

Luke 17:11-37

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[0:00] Do sit down and turn to Luke chapter 17. Luke chapter 17. And there's different ways of dividing up Luke 17, but I want to deal with the whole of the chapter from 11 to verse 37.

! So has the kingdom of God come? Has the kingdom of God come? It's multiple choices this morning. A. Yes. B. No.

C. Other. What would you go for? I'm tempted to show a show of hands, but has the kingdom of God come? Now it's a question that comes, doesn't it, in different ways.

So it comes in the guise of your non-Christian friends. They'll say to you, well where is God? Where was God on dot dot dot? Has God made any difference to the problems in the world?

You look at the mess of suffering, at the mess of sin, at the mess of our culture as it turns its back on God. And people ask you, well has God done anything about that? Has the kingdom of God come?

[1:15] What do you say? A. Yes. B. No. C. Other. We'll go to the Ealing Liberal Synagogues.

Just down the road we go to the Jewish rabbi. And they're speaking in the Old Testament. And they know about the promises of God's kingdom, the Jews. They know about the day, the day of the Lord promised in the book of Daniel.

The day when the Son of Man will appear. A day when there will be judgment. A day when he would give glory and power that will never pass away. And you could debate with them.

Has the kingdom of God come? Has the day of the Lord come? Has God sent his Messiah? Has God ushered in the new age? Has God fixed the problems of the world?

And the answer is A. Yes. B. No. C. Other. Well I'm going to argue it's C. Other. This morning. Because Jesus has something to say very interestingly about the kingdom of God.

[2:16] And he says neither yes nor no. Well in fact he says yes and no. But not in a politician's kind of way. In a very clear and precise way.

That maybe you wouldn't expect. So Jesus says firstly verses 11 to 21 if you look down. The kingdom of God is here. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king. On the way to Jerusalem. Jesus was passing along. Between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered the village. He was met by ten leopards. Who stood at a distance.

And they lifted up their voices. Saying Jesus have mercy upon us. And Jesus encounters these people in great need. And they called to him from a great distance.

Because leprosy forbade them from approaching someone. Lest you transmit infection to them. So the best they can do is they can stand outside the doctor's surgery.

[3:14] And they can call through the window. Have mercy on us. And Jesus when he saw them said. Go show yourselves to the priest. They went and they were cleansed.

Is the kingdom of God here? Yes. Well look at what Jesus says to the Pharisees in verse 21. On being asked about the kingdom.

By the Pharisees. Verse 21. He says this. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God will come. He answers the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed.

Nor will they say look here it is. Or therefore behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Has the kingdom of God come? The kingdom is here. Trust the king. The Pharisees in this whole section of Luke.

We've seen it haven't we? They persistently get it wrong. The Pharisees persistently fail to understand what the law and the prophets prophesied. They were constantly persistently failing to understand Jesus was right.

[4:16] They're saying when the kingdom of God would come. In the kind of way that the modern rabbi would ask in the synagogue. They're missing the point. Because they fail to see that the king

of the kingdom is in their midst.

They fail to recognise Jesus for who he is. And they ought to know who he is on the basis of the evidence that is all around them. For example on the basis of ten leopards who were cleansed. Just going back a few pages to Luke chapter 7. Can you remember Luke chapter 7? And verses 17 to 18. It's on page 864. And the disciples of John the Baptist come.

In Luke chapter 7. This report verse 17. This report about him spread through the whole country of Judea and the surrounding country. Then the disciples of John reported all these things to him. And then they come. He sends them to the Lord and he says are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another? Or to rephrase the kingdom. Or rephrase the question. Has the kingdom of God come?

[5 : 20] That's John the Baptist's question. And he says this. When the men had come. They said John the Baptist had sent us to say are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another? In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits.

And on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And then he said to them go and tell John what you've seen and heard. The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised. The poor of good news preached to them.

John asks a similar question. Are you the one who is to come? Are you the Messiah? Has the kingdom of God come? And Jesus says when he sends back the messengers to John. Look at the evidence.

Look at the evidence. The lepers are cleansed. Where else in history can you find leprosy being cleansed with just a touch? Or with a word?

Where can you find the blind being healed? Where can you find the lame walking? And the evidence is this. That the kingdom must be here. So here we are again in Luke 17.

[6 : 22] Here is the evidence. On the road between Samaria and Galilee. Tiny lepers healed with a word from a distance. And they go to the priest. And the Pharisees come asking. Has the kingdom of God come?

And Jesus rebukes them. He says you shouldn't be asking that question in the face of such evidence. Surely open your eyes and you can see that the kingdom of God is here.

The kingdom of God verse 21 is in the midst of you. But the Pharisees problem isn't that they don't know about the evidence. But their problem is that they failed to respond to the evidence rightly to what they saw.

And it's a very clever little episode. This one with the lepers. Because it shows you Jesus' amazing kingdom power. But at the same time it shows you the amazing failure of the Jews of the day to respond rightly to him.

Ten lepers all cleansed. The kingdom of God is among you. But look at their reaction. Look at verse 15. Then one of them when he saw that he was healed.

[7 : 32] Turned back to God with a loud voice. And he fell on his face at Jesus' feet giving him thanks. What is the scandal? The scandal is that one man out of the ten got it right.

But there's even a greater scandal isn't it? Who is this one man? He was a Samaritan. Now if you know anything about the background of Luke's gospel. If you know anything about the background of first century Judaism.

If you know anything at all of the story of the good Samaritan. You will know that they were the despised outsiders. That is the whole point of Jesus' parable earlier on in Luke isn't it?

The good Samaritan. What a shock it would be that the Samaritan is the one that gets it right. Which tells us. Not only tells us.

Not only tells you that Samaritans is not as bad as you thought. But more than that it shows up God's people of the day. It shows God's people of the day were much worse than they thought.

[8 : 33] The Samaritans. The outsider. The foreigner gets it right. But nine of God's people. Nine of them get it wrong. They see the healing.

But they do not respond to the king. And you can hear it can you. In these excruciating questions that Jesus asks. Look at verse 17. I hate these kind of questions. Where are the nine?

Jesus asks. Jesus asks again. Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Were there not ten cleansed?

That is the right response. To revelation and the evidence that the king has come. Now one made it. And so to go around saying. Is God going to do anything about the mess of this world?

About the problems of this world? Does God care? Has the Messiah showed up? To ask those kind of questions actually is insolent. And thankless.

[9 : 41] And thankless. And it completely fails to do the right thing in the face of the evidence. Every time you hear that question.

Is God going to do anything? Has God done anything? In a world which God has already entered 2000 years ago. With the most extraordinary evidence behind him. It is not for want of evidence that people don't believe.

It is for want of failing to respond properly to it. They don't want to believe. Ten cleansed but only one turns around and gives thanks. And he is an outsider. And the Pharisees have the audacity to ask God.

To ask Jesus whether God will show up in this world. God has already made himself known. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king. That's the message. Your faith has made you well.

The faith that brings you to Jesus. That connects you to Jesus. To fall on his face. It's the idea of worship isn't it? To fall on your face before someone.

[10 : 46] We don't do that today. We only bow to the queen. Or we curtsy to the queen. But in those days. If you wanted to recognise somebody as deity. You would fall on your face. That is the way you would respond to a king.

And that is what this man does. The kingdom has come. Trust the king. But then Jesus said to his disciples. Verses 22-37. The kingdom is coming again.

The kingdom is coming. The king is coming again. Be ready. The king is coming again. Be ready. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king. But the king is coming again.

Be ready. And once again. Repeatedly through this passage. This section. We have a message to the disciples. As long as. Alongside a message to the Pharisees. The Pharisees have got it wrong. And there. We are shown what not to do. But the disciples are being told you. How to get it right.

And we see the two alongside one another. Don't be like the Pharisees.

[11 : 50] But do be like. Listen carefully to the lesson for the disciples. Is this the king? Is this the king? Of course.

The king is coming again. So be ready. But in this section. There's two things. And again. It is a brilliant passage. Because two contradictory thoughts. Which are not contradictory.

So here we go. The king. Is coming. Slower than you think. And that might catch you out. Okay. But he's also coming.

Quicker than you think. And that might catch you out too. Alright. Both those things. So the king is coming again. In verses 22 to 25. The days are coming. When you will desire to see one of the days of the son of man.

And you will see it. And you will not see it. And they will say to you. Look. There or look here. Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes. And lights up the sky. From one side to the other. So will the son of man be in his day.

[12 : 52] But first. He must suffer many things. And be rejected by this generation. The kingdom of God. Is slower than you think. Jesus seems to be worried. That within the generation of the disciples.

They might be misled. There might be claims. That the son of man has already returned. The son of man is here. Or he's there. Don't be fooled. Says Jesus. In other words.

Just as bad as thinking. That the kingdom of God. Hasn't come at all. Is thinking that the kingdom of God. Is here. In its full extent. Jesus is back.

And that there's nothing. More to look forward to. Jesus says. Don't be misled by that. There's various claims. Isn't there. Over the last 2,000 years. It's probably there in the New Testament days. Certainly in Ephesus. That Paul writes to Timothy in Ephesus. About those who say. That the resurrection. Has already happened. That this is already the final day. And they destroy people's faith.

[13 : 51] And we could point to lots of other episodes. Where people have claimed. The son of man is here. Something of the Mormons. The Mormons in America. They wrote down their message. On gold tablets.

That was only readable. With x-ray goggles. Because. Now I don't think many of us. Are going to be fooled by that. Are we? But the idea. That this is all there is.

That this is the fullness. Of the kingdom. And there's nothing left. To look forward to. So live from now. Jesus says. Don't be fooled. You will not miss it.

When it comes. As the lightning flashes. And lights up the sky. From one side to the other. So will the son of man. Be in that day. The return of the king. Will not happen in secret. It will not be.

That you didn't notice it. Because you were on the scene. Everyone will know. It will happen. And it will happen. Slower than you think. It's one of the issues. That troubled the New Testament church.

[14:48] That you're expecting. When they seem to me. Jesus to come back. In their lifetime. And he didn't. As he said. He wouldn't look at verse 22. The days are coming.

When you will desire. To see one of the days. Of the son of man. And you will not see it. But of course. That has caught some people out. Doesn't it? He is slower than we think. And so maybe it will never happen.

Maybe we think. That his first coming. The leper healing. That's going to be the only one. And the world is just going to carry on. And on. And on. And on. And on. Just as it is now. For the rest of the time.

And Jesus says. It will be slow. There will be a delay. Even a 2000 year delay. Which is longer than many thought it would be. But he says. The day is going to come quicker than you think.

And that will catch people out too. So Jesus gives two illustrations. From the book of Genesis. Both with the same punchline. Look at verse 26. Just as it was in the days of Noah.

[15:50] So will it be in the days of the son of man. They were eating and drinking and marrying. And being given in marriage. Until the day when Noah entered the ark. And the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise just as it was in the days of Lot.

They were eating and drinking. Buying and selling. Planting and building. But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom. Fire and sulfur rained down from heaven. And destroyed them all. So will it be. On the day when the son of man is revealed.

It's a brilliantly crafted little section. It begins and it ends. With the revealing of the son of man. They have the bookmarks. And in between there are the two examples. Both with exactly the same punchline.

It destroyed them all. It destroyed them all. And the reason they were all destroyed. Was it became. It happened quicker than they thought. Didn't it? Unexpectedly. People were carrying on.

Like things will go on forever. Like they are the rest of time. And it is always done. It will always be. And destruction came and destroyed them all. And the point is made with those verbs.

[16:49] Eating and drinking. Marrying and giving in marriage. And the flood came and destroyed them all. Eating and drinking. Buying and selling. Planting and building. And fire and sulphur. Came and destroyed them all.

The king is coming again. Be ready. Slower than you think. And that catches people out. But quicker than you think. And that will catch people out too.

And I think the whole point of those words. Marrying and giving in marriage. Drinking and eating. Planting and building. They are just a description of as many verbs.

As Luke can find. To pile up what is normal life. So you can think of other ones. To do it today. Other verbs. Ferrying the children to school.

Putting your clothes in the wash. Watching the football. Planning your retirement. Doing your hair. Just think of anything you like.

[17:51] They are just normal life words. That is what they were doing. They were taking the children to school. They were watching the tally. Until Noah. Entered the ark. And the water destroyed them all. They were deciding what to wear.

They were ironing their clothes. They were reading their books. Until the day when fire and sulphur. Rained down from heaven. And destroyed them all. Quicker than they thought. And so it caught them out.

And so what have you got to do. In the light of the future coming of the king. You've got to be ready now. Because there's no time. It's left for preparations later.

So look at verse 31. On that day. Let the one who is on the house stop. With his goods in the house. Not come down to take them away.

And likewise. Let the one who is in the field. Not turn back. In other words. You'll not be able to do anything on the day itself. Because it'll be too late. It's too late to get into your house. To get your possessions. Too late to get in from the field.

[18 : 46] When you're out at work. Too late. You've got to be ready in advance. Remember Lot's wife. She tried to turn back. She looked back.

I don't know if you know the story. It's on the day that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven. And Lot's wife looked back. And she was turned into a pillar of salt. It's one of the most unusual miracles in the Bible.

It captures your imagination. Doesn't it? The point is very clear. Don't turn back. When judgment is coming. It's too late to go back.

Too late to sort it out then. Too late. When the waters begin to fall. It's too late to start building an ark. When the fire started falling from the sky. It was too late to have escaped the city.

When the son of Getman comes back. It will be too late to respond in faith then. The king is coming. Be ready. Jesus goes on doesn't he?

[19 : 44] This judgment will divide everyone. Look at verse 34. On that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. Some have taken this verse to be evidence for what is known as the rapture.

There will be an airplane pilot and another man driving a plane. And they will be driving along the plane. And suddenly the airplane pilot will be sucked out of the air.

Because he's a Christian. Into the rapture. Or something like that. There's a whole series of books. Aren't there? Novels. Called the Left Behind CDs.

And films. I know some of you like them. They are terrible theology. Alright? Let me say that to you. You might think they're great literature. Which I wouldn't agree.

But they're terrible theology. I think it's very misunderstood to say that. Jesus isn't necessarily saying here. Two of them will be grinding together. One will turn around to the other one.

[20 : 43] And the other one will be in the sky. That isn't what it's saying. It's talking about two destinations. Alright? Two lying in the same bed. The two will be called to different places.

There will be division. Amongst every group of people. Amongst the people in this church. And it will be too late. Too late. The disciples said.

Today in verse 37. Where Lord? And he said to them where the corpse is. There the vultures will gather. On the day of disruption and judgment. The kingdom of God.

Is here. Trust the king. The kingdom of God is coming. Be ready. And I want to say to you. I think there's very good reasons. Why Luke has put these both here together. In one chapter.

Because if you just have the be ready he is coming lesson. You might say. Well where's the evidence? How do I know that this crazy prediction you're making about the future.

[21 : 41] Why should I believe you? Why should I believe that God is going to do anything in this world? Why should I believe his kingdom is ever going to come at all? And the answer is this.

Because the kingdom has already come. It has come. And it is coming. The king has shown up. The king has already revealed his identity. The king has already proved who he is.

Look back in history. Two thousand years. See the evidence. Of the healed lepers. Look at the eyewitness testimony. Of sight given to the blind. Look at the lame who walk.

Look back in history. And see the suffering of the son of man. That he is rejected. And see his resurrection. See the evidence that the king is here.

And so heed the warning that the king is returning. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king. Trust the king particularly.

[22 : 40] When he tells you that the kingdom of God is coming. But I think there is another reason. Why the two are put together. The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king for mercy.

The kingdom of God is coming. Be ready for judgment. Do you see that? The kingdom of God is here. Trust the king for mercy. The kingdom of God is coming.

Be ready for judgment. Because when the king came the first time around. He didn't heal all the lepers in the world. It's a massive mistake people make on that.

He didn't heal every leper. It's one of the things that fools people into thinking. That maybe it hasn't come yet. That is what confuses the rabbis. They had such extraordinary promises.

About the kingdom. They just imagined that the world would be changed beyond recognition. But in many ways the world after 33 AD when Jesus died. And the world before.

[23 : 39] Well looks much the same doesn't it? The hospitals were still full of blind people. There were lepers. There were lame people. There were still wars. There was political oppression. Still occupying forces in the Middle East.

And you would be tempted to think. Well nothing has changed. Because Jesus did not come the first time to sort everything out. Jesus came the first time to announce his salvation.

The day of mercy. And that is what this leper says to him. Isn't it very importantly? He says have mercy on me. And Jesus says your faith has saved you. The kingdom of God has come.

So salvation is now available. The king has died and risen again. And rescue is on offer to anyone who turns to him. But the king is coming again.

And judgment will come. The king is coming again. And it will be too late. So we live in the middle don't we? We live in the middle of the two comings.

[24 : 45] When the answer to how's the kingdom of God has come. It's not yes. Or no. But other.

And a bit of both. And we should do the same this morning. As that one leper did. The Samaritan. And we should fall on our face.

At Jesus' feet. And give him thanks. And put our trust in him. And we should not do what Lot's wife did. We should not turn back. We should not take our eye off the ball.

And fall asleep on the job. Jesus right in the middle of this passage. Gives a summary of what it means to be a disciple. Look at verse 33. He says whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life will keep it. It's a summary of discipleship. You give your life up. For the sake of following me.

[25 : 46] You hand over the reins of your life to me. And when you do that. On the last day you will save it. How should we live between the two comings of Jesus?

We should live as those who trust that the kingdom is here. Salvation is here. The king is worth following now. Before the day when the king will come back.

Slower than anything. It's 2,000 years. And so many are drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. And eating and drinking and buying and selling. And planting and buying and ironing.

And taking the kids to school. And putting out the bins. And doing the garden. And mowing the lawn. And investing and planning their holiday. And it catches them out.

Because life between the two comings is a day when salvation is on offer. But life after the second coming is too late.

[26 : 52] Let's pray.