" Do we believe that we are citizens of the Kingdom and that we must proclaim the glories of our God and King? Because of Jesus' commitment to the Church and to local churches, I believe we cannot ignore the testimony of the saints who have gone before us. We must, by God's grace, continue the testimony of the saints throughout the ages! Ventura, we are part of something *much bigger* than Ventura Baptist Church. We are part of the Kingdom of God and we are an embassy of his Kingdom.

It's now with this understanding that I think we can see even a building and capital campaign in a different light. You see, I don't want you to just give money because elders tell you to do it. I don't want you to be bored with God's redemptive plan. I pray that we have a sturdy foundation to our giving and even excitement with the building here! When we realize we're not just some small church in Holland, Michigan in 2017 and we realize that we are part of the people of God – a missionary outpost for the King – we will see that in all we do (whether eating or drinking or building projects), we can do it to his

glory. This is what I long for us, Ventura. Do we believe that Jesus' reign actually is and will be successful in drawing more and more people to himself until a glorious day where we will see him face to face? Do you believe that going about his mission for his kingdom in his ways is vital? Do you have excitement even in our day that Jesus is building his church and the gates of Hell cannot even prevail against it?!

If so, then what we do here as Ventura Baptist Church, matters! Even a building matters. Praise the Lord! So, let's take the jump for about five minutes to see how important an addition for a building can be for a local gathering.

Connecting the local church to buildings

When the slide says "connecting the local church to buildings," I'm not saying that we should say a building *is* the local church. That's actually something that I try to work against in my vernacular. We don't go to church. We gather with the church. We don't need to be on Quincy Street. A local church, as the Bible defines it, is a gathering of professing Christians with leadership. So, you can have a couple elders and some "congregants" in a house church under persecution or you can have a 500-person church with godly leadership and a congregation holding one another accountable!

But the church is *not* the building. The author of Hebrews indicates that the local church is a place of committed people who gather regularly with one another. He commands us to not have a life of habitually *not* gathering. Instead, we are to make our lives a habit of gathering regularly with and exhorting the others with whom we're one.

Since habitual gatherings with specific people is commanded, then we can talk about a place to gather. This need is even seen in the early church. Think of Acts, after Jesus ascended. You have 120 people praying together. They have a space. But then Pentecost takes place. Peter preaches and the Holy Spirit draws 3,000 people to the Lord in one day. Now what?! Talk about space issues. We're told that in the early days of the church, the disciples of Jesus gathered in what was called Solomon's Porch. It was public. People could see them worship. But then persecution came. People spread throughout various lands. Now what? Where were they going to gather? Well, we see that God saved some people who had homes large enough for the Christians to gather. Other gatherings were quite small and in homes. In time, people even worshipped in catacombs because the persecution was so intense. But the point is that whether a big or small gathering, there was always a space.

What about us? I've been privileged to pastor Ventura for 5 ½ years so far, and I've been amazed to see God's working in this place while here. I've also continuously been encouraged as I tell snippets of Ventura's story to people. To talk of the 1930's and 40's when people met in the schoolhouse here for Bible study on Sunday afternoons and then how in the 1950's, D.J. DePree became the lay preaching pastor of this church. As time moved on, we can rehearse God's faithfulness, but we can also see attacks from within and without. Then in the late 90's and early 2000's, this church had gone through one or two church splits and was in pain. Now, God could have let the church remain that way if he wanted, but he didn't. God continued to work and grow his children here and he even brought new kingdom citizens here. In the last 5 ½ years I've been here, we've seen numerical growth over double and, more importantly, I believe we've also seen spiritual growth. And now we face space challenges. Our nursery is packed. We have no more discipleship training spaces available for Sunday School. Then for our morning worship gathering, we're consistently hitting around 80% capacity, and we took out the back walls just last year.

I believe that if we are considering the Kingdom of God and how the local church shines forth the kingdom's virtues and message, then I believe Jesus, our King, designs for us to be concerned about our gathering (for our growth with fellow believers and also for our testimony to Holland, Michigan and the world).

Recently, I was talking with a pastor of a church in Washington D.C. talk about the gathering space for his church. He said that it was in 1912 or '13 when Capitol Hills Baptist Church decided they needed a 1,000-person seat auditorium. They even took out a ten-year loan. The people made sacrifices and to all of that, this past named Mark Dever said that he's thankful for the sacrifice of people 100 years ago who had a desire for Christ's name to be known in Washington D.C. Their auditorium is packed, but more than that, they are constantly sending out church planters and missionaries.

Capital Hills Baptist isn't our story, and I'm not saying we need to have 1,000 seats. What I appreciate from that testimony is a recognition of God's kingdom mission of drawing people to himself and training them through his church. It also emphasizes that the people of 1912 weren't living for 1912. They were living for God's Kingdom and entrusting their local church to *Jesus' mission and Jesus' shepherding*. All they needed to know was that Jesus is their Savior King who died to forgive people and bring them into his kingdom. These kingdom citizens were concerned about being kingdom missionaries – even being concerned about their local church and the space in which they worshipped and in which future kingdom citizens would worship!

I believe God is giving us a similar vision of his Kingdom and his church. Now, when you hear *kingdom of God*, what do you think? Do you see the local church's role? Do you see us as a part of the kingdom of Christ? Ventura, God has been working in our midst over the last 61 years as a local church, and I believe he designs to continue that work. And I am excited at how God is going to grow us as kingdom citizens, children of God. So, **pray that we would be faithful kingdom missionaries, training one another and reaching others in this world. Pray that neighbors would come to faith in Christ. And pray that the Lord would take brick and mortar and cause it to shine for Jesus' fame. Pray that we would rejoice in what God is doing here and that we would participate together in it. May we joyfully seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness knowing that he will add all the "things" that he believes are good and best!**