

Man's Petty Kingdom

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon calls believers to recognize the urgency of God's kingdom amidst the shaking of earthly institutions and to enter into a deeper relationship with Christ.

Duration: 43:46

Scripture: Deuteronomy 11:22-23, Joshua 3:3, Matthew 6:33, John 1:17-18, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:15

Topics: "Denominations"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging his role as a messenger of God and emphasizes the importance of radical choosing and repentance. He highlights the two categories of people at the Jordan: those who are curious or indifferent and those who are broken and contrite, longing to be joined with God. The speaker emphasizes the need for a radical descent into death and separation from selfishness, ambition, and worldly desires. He references the story of Joshua and the crossing of the Jordan as a call to choice and obedience to God's leading. The sermon concludes with a mention of a critical time at the Jordan when God called the people to choice and the importance of following the ark of the covenant as a guide.

Transcript

Well, I want to take you this morning to a river, as I took you the other day to a mountain. It's that famous Jordan, which is ever and always the profound place of choice and of crossing. And before I read from it, I just want to read that paean of praise to the Church that is given us in the Book of Hebrews.

Don't turn, just listen to the amplified rendering. But rather, it begins. You've not been called to the old-time religion and to the revival of the things that titillate your soul, because they're couched in the things that are familiar and the sentiment of old.

And you're not called to the worldly wisdom of men and their diagnostic helps for your church growth. But rather, you have approached unto Mount Zion, even to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless multitudes of angels in festal gathering. And to the Church, the assembly of the firstborn, who are registered as citizens in heaven.

That's far more than Christian respectability. And to the Judge, who is God of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect. This is evidently then something more than Sunday church.

It's evidently a suggestion of a far more intensive quality of relationship, where the spirits of just men can be made perfect, that they might be citizens in heaven. And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. So see to it that you do not reject him or refuse to listen and to heed him who is speaking to you now.

My prayer this morning, especially, and in these days in general, has been this, that I might be to him as a mouth for you. For if they, the Israelites, did not escape when they refused to listen and heed him who warned and divinely instructed them here on earth, revealing with heavenly warnings his will, how much less shall we escape if we reject and turn our backs on him who cautions and admonishes us from heaven. Then at Sinai has worshipped the earth, but now he has given a promise, yet once more, will I shake and make tremble not only the earth, but also the heavens.

Now this expression, yet once more, indicates the final removal and transformation of all that can be shaken. That is, of that which has been created in order that that which cannot be shaken may remain and continue. May I prophesy that if you have not experienced yet a shaking individually and in your churches and throughout your movement, that you shall, and that these speakings have been the beginning of shakings.

For God will not allow to remain that which cannot remain. All that is earthly, all that has its origin in human initiative and in sentiment and in tradition, however hallowed and however dear, is going to be crumbled and brought into the dust. Mark those words.

We're going to see movements collapse, stagger, sway, and fall. We're going to see the most lustrous charismatic churches and great multi-million dollar plants be terrible stigmas. Empty houses, unable to pay their mortgages and to save themselves from their financial indebtedness, who are carried off by the fever of the hour in great building promotions.

We're going to see some of the glossiest and snazziest of present-day ministries turn to dust. There's only one thing that will survive the shaking. It's a kingdom that is firm and stable that cannot be shaken.

So offer to God pleasing service and acceptable worship with modesty and pious care and godly fear and awe, for our God is indeed a consuming fire. With that admonition, will you turn with me to the first chapter of the Gospel of John? I can't think of a heavier imperative for the Church of Jesus Christ and the earth today than the incarnation of God in them. The mystery of God, which is His deity, His heavenly glory, revealed through flesh.

That's much more than being correct, scripturally sound, and respectable. It's a glory. The phenomenon is a glory.

And no man has seen God at any time. But the only unique begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him. God will not do anything outside His Son.

I want to tell you that. If your movement is not in His Son, and His Son is not in your movement, you shall be outside the holy end-time purposes of God. You may make a sound, you may have your activity and your programs, but it counts for nothing that is eternal.

Only the Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, not in tradition, not in respectability, not in human wisdom and devices and programs and methodologies, but in the bosom of the Father, in the heavenly place, He shall reveal Him. My Jewish life was confronted and stopped short when I beheld in a simple Gentile girl, whom I should have disdained and utterly cast aside as not worthy of my attention, the light to

lighten the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. In her simplicity and in her transparency, God was in her face.

And the word, it says in the 14th verse, became flesh. Human and incarnate and tabernacled fixed His tent and lived a while among us, and we actually saw His glory, His honor, His majesty, such glory as an only-begotten Son receives from His Father, full of grace and truth. My only regret is I've not been able to speak to you on truth.

It's full, or it's not the Son. It's full of truth and grace, or it's not the Son who is in the bosom of the Father. If you're making polite references, that soothes and smooths the situation over, but it's not true.

It's no longer full of grace and truth. It's no longer the Son in the bosom of the Father, and there's no longer the revelation of the Word made flesh, which alone can save men out of death. You can have all your evangelistic programs, but you need to be full of grace and truth.

John testified about Him and cried out, This is He of whom I said, He that comes after me has priority over me, for He was before me, and He takes rank above me, and He existed before I did. How we need to parrot that cry. Do you realize that there's one who has priority over you, and who takes rank over you? I'll tell you that if I would just summarize the whole issue at the end of the age, it's this.

It's the petty kingdoms of men versus the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of heaven. It has priority over you, and it takes rank over you.

Have you seen that, and have you acknowledged that? Out of His fullness, we have all received and had a share, and were all supplied with one grace after another and spiritual blessing, gift upon gift. For the law was given through Moses, but grace, favor and spiritual blessing and truth came through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time.

The only unique Son, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom, that is in the intimate presence of the Father, He has declared Him, He has revealed Him, brought Him out where He can be seen, He has interpreted Him, He has made Him known. God will not do anything outside of the Son that reveals the Father. And the question is this.

Are you in the Son? Are you in the glory of what God is establishing now in these end times in the earth? The body of Christ. I'm not impressed that you can use the phrase glibly. I'm only impressed with the actuality.

But I'll tell you to be in this requires a coming out of something else. You cannot come into this Son with all of your trappings and all of your own vested interests. There's no place for that in the bosom of the Father.

And this is the testimony of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? He was this ungainly character, sounding off in his shrill way in that muddy place in the Jordan in the wilderness. An offense. He confessed and admitted the truth and did not try to conceal it, but acknowledged, I'm not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I'm not. Are you the prophet? He answered, No. Then they said to him, Well, who are you? Tell us so that we may give an answer to them that sent us.

What do you say about yourself? He said, I'm the voice of one crying aloud in the wilderness, the voice of one shouting in the desert. Prepare the way of the Lord. Straighten out the path of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

The messengers, it says in the 24th verse, had been sent from the Pharisees. And they asked him, Why then are you baptizing if you're not Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? John answered them, I only baptize in water, but among you there stands one whom you do not recognize and with whom you are not acquainted and of whom you know nothing. These things occurred in Bethany across the Jordan where John was then baptizing.

Can you picture the scene, folks? Pathetic prophet, ungainly and unattractive, creating some kind of ruckus in that distant wilderness place outside of Jerusalem. It's a Jerusalem which has been abandoned of God. It is no longer the holy city.

It's a city whose wine has turned to water and its silver to dross. The city of righteousness has become the city of harlots. And such a phenomenon does not take place in a day.

It's a gradual erosion. And usually those who are there are unwary and unseen. The temple still stands, but the Shekinah glory of God has long since departed.

There are still priests, but they are flunkies and functionaries sent by the Pharisees to inquire of what is that ungainly thing taking place in the muddy Jordan at a spot just before it empties out into the Dead Sea. I had that kind of strange sense this morning that this is where we stand now, spiritually speaking, at this point of time. There is something that is happening outside your Jerusalem, outside your religious establishment.

Have you seen it? There are only two classes of people that were there at that point in time then, and there are only two classes of people now. The first is indignant, suspicious and somewhat hostile, or at best curious, mildly, to see what's going on. Men who have been sent by the Pharisees, not by God, to inquire what's going on here.

How dare anything go on outside our Jerusalem? Of these, John the Baptist said to them, there's one here whom you do not recognize and with whom you're not acquainted and of whom you know nothing. John himself was not able to discern and to see him and to realize who this son was, except that he would glimpse him in the waters of repentance and separation. I'm not impressed with the glib and cheap and easy, unctuous mouthings of the phrase, Body of Christ, which is the corporate, many-membered Son that shall reveal the Father, which is the Church of the Firstborn, the Zion of God, the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City.

Have you really seen it by revelation? In the scene that changes everything, there's only one place that you can discern it. It's in the waters of separation, the radical descent into death, which the Jordan is. And I'll tell you that by the eye of God, there are only two classes of men, those who sense their woeful and terrible inadequacy, those whose hearts are burning because they're discontent with mere religion, in whose heart there's a cry for the coming of the Lord in fullness and in glory.

And we stand again, historically, at such a time, the soon coming of the Lord. And there's again a place where God is bidding men to repent of their vested self-interest, of their fierce and intense personal ambitions, of their own desires for their future, of all of the welter of things that pertain to their religion and

to their Jerusalem, and to come out of that and to come and to humble themselves in that muddy place and enter the waters of radical separation from selfishness, from ambition, from power, from the love of prestige and the esteem of men, that they might glimpse a son who is being brought forth and to whom they can be joined in those selfsame waters, one whom you've not recognized, one with whom you're not acquainted, and one of whom you know nothing. I'll tell you, if you'll not enter the waters at this time, for there's certainly a timing of God, had they known the time of their visitation, Jesus wept as he looked upon Jerusalem on his way to the cross.

I believe that these days have been a time of visitation for your denomination, that if you'll not enter the waters of separation, think of what it will cost you, who love the fraternity of like-minded men, who are presidents of institutions and heads of denominations, how scintillating and intoxicating and heady it all is, how full of things that are pompous and earthly, worldly. That which is esteemed of men is abomination in the sight of God. I'll tell you, if you'll not enter these waters here now, they'll flow into the Dead Sea and your denomination with them.

You're at a fierce and severe radical moment of choice, and it behooves you to see who is being brought out of these waters, that is God's end-time instrument for the revealing of himself to men before the day of his judgment shall come. The Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he'll not do anything outside that Son. He has priority over us and rank over us, over our denominations, over our interests, over our individual churches and careers.

Only in him shall the glory of God be revealed. A Son that shall receive the Spirit of God without measure and enter the familiar synagogues that have long ignored him and look up in stark amazement at the power and the authority at which he shall speak under that Spirit, for the Spirit of God shall be upon him, for he hath anointed him to open the eyes of the blind, to set the captives free, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of his soon-coming wrath. How dare we think to conclude the messianic tasks except by the Spirit of God without measure, which is given only to a Son.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who has priority over me, who takes rank above me, because he was before me and existed before I did, before old-time religion. He was, and at the end of the age he shall be. And I did not know him and did not recognize him myself.

It wasn't because I was a long-time Pentecostal or I was even related to him that I was able to recognize him. But in order that he should be made manifest and be revealed to Israel, be brought out where we can see him, that I came baptizing in water. It's only the place of repentance that reveals the Son.

For as many who will not be content to stand on the bank as the curious or the indignant, but will come as the broken and the contrite to enter the waters of radical separation. John gave further evidence saying, I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and it dwelt on him not to depart. And I did not know him nor recognize him, but he who sent me to baptize in water said to me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descend and remain, that one is he.

And I have seen that happen. I actually did see it. And my testimony is that this is the Son of God.

You should be patient with me this morning. I just want to make one reference to another critical time at the Jordan when God again called the people to choice. It's in Joshua the third chapter when a people had been stumbling about, if you will, in a religious wilderness forty years, a time of judgment.

And the hour had come to cross. And God said and commanded the people saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God and the priest of Levites bearing it, you shall remove from your place and go after it. Come not near unto it that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way heretofore.

God intimated some things to you that pertain to the kingdom and of course within the purview of a morning speaking time he could not disclose details. But how few of you were interested sufficiently to pursue me and to inquire. You have not been this way heretofore.

And you shall have no knowledge of what remains on the other side except that you can enjoy the apprehension and the fear and the tremblings which are right because on the other side is that final showdown with the powers and the principalities of the Gilgashites and the Amorites and the Hivites. The Canaanites cities which have ever and always been opposed to the spirit of God and to his people. That final battle in the taking of the land that on his holy hill his temple may be established and the glory of that house shall be greater than the former.

There's a land to be possessed folks for those who enter the Jordan and cross over. It's a time for radical commitment and you cannot bring the things that you've enjoyed in the wilderness into the new land. God who is gracious and has honored our immaturity with daily manner now shall require us to live from the land and enter in to apostolic vigor and to reality when you shall see the ark of the Lord being lifted by the priests and the Levites you shall remove from your place and go after it.

Though you have not been this way heretofore when the priests who bear the covenant of the Lord shall put their feet in the Jordan it shall part and the people shall go over as on dry land. As the priest that bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan all the Israelites passed over until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. Unlike any of the previous messages in these days which you have called lectures I'm going to give an invitation at this conclusion to the priests and to the Levites who are the bearers of the ark for the hour has come when the ark of God is being lifted and he's bidding his people pass over.

There's a class of men unlike those that were sent by the Pharisees who were religious flunkies to do the bidding of those who are concerned with their establishment in Jerusalem a mere shadow, a disfigurement, a grotesque caricature of the true priests whose service is to God only who is the first one in and the last one out who has got to stand in the midst of swirling waters as if on dry ground in the faith and the commitment and the courage that will part the waters and enable a people to follow after. Jerusalem was no longer a holy city the whole land lay under Roman bondage the Greek Hellenistic spirit seduced and prevailed over all the people how much like this present hour. The glory of God had departed the temple and the priesthood was corrupted, concerned only with their prestige, their position and their advantage.

But outside, isn't that always the way? Outside. Outside religious Jerusalem at the faithful place of crossing at the muddy wilderness spot the ark of God was again being lifted. It was at a final place of opportunity for radical separation in the waters of repentance before the Jordan ended its journey into the Dead Sea.

Today there is a sun coming forth out of those waters upon whom the Holy Spirit will descend and remain without measure greater than any denomination and all of them together. The curious and the indignant cannot know or recognize Him only those who enter the waters of death to pride, to recognition of men, to

religious ambition to power, to prestige. Because you have obeyed my voice, God said to Abraham in multiplying, I will multiply you.

You don't need charts and graphs. If you've been unwilling to go up, will you pass through? If you've not heard the voice of God will you this morning see the ark of God being lifted by the priest and the Levite? When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God and the priest, the Levite, bearing it then you shall remove from your place and go after it though you have not been this way heretofore. God has not invited you to move to a 160-acre farm as He has us.

We're only one model and form and variant of Christian community. We've not set before you some narrow kind of self-interest asking you to emulate us, but we have proclaimed a kingdom. The same kingdom that John the Baptist came proclaiming, the same kingdom of heaven that Jesus both began to teach and to preach and the same kingdom that was in the heart and the mouth of Paul to his final and to his dying day.

It is still in the heart of God. It's a kingdom that eclipses all. It takes priority and rank over all.

If you'll follow the ark of God which is being lifted though you have not been this way heretofore. I have such a sense of sadness to see this fantastic facility, this school, these buildings, the men and families that live all about it as a cluster and to see and to recognize that it is an institution and not an organism. It has all of the precious potential for the expression of the kingdom if you would but make but one radical apostolic shift from things institutional in the systems of men to the things that are apostolic and that are the expression of his life in the community of God which is his kingdom, the Zion of God, the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down from above where the spirits of just men are made perfect.

Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Where are the priests of the Lord who are the first ones in and the last ones out? One of your dear ministers said to me privately the other day when you began speaking God I was ready to shout amen but one of the leaders of our movement cautioned me with his finger to keep quiet. How many of you can say with Elijah as the Lord my God liveth before whom I stand and how many of you are conscious that you are observed and seen by the men of your movement who can see to your promotion and advancement? I'll tell you if you'll continue that way you'll be the priests that were sent by the Pharisees rather than the priests who can bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

Where are those who will be the first ones in and the last ones out? God does not give you or explain to you what the crossing is going to mean. What lies on the other side? What kinds of struggles and battles are before you? What it will mean to possess the land and to live from the land? What it will mean to leave behind the institutional securities and the comforts and the things that are familiar and proven and tested? To explore and to find your way into that new relationship with God's people by which they can by one shout break down the walls of those who oppose them. I'll tell you that's more than Pentecostal bellowing.

It's the one voice of those who have been called into an army and who have exposed their flesh to the cutting of the sharp knife of the Lord till they be healed and each man find his place in the camp. All of that awaits you on the other side for those who will cross over but there'll be no crossing for the people until the priests will be the first ones in and the last ones out. Priests who can stand firm on dry ground and I'll tell you it'll get dry in the midst of the flood that the people might pass over into the land of promise, kingdom living.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That kingdom is only to be found and to be established on the other side. And I want to tell you as a Jew that there are two and a half tribes that never passed over.

Gad, Manasseh and Reuben never ever made it. Lost forever to the purposes of God and to the people of Israel because they could not bring themselves to pass over. The grass was just too lush on the side which was already familiar to them and their distinctive was that they were razors of flesh.

What a melancholy picture we have in the New Testament when Jesus himself encounters one of the descendants of that people now ridden with demons to Gad, Areen. Living in the cemetery with dead man's bones naked and in chains. What a last and melancholy statement of a people who would not cross over.

And nothing had changed because when he cast the demons out of this victim, they drove him from their coasts more concerned for the loss of their swine than for the recovery of a man made sane. I'll tell you dear children if you have ears to hear, it's a fateful thing not to cross when God bids you cross. For you've not passed this way heretofore.

We have been too long in the religious wilderness more concerned for the raising of flesh than the building of this kingdom. We are not told what awaits us on the other side, but the end we know. The Shekinah glory of God in the temple that shall be established on his holy hill.

Where are the priests of God who will bear it? And where are those who seeing it will remove and go after though they've not been this way heretofore. Believe in the Lord thy God so shall you prosper. Believe in his prophets so shall you be established.

I have been faithful to speak the words that God has put in my mouth and now you are called. Not merely to compliment me because I've challenged your thinking and it was an interesting lecture, but if this is not very God calling an entire people to a new place in apostolic reality in the establishing of a kingdom, a new quality of life and relationship that will require the radical alteration of much and at the beginning of which is to be found in the waters of repentance and separation for our ambition, for our self-interest, for our vanity, for our pride, for our self-seeking, for loving the esteem of men more than the approval of God. So I'm going to ask you to bow your heads with me.

Precious holy God, it's with trembling that I have to announce to this people what is my function in your body. Lest they think that they were hearing only a speaker. Lest they think that this was an interesting series of days with different aspects of the truth that somehow all fit together when you have in your providence set before them alternatives that require radical choosing.

Indeed now as then there are only two categories of men at the Jordan. Those who are merely curious or indignant that anything can take place outside their Jerusalem and those that are broken and contrite who want to see and glimpse the sun which is being brought forth out of these waters and be joined with him. Precious God, may these words be as the lifting of the ark before this people that as many who have eyes to see and ears to hear will be willing to remove from their place though they have not been this way heretofore.

And my final word precious God in prayer among these dear precious people whom we love with your love is for those whom you've called to be the priests of God to go before and to bear the ark to put their feet in the waters of the flood though it's threatened to engulf them to hear the roaring of the lions that are

displaced in their lairs by the riverside at the flood stage the shrieks and the cries of fanatic and worse that they shall hear. But the waters shall not part except there be a class of men whose first loyalty is to God before anything else who will be ever and always willing to be the first ones in and the last ones out. In the name of Jesus and as a minister of this everlasting gospel I want to ask those men whose hearts are set for God who will be his priests to get out of their seat and to come and to kneel by the front of this platform to be the first ones in and the last ones out.

You have no idea what this is going to cost you you'll suffer the misunderstanding of men you'll offend many you'll have no distinctiveness in yourself you'll be a priest swathed in the blood of sacrifice from your fingernails to your elbows dripping with the gore of sacrifice there's nothing attractive about the calling full of tremblings wholly separated unto God bearers of the ark precious God in Jesus name if this is not some kind of mock and hokey religious service if this is something that was born in heaven and these were the words of your speaking and this is your invitation then I ask you now to seal in heaven by name every precious man of God who has come to bow before you and to acknowledge that you have priority over them and rank over them who are laying on the altar of God

this morning sanctifying themselves every petty ambition and thought for the future of what they were going to be and what they were going to do and the audiences that they would impress and the elevated positions that they would attain in the movement willing that it should all perish that they might have but one distinction in God to be the bearers of the holy ark that there might be a city set on the hill out of which the Shekinah glory can again come to flood a dark earth with the knowledge of God unto the salvation of despairing millions everywhere thank you for these precious priests Lord seal them by name give them the preparation that goes far beyond schooling that men can provide shape their lives in testing and in trials that they shall not balk at floods and swirling waters

that they can stand still in the midst of a dry ground and not panic and not seek for devices and techniques and methodologies to save them from their predicament but trust the God whose ark they bear and now a final word of invitation for the people who will follow after those of you who have seen the ark of God being lifted this morning and are prepared to follow after these priests who bear it into a land of promise it'll blow your mind it'll destroy every conventional religious category you have ever entertained it'll bring you into a fierce new place where privacy as you've understood it will be a thing of the past it'll be a new honesty and quality of truth in living lives that are transparent and open to each other it'll be a people who are together it'll be Peter standing with the

eleven it'll be Peter and John going up together at the Gate Beautiful it'll be behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity it'll be the end of things feigned and postured it'll be the end of religious faces it'll be kingdom reality I ask you to stand if you're prepared to follow after this morning willing to cross though you have not been this way heretofore art can't you explain to us what it's going to mean? what are the particulars? no it's just for those who love him enough to follow without knowing I'll tell you this I cannot believe that we can cross into this land and still continue as we were there has got to be radical alteration unto glory precious God seal this moment in heaven Lord woe to those who have stood idly to this invitation because of

the fear of man but seal this scene in heaven mighty God may it be a profound and historic moment of crossing into a new land precious God a new reality a new glory that shall make you known precious God save us from the image that we have adopted from the world about what church ought to be what a minister ought to be what a denomination ought to be and give us in a burning way by fire what that holy

city is that new Jerusalem that cometh down from above that Zion of God that church of the firstborn the spirits of just men being made perfect oh God thy kingdom come thy kingdom come and not some patsy middle class religious alternative thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven transform this school from an institution to an organic and pulsating expression of your life by a people live

by faith who flow together by the spirit of life a glory to God in the earth that shall produce priests of God and not functionaries and hucksters and promoters seal precious God this consecration this morning and work out the application of it in the minutest detail as we cross over with you to the other side hallelujah thank you precious God thank you precious God seal it in heaven Lord and bring it forth thank you Lord thy kingdom come thy kingdom come intoxicate us for the kingdom of God may we be drunk with the words no longer the petty kingdoms of men but the kingdom of thine own dear son into whom we have been translated at the place of crossing this day in Jesus name we pray Amen

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