

Walking on Water Part 4, The Story of God We are Grafted Into July 1, 2018

This morning we get to move on in our quest to be the best, strongest water walkers we can and to do this I think it is important to establish our roots.

So...let me back up just a bit from the sermon title, Saints have been blessed in Christ. We will look at this next week, but I thought we should take a deeper, more in depth look at the verses found in Ephesians 1:3-6.

I have entitled this, The Story of God We are Grafted Into

Look with me at our passage.

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

As we celebrate the founding of this nation, we all know that we have the privilege of being born into this great country. We look back on July 4th and celebrate our founding fathers and the sacrifices, the hard work and the institution that is the United States of America.

It might not be perfect, it might be faltering in some areas but it is still the best deal, the best country in the world and we get to call it our own.

Well, there is another country that we, as Christians get to be a part of. It is not so much a country as a kingdom, a spiritual kingdom.

When Paul was writing his letter of encouragement to the Ephesians, he began by praising the One who was the originator of it all. In verse three he exclaims, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So many times we are looking for a blessing from God but here, Paul is blessing God. He is giving God praise for what He has done. Look at some of the action words I have underlined.

God has: blessed us; chose us; predestined us; adopted us; freely bestowed His grace on us.

When we come to understand all the things God has done, even just a little bit, like Paul I think we too will exclaim, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Think about what it means to be chosen by the Creator of the Universe. To be adopted by Him and to have His grace poured out into our lives.

Note to self...Silence makes one think...

These things just didn't happen by chance. It says here that we have been predestined to be adopted by Him and to receive all the blessing of heaven.

I know we could get lost in a discussion of predestination, there are many theories of what it means. The reality is though, the thoughts and ways of God are higher than ours and to try to understand God fully is an exercise in futility.

Here is my partial understanding so far on what it means to be predestined or chosen specifically by God. God has a plan, a big, all encompassing, predestined kingdom plan. He created the beginning, the middle and the end. The call to be part of this plan is available to everyone on earth but it is our free will which dictates whether or not we will enter this plan.

However predestination works, the reality is you are here. God choose you, you choose God and you have been grafted into His Kingdom plan and as I mentioned, this plan has a beginning, a middle and an end.

This morning, just like what we are doing on the 4th, celebrating our beginning, I thought it might be good for us to have a quick history lesson so we can celebrate with Paul the kingdom story of God in story form. I have summed up the Old Testament in one broad stroke, leading up to Christ. And then next week we will see how Christ enters into the picture and how because of Christ, we are grafted into the unfolding story of God and His kingdom.

Let's begin with our history lesson.

God on throne slide 1. In a land, far, far away there was King. But this was no ordinary King in an ordinary land. This was the King of all kings and of all kingdoms. In fact, this King, who was all-wise and all powerful, was the one who created all the known kingdoms.

Even though this King had a kingdom He decided to create a new one (**slide 2 Earth**) and He named it Earth. In this new kingdom He created a special place and He called it Eden (**Slide 3 Eden**) and within Eden He placed a prince and a princess to tend it.

Eden was a lush garden with forests and all kinds of plant life and animals and it was watered from several rivers. Everything prospered and grew in lush abundance and variety.

As the prince and princess walked through the garden they would stop, pick and eat some of the luscious fruits and vegetables that were growing in abundance.

Their king would sometimes come down in the afternoons and take a walk with them in the cool of the garden and they would talk about all sorts of things. The prince and princess enjoyed these talks very much and they always felt very, very loved by the King.

The King had a lot of faith in His prince and princess. So much so that He put them in charge of His kingdom. Be fruitful and increase in number, fill my kingdom and subdue it. I give it to you to rule over it of He said.

Every plant in the kingdom is yours for food and all the beasts and birds of the air and everything I have in this kingdom is yours. I only have one rule. Do not eat of this tree which is growing in the center of the garden but everything else it yours.

What a wonderful time this was. What a great and wonderful responsibility as well. The prince and princess embraced the task they had been given and they took very good care of the garden. Life was good, in fact life was very, very good.

But then one day, this odd creature (**Slide 4 Satan**) came along and he could speak their language. This creature was pretty cool and he seemed to know a lot too. He talked like he was a personal friend of the king and he began sharing some things that made a lot of sense when you stopped and thought about them.

He seemed to be offering the prince and princess some insider information that would enhance their lives. Surely the King didn't really mean they would die if they disobeyed Him by eating from the special tree. Surely He wanted them to be like Him. The princess thought about it for a moment, her first mistake, then she looked again at the fruit of the tree and saw that it sure looked sumptuous and good to eat.

Okay, she couldn't resist now. She picked the fruit and tasted it. Boy was it good. The prince should try some she thought so she took some over to him and he took a bite as well.

And just as soon as he did, something happened. Something changed. They couldn't put their finger on just what it was but the way they were looking at

things, at themselves, at each other was strange. They were instantly uncomfortable with their lives. Then they heard the King walking in the garden, calling out their names but they were so uncomfortable they hid from Him.

But, the King was persistent. He found them and He began to question why they were hiding. He seemed to know what was going on but He wanted to hear it from their own lips.

Shame entered into the kingdom. Guilt, suffering, death and a lot of other things that were not found in the garden were now a part of the kingdom. In fact, the prince and princess had to leave the garden (**Slide 5 Cast out**) and go out into another part of the land that was very dark and inhospitable. It seems that they were in another part of the kingdom they had not seen before.

Maybe it was even another kingdom, a dark kingdom where life was much tougher, a kingdom where food was harder to come by and child bearing was hard and painful. Things had really changed. Soon, children came and then the unthinkable happened. One child killed another. (**Slide 6 Cain & Abel**) How could this happen? This is so far away from the times when they were walking and talking in the garden with the king in the cool of the mornings.

Oh how they wished they could turn back the clock...**Go black...slide 7**

Life came and went in this dark kingdom. Generations passed, the weather changed and a great flood that covered the land occurred. If it were not for one family, the prince and princesses line would have vanished forever.

But the king was a good king and he found mercy in his heart for one man. He saw that this man was righteous and that he loved and was obedient to the king. Build a ship, (**Slide 8 The Ark**) the King said, put your family and two of every kind of animal in it and I will save you from this great flood.

The man was obedient and did everything just as the king commanded him to even though it took many, many years.

The rains came, (**Flood slide 9**) covering all the kingdom. The man and his family and all the animals remained safe and dry and when the waters receded, the king came and opened the door.

(**Rainbow slide 10**) Come out and live here once again. Be fruitful and multiply, fill the kingdom with your kind. But something was noticeably different in the relationship with this man and the king from the relationship prince and princess had.

The man and his family were just subjects not royalty. There was no authority given to them by the King to rule and reign. They were just to live out their lives in simple covenant relationship with the King.

Time passed again as time does. Generations came and went until, there was born a man named (**Abram slide 11**). No one knows for sure why the King singled out Abram but He did.

Come, out from your country and go where I will show you to go, said the King. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Where he was going the man named Abram didn't know. How the king was going to bless all peoples on earth he didn't have a clue but the man loved the King and had faith in him so he went.

Out into the land of promise he went and he settled and children were born and married and had children of their own.

Time marched on and things changed again. The descendants of the man named Abram found themselves enslaved by a lesser king in another land. **(Egypt slide 12)** Did the King of the world forget His promises? Did He forget about His subjects? For a few hundreds years it seems like He did.

But then the King spoke to a **man named (Moses slide 13)** who he had put in a special position. "I have heard the cries of my people and it is time for me to rescue them," He said. I am going to use you and through many miracles, my people will be set free.

It came to pass as the King said. Many wonderful, miraculous things were shown to those in authority and they bowed to the King and allowed His subjects to go free.

As they were traveling back to the land the King had promised them, He gave them some laws and decrees to live by. **(10 commandments slide 14)** He said, "listen carefully to the voice of the King and do what is right in my eyes. If you pay attention to my commands and keep all my decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on those in the foreign land, for I am your King, the One who heals you."

Slide 15 'You yourselves have seen what I did and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

What an exciting time to be alive! The king has come and delivered them and now He wants them to come into a special relationship with Him. He is going to anoint them, bless them and allow them to be more than His subjects, they are going to be His special people with a special function in the world.

Priests of the King to the world! Think of it...The King's representatives...His liaisons, the ones whom He is establishing His kingdom through. What an awesome and wonderful opportunity, representatives of the King. Through us and our people the world can be saved.

It all seemed exciting at the time but for most, it was too much. The King was asking too much. The King wasn't leaving enough time for them to pursue life for themselves. This King expected them to be a unique, peculiar people, different from all those around them.

This was just too hard for most of the people. They wanted to be liked, they wanted to fit in and to be popular. They wanted to have a ruler, a physical king like all the people around them had and so...the King, even though He knew it wasn't the best, He gave them what they wanted because He loved them so much.

Kings Slide 16

He gave these people a series of kings. Some good, most bad.

Things change...time passes as time does. Hundreds of years pass by and the people are no longer serving the King. Even though the King raises up many special men and women, (**Prophets slide 17**) warning and pleading with the people to come back into a special relationship with the Him, most do not. The people continue to go their own way, even serving the King in the way they think is best but not the way the King asked them to.

Dark kingdom world slide 18

The world continues to slide into darkness. For hundreds, thousands of years the world, because of the introduction of sin, death and destruction is a dark and inhospitable place. Life is hard. Will there be any relief? Is there any hope for anything better? Will things ever be restored to their original splendor?

What happened to the promises the King made to Abraham so long ago?

PAUSE

We are going to end here today but we know this is not all there is to the story of God and His kingdom.

The passages in Ephesians we are going to look at next week, verses 5-12, will answer the middle of God's plan for His kingdom and His plan for mankind.

Christ is introduced to the world and He changes everything. He allows us to become part of God's unfolding kingdom plan.

Let's pray.