

# Living as Citizens of God's Kingdom Now

## DARRELL DELANEY

Imagine walking through a foggy valley with only a lantern to guide your steps. You cannot see far, but you walk anyway, because light, no matter how small, changes everything. That is what living in God's kingdom is like. We carry the light of Christ into the world's haze, trusting that his kingdom is coming, even when we cannot fully see it. In this final episode of our series, we are exploring how praying, "Your kingdom come," causes us to live now like heaven is already breaking in, because it is. The kingdom is not just a future hope; it is our present calling. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will talk about what it means to live in the kingdom now, not just someday; and how your faithfulness lights the way; next on *Groundwork*.

## SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

## DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney: and Scott, we are in our fourth and final episode of our series on the kingdom of God; and we have covered a lot of ground; and there are a lot of things that we have talked about. In the first episode, we talked about how this theme is all over the Old and New Testament; and we see it all over scripture. In the second episode, we talked about how the kingdom of God has come *near*, not just in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament.

## SCOTT HOEZEE

Then in the third episode, we looked at the parables of the kingdom, and how Jesus taught us about the kingdom; and we saw so many surprising things there, Darrell; that the kingdom of God is the biggest reality of them all, and yet, it doesn't look that way for now. What does it look like for now? A mustard seed, yeast that disappears in dough, a treasure hidden in a field; so many surprising things in that third episode when we looked at the parables. Now, in this final episode, we are going to ask, as you just said in the introduction there, Darrell: What does it mean to live in the kingdom now? Not just to hope for it, but to pray for it and to reflect God's reign in our everyday lives.

## DARRELL DELANEY

So, I don't know if you guys have been paying attention in this series, but the kingdom of God in concept has been coming closer and closer and closer; and Jesus has said: Okay, this is the concept that we prophesied about and we talked about. This is the concept that is near; this is the concept that is in your midst; and now, we actually live that out by reminding ourselves of what Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew Chapter 6, when he says: <sup>9</sup>"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

So, I was taught in the worship class when I was in seminary that when you say: Your kingdom come, your will be done; you could literally pull back the curtain of the sky and see that worship is happening in the heavens; and that is the exact worship we want to see here on earth. Even though that is at cosmic proportions, they are already worshipping now in real time. We taught this when we did the series on Revelation. They are doing it in real time right now, and we are coming under alignment with what they have called us to do, and we are mimicking exactly what we see up there.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Some time ago, I read something by somebody or heard somebody speak. They said: We put some of the wrong cadences when we pray the Lord's Prayer. So, like at the end now, we add this last line: It is not actually in Luke or Matthew, where Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer, you know...

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Thine is the kingdom...

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory *forever!* As if the "forever" only goes with the "glory." It is supposed to go with all three: The kingdom, the power, and the glory forever—all three, right? Here, we pointed this out...we touched on this, I think, from Luke's version earlier in this series. We say: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth. And it is like, just the *will* be done on earth? No; it is the kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven; as you just said, we want that: "On earth as it is in heaven" to apply to both the kingdom and the will of God; and we want them to come right here; and again, as we have said throughout this series, whenever we live in Jesus-like ways, that is where the kingdom is; and that is how it comes on earth; and you are right. It is sort of like, in the book of Revelation when John sees the worship going on in the heavenly throne room with "Worthy is the Lamb," that is not a vision of the future; that is a vision of what is going on right then and there; and if we could just see that, we want to participate in that right here in our lives on this earth this day.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

I love this prayer because it actually focuses us on God's agenda and not our own. Not the world's agenda; and we actually are focused on making sure that we prioritize the way he does things. It is kind of the culture of heaven, but we want the culture of heaven to inbreak into here; and we wonder what that looks like, and actually, the Apostle Paul talks about what it looks like in Romans 14:17 when he says:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Those are characteristics of God's reign; and they are not all flashy all the time, Scott. They are not tied to political or personal gain, but they are rooted in the Spirit and expressed in community. It shows up when we forgive instead of retaliate, and when we share instead of hoard and when we welcome instead of exclude; the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit are present.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Which we have used the image in this series before that kind of living for the kingdom means that it is like you are flying upside down. You know, we touched on the Beatitudes and all the people that we think are losers are the winners in God's kingdom. What you just described, Darrell, means living against the grain of the world, and the world is going to push back. We have to say "No," to the empires of greed and violence and pride that we see all around us. It means choosing the way of the cross; the way of Christ; and treating our coworkers well; raising our children well; being thoughtful in how we spend our money; advocating for justice for all; but of course, all of that isn't new, Darrell. Listen to this from the prophet Micah. Chapter 4: In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. <sup>2</sup>Many nations will come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. <sup>4</sup>Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

That is the peaceable kingdom; that is shalom, Darrell.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Well, this shalom that you just mentioned in the kingdom of God changes the way we behave. It is interesting...I am trying to figure out why they were bringing swords up the mountain of the Lord anyway...

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Yes, right.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

But even though they do bring those swords with them, they are being beaten into plowshares, and their spears are being turned into pruning hooks; and so, nation will not take up sword against nation, which is peace instead of war; it is justice instead of oppression; and it is abundance instead of scarcity. When you have the kingdom of God, you have shalom; and my definition of shalom is not just peace, but nothing missing, nothing broken, and everyone has what they need. And the good news about that is, we are not doing it alone. We have the Holy Spirit helping us to do that.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Like Neal Plantinga updated that *swords into plowshares* image once, saying: We would take Sherman tanks and turn them into John Deere garden tractors, right? So we could cultivate something with them, but we don't do that alone. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live out the kingdom, even when it is hard; even when we go against the grain; even when society resists us, we do it with the Holy Spirit's power. The kingdom of heaven has come near—the kingdom of God has come near; and the kingdoms of this world, that are so broken and violent and unjust, they are going to give way one day, Darrell, to the reign of Christ; and to evoke a line from near the end of *The Lord of the Rings*: Everything sad will come untrue. That is what we are looking forward to.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Yes; and so, we are going to continue this conversation when we talk about what it means to live in the kingdom today, and that is not just wishful thinking, but a call to action. So, let's dig into that in the next segment. So, stay tuned.

*Segment 2*

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, why don't we just get practical. What does it look like? What is kingdom living looking like in our lives today? When Jesus says: Your kingdom come; it is not just a flowery, poetic language. He is giving us the posture that we walk in daily. We need to do that with intention; we need to do that with humility; and we need to do that with purpose.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

And we know, as we have been saying throughout this series, as we are in the final episode now, it is, as we said, going against the grain; it is flying upside down. We looked at some of the parables in the last program: The last will be first; the first will be last. Many are called, few are chosen. The meek will inherit the earth, from the Beatitudes. "The greatest of you," Jesus says, "must be your servant." You have to become like a little child to receive the kingdom of God, which in Jesus' day did not mean being cute and charming, as a little kid. It meant being a second-class loser; little children were not viewed as valuable until they could grow up and do something. Jesus said: You don't have to do anything; just be like a little child; that is how you are going to receive the kingdom. So, it means living with a whole new set of values.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

When you take that seriously, Scott, it shapes the way you show up in your relationships; in your neighborhood; in your work; in your school; and it means that you slow down and listen to people instead of reacting in anger. It means checking your own pride when you are tempted to make it all about you. It means forgiving someone, even when they don't apologize, because kingdom living looks like that. It also shows up in places of need. If you look at this verse in Matthew Chapter 25, Jesus talks about the final judgment and how the king will say to the righteous:

<sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" <sup>40</sup>The king will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

So, Jesus is intimately connected to the ones who we serve, and he is so connected that he says you did it for him.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly; and in that parable...you know, it is the sheep and the goats. Here, he is talking to the sheep; and they will end up saying: Well, we didn't know that was you, Jesus. And then the goats say: Well, we didn't do any of that because we didn't know that was you, Jesus. If we had known it was you, you know, we would have clothed you and fed you and visited you. And Jesus said: You didn't have to know it was me. It is just enough to know it is one of my brothers or one of my sisters. Then, that is how we have to view. It is that different set of values. We look at the world through different eyes than other people. We see value, we see need, we see Jesus where other people don't. So, when you mentor a teen, when you donate food to a food pantry or clothes to a clothing bank, when you are showing kindness to somebody who is struggling, you are not just being nice. You are not just paying it forward, as we say; you are living the kingdom of God.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

It is a beautiful thing. Another thing you need to know is that living the kingdom is not always dramatic...

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

No.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

It doesn't always draw a lot of attention to itself. Sometimes it is as small as choosing not to gossip or laugh at that inappropriate joke or whatnot. Sometimes it is just refusing to let cynicism steal your hope. It is showing up with integrity in a system that kind of rewards compromise, Scott; and it is doing the right thing when no one is looking. That is the essence of the integrity that we are called to; and in those moments, we are bearing witness to another way of being.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly, exactly; and Paul talks about that in Philippians 2 in this very famous passage: <sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant... <sup>8b</sup>He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! So, that is kingdom living, Darrell. That is choosing humility; it is choosing sacrificial love; it is choosing obedience to God's will; and we have said throughout this series that we bring the kingdom near and we participate in the kingdom when we live like Jesus; and as we all know, the core virtue that Jesus incarnated...that Jesus embodied better than anybody...is humility. That is the one New Testament virtue that unlocks all of the other virtues.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

I love how you said *we*, when *we* do it, because it is beautiful when we as communities live like this; and people begin to notice. Actually, it was one of the marks of the early Church, if you look at Acts Chapter 2. It says: <sup>42</sup>They devoted... (they, the believers, the new people, the ones who joined the church)... they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common... <sup>46b</sup>They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

So, people were actually being drawn in by the community living that the Holy Spirit calls them to live while they were practicing these kingdom practices; and it was not just a trend; it was like, it was reflecting heaven; it was a beautiful thing, and what would happen... I want to know this, Scott... what would happen if our church or community started to take this kingdom vision very seriously? What could happen?

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

I am sure it would look just like it does now... not really. Indeed, what would it look like? What an impression it would make. You know, it is interesting from that passage, before Christians were called Christians... they got labeled that in Antioch sometime later... I don't even know if they were really referred to always as *the Church*. What was the very first descriptor for this new community that we read about in Acts 2? The Way. They called them people of The Way; and what is The Way? Well, it is Jesus; it is Jesus' way; it is humility that we picked up from that Philippians 2 passage. So, what would it look like if we really embodied today The Way, as these people did? That we would live that way in our effort to help make possible what we prayed about in the Lord's Prayer we looked at earlier: Your kingdom come *on earth* as it is in heaven. When we participate in The Way, that is what happens.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Well, I have often taught this to the young people when I did youth ministry, that when Jesus said: You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, we talk about that in the context of today, meaning Jerusalem was home for those young guys. So, they did it locally; and then the concentric circles continue to go out: School, job, campus, extracurricular activities; and even social media is where you can live out these kingdom values and be a light and witness; and we are called to do that in very powerful ways; and this passage shows us, in Acts Chapter 2, how they lived out what they believed, and they showed generosity and humility and care for one another; and we could do that for anyone, especially the ones who the world ignores.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Yes; there was an early historian, way back in the Roman Empire and so forth; a secular historian, not a Christian. In one of the works, he says that what really caught his eye about these people is their distinctive way of living. I mean, here is a secular guy trying to figure out this church thing, and he says: They just don't live like the rest of us. They are generous; they share; they build hospitals... you know, all that good stuff. Well indeed, that is the kind of impression we want to make on the world today, and when we do, then we indeed show people the reality of the kingdom; but of course, we still live with the tension. What we call the already and the not yet. So, how we deal with that is what we are going to take up as we conclude this episode and this series. So, stay tuned.

*Segment 3*

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Scott, as we bring this episode, and ultimately this series, to a close, we want to pause and just take a deep breath, because we have covered a lot. I mean, we went from Genesis to Revelation pretty much, and we could have had a deeper series with a lot more episodes in it, because we covered a lot of ground; and we covered covenant, prophecy, creation, Jesus' ministry, Church witnesses, and the hope of what was to come; and the heartbeat of it all is the kingdom of God is the life that we live. In the segment we just wrapped up, we talked about how your

kingdom come, your will be done is not just what we say but it is how we live; and so, there is the tension of what is already here and what is not yet come, and we are living in the middle of that, even though Jesus inaugurated it when he said the kingdom is here.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly; yes, the kingdom of God is not just a little tidbit of theology. It is not a concept; it is not an idea; it is a study; it is a reality to live, as you just said; but the fullness of the kingdom, which we long for, is not here yet. Jesus did inaugurate the kingdom, as you just said, with his life, death, resurrection, and ascension; he is reigning at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, as we say every time we say the Apostles' Creed. So, it is present; it is real; it breaks into our world. You know, earlier in this series, we looked at how, in the book of John, he called Jesus' miracles *signs*, like arrows that pointed to the reality of the kingdom. It is real. It is just above our heads. And once in a while, ZOOM, it breaks into this reality, as Jesus turns water into wine, or as Jesus heals a blind man\*, or as he raises Lazarus from the dead. That was the last of the book of signs. The kingdom of God is right there, John says; and every once in a while, BOOM, we see it, but it is not fully here.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

When I have taught this, I have actually used as an illustration a couple of hula-hoops as Venn diagrams; and so, I had one hula-hoop that explained how the kingdom of God is here and inbreaking; but then, the other hula-hoop is the world, and how it currently is, and that means it is not fully here. So, they would overlap just a little bit, so you could see that they were touching. So, this showed that we can have joy in the midst of challenge, we can have hope in the midst of trial, because the kingdom of God is breaking into our midst; and that is the essence of what Jesus is telling us to pray, that your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven, the kingdom is already going, and in full up there, but when we live as he called us to live, it is inbreaking even more; and each and every day, we can actually be part of that process. It is a beautiful thing to see when faithful witnesses serve.

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

And it is also something we long for. You think of Romans 8, you know, how the whole creation is *groaning* ...

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

Groaning...

### **SCOTT HOEZEE**

In expectation. Paul uses a unique Greek word there, which means like, the whole creation is up on its tippy-toes; it is craning its neck: *apokaradokia*; one of my favorite Greek words. The only time it is used in the whole Bible is in Romans 8...*apokaradokia*...we are craning our neck...straining to see what is coming. It is like being in an airport and waiting for your son coming back from Afghanistan in the Army, and you cannot sit still. You are on your tippy-toes. It is like if you put your face forward a couple more inches, he will get here quicker, or something. That is the posture of the whole creation and of all of us, and that can be kind of agonizing. We are in the pangs of childbirth, Paul says there.

### **DARRELL DELANEY**

Yes; and so, here is the trick, though. The trick is to hold onto hope, even though it is not fully happening. He says: Eagerly anticipate and patiently wait at the same time. And the final vision of the kingdom is not just a personal one for just you and me, but it is going to affect all of creation. Look what it says in Revelation Chapter 11. It says: <sup>15</sup>The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

And that declaration echoes through all of time and all of history, because history is headed somewhere. It is not just some arbitrary place, but it is toward restoration; it is toward reconciliation and renewal under God's reign through Christ.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

A lot of us cannot hear that Revelation 11 verse without thinking of *Handel's Messiah, the Hallelujah Chorus...*

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Yes.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. The music swells at that point, and: He will reign for ever and ever!

So, history is headed somewhere, right? I mean, a lot of times philosophers and people who don't have religious faith...they sort of say: Does the universe have a purpose? Is there, what we call, a *telos*? Is there a goal? And, well, secular people say: No; it is all just a big booming confusion. It is just big, booming chaos. It has no point...there is no point. But we Christians don't believe that. We believe history does have a point. We believe the universe has a point. We believe the universe has a goal, and it is the full, incoming of that kingdom of God; and meanwhile, Darrell, we live today to help make that future believable, and how do we do that?

**DARRELL DELANEY**

Well, there are some ways that we can actually do this in our daily life, Scott. It means that if we choose peace when others choose conflict, it says: As far as it be among you, live with peace among everybody...as far as it be on you. It means advocating for justice when the world looks away. I think that sometimes we can get caught up in retaliation or violence or revenge, but justice is actually doing what God would do in that situation, in speaking up for those who don't have a voice.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

Exactly; and, as we saw earlier in this program, from Matthew 25...the sheep and the goats...it means caring for those who are on the margins. All through the Bible, the marginalized: the widow, the orphan, the immigrant...the stranger in your midst; take extra care of them, God said, in Leviticus and elsewhere; and Jesus continued that, right? You visit the sick, you feed the hungry, you give water to the thirsty, you go to prison, you remember the ones who are forgotten. There is a prison ministry called: *Forgotten Man Ministry*. We forget about the people in prison. Don't do that; and when you remember them, you are living in kingdom ways. Stay faithful, even when it hurts; even when it would be easier to compromise. Hold onto joy in a weary world. Hold onto hope in a time where there is rampant despair.

**DARRELL DELANEY**

You mentioned *Forgotten Man*...there is *Reach the Forgotten* jail ministry that I was a part of when I was serving there, and it is really interesting that it allowed the love of God to come into you and share with the person, but you also are blessed when you go. So, I think another thing is not drawing attention to what you do, and saying: Hey, look what I did over there. Take a look at that. Because God does not get the glory when we draw attention to those things; and also, we have been shaped by our prayers, and these types of prayers that Jesus gave us: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...actually shape our priorities...shape our hearts...and we have been challenged by the call of that and grounded in purpose.

**SCOTT HOEZEE**

From 1 Corinthians 15:58: Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, (Paul writes) stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

That is what kingdom living is like; and Darrell, I think we really need to remember the beauty of what we have been invited into.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

Yes; it is beautiful, because as long as we are waiting for heaven and we are building the signposts of the here and now, we can, in our communities and in our workplaces, get to reflect the good king that we serve; thanks be to God.

## **SCOTT HOEZEE**

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at our website: [groundworkonline.com](http://groundworkonline.com). There, you can share what *Groundwork* means to you; and you can make suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

## **DARRELL DELANEY**

*Groundwork* is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit [reframeministries.org](http://reframeministries.org) for more information.

**\*Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says “dead man,” when he meant to say “blind man,” referring to the story in John 9:1-12.

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**<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/living-as-citizens-of-gods-kingdom-now>**

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