

## "PLAYING KINGDOM"

(Discourse by Benjamin H. Barton, beloved Pilgrim who finished his course in June, 1916. The Pastor esteemed him very highly -- see reprint page 5930, par. 5. This particular discourse is stated in very simple language, but when studied carefully, it will be found to contain some very practical suggestions to aid in doing the Lord's will as perfectly as possible. Starting on page 311, 1913 Convention report. Toronto, Ontario, Canada.)

You will find our text this morning in the words of our Saviour in the Gospel of Matthew, 18th chapter, 3rd verse: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

I understand, dear friends, that our heavenly Father's kingdom is a very, very ancient one. There was a time when God had no kingdom. God was lord of the great universe, but there was not a being who could look up to Him as a subject to his kingdom. When the heavenly Father created the first being, He created His kingdom. That first being, God's first faithful subject, was our dear Redeemer. Every additional creation meant an addition to God's kingdom; every being brought into existence brought a new subject to look up to that great Sovereign. When God created our earth, it was a part of His kingdom; when He made man and placed him upon the earth it was an addition to His great host of subjects.

We can understand, in harmony with Psalm 145:13 that "God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all generations." From the day that first wonderful one was brought into existence, down through the thousands of years to the time of man, there had never been an act of rebellion upon the part of any subject in God's universal dominion. But when Satan entertained the thought of sin, and subsequently presented the temptation to mother Eve; from the time they listened to the tempter it meant rebellion in God's Kingdom; some of the subjects had rebelled against their glorious and wonderful king. We know how readily our heavenly Father could have quelled that spirit of rebellion at the start. We are sure He could have blotted the evil one from existence before Satan tempted our first parents, but for good and wise reasons he allowed the rebellion to continue. God simply declared a blockade of all the ports of heaven against this earth; He quarantined our earth, and limited Satan as declared in Isa. 14:12, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations." He was cut off from the privilege he had formerly enjoyed of going to other sections of God's great universe, as the holy angels still can do.

We find that Satan, the usurper, has been the god of this earth. We know some of the terrors of his rule; the evil consequences following his wicked reign. But it is not always

to be this way; for God some day intends to have the earth re-annexed as a part of His kingdom, and man restored amongst the number of His blessed subjects.

During the past 1,900 years God has been gathering out a class to be, with Jesus, the great agents, the instruments in due time for the establishment of the kingdom. They are to be the great rulers in that wonderful kingdom. You remember this was one of the inspiring thoughts presented to the followers of Jesus, as in 2 Tim. 2:11, 12: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." The Saviour said as we read in Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne." Again in Rev. 20:4, "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Now, dear friends, you and I are among those invited to an heirship in that kingdom, and we want to be in the kingdom. In the popular use of the term kingdom it includes the territory with all of its subjects, as well as the ruling aristocracy, but in the more accurate sense the kingdom does not relate to the subjects or the realm, but to those who occupy the authoritative position in directing the affairs of government. In the higher sense of the term it will be Christ and the church who will be in the kingdom, to rule over and bless the world. In a secondary sense we might say that those who will be princes in the earth could be counted in the kingdom, and finally all willing to come into harmony with the Lord will be in the kingdom.

We find in God's word many suggestions as to the requirements on your part and mine if we are ever going to be of that kingdom class, to share with Jesus in disseminating the blessings which God intends the world to receive. Our text gives us to understand something of what is required of us -- "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Childlikeness, first of all, conveys to our minds the thought of humility. This is very important, for you and I will never have a place in the kingdom unless we develop this grace of humility. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time." We cannot share in the kingdom unless we become childlike in humility.

In the second place, we find in the child trustfulness. See the degree in which the little child trusts its father and mother. It does not exercise trustfulness in an irresponsible stranger. Unless we develop this trustfulness in the Lord which will lean upon Him and His word, we cannot be in the kingdom.

We might consider the innocency of the little child. It does not have evil motives in its heart. If the child has had a quarrel with another, how readily it is settled. It does not hold spite, and we must have that spirit if we are to be in the kingdom.

But there is a very important part of the subject which I wish you to consider this morning. One of the peculiarities of the little child is its playfulness. How much play means to its little heart. The little girl plays at keeping house. She fondles her little doll babies as tenderly as would a real mother her child. The little boy plays at being a preacher. He gets on a chair and preaches a sermon to a make-believe audience, and, dear friends, unless you become as little children in playing kingdom you will never be in the kingdom of heaven.

I know you think that is a strange expression. You say, "Do you mean trifling about the kingdom; treat it as a light matter; play about it?" No, that would not be childlike. The child does not treat its play lightly. How seriously it takes its play. Many little girls take with more seriousness the care of their doll babies than do some mothers the care of their real babies. The little child plays at many things which help it in later life to take part in the actual things. You and I are expecting to share in the kingdom and we must play at it now; we will show that our hearts are really in this matter. We have the Lord's word on this point in 1 Cor. 6. The Apostle calls attention to the fact that one brother was going to law with another brother. He expressed surprise, saying, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? If you are going to be entrusted with such great privileges of judgment in the time to come don't you think you can do a little play judging now, and settle some of these difficulties? Why, the simplest minded brother in the church should be able to settle a matter like that." We have the same thought presented by the Apostle Paul in Heb. 6:4, 5, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away to renew them again unto repentance." Regarding the statement that some "taste the powers of the world to come," we note that in the Greek instead of "world" the word is "age." It refers to the Millennial Age. What is meant by the powers of the age to come? What powers of righteousness and blessedness will there be manifested to the world? We answer that the powers will be Christ and the Church. The thought is that you and I, figuratively speaking, put ourselves into the Millennium in some respects. We say, "If Christ is going to reign then I want Him to reign over me now. If God is willing that the church shall share with Jesus in that wonderful reign to bless the world, I am glad to serve my brethren and serve my Master now, as I expect the world will have to serve them then." That is tasting the powers of the world to come, as Peter says in 1 Pet. 5:5, "Be subject one to another."

If we say, "I am not going to have Jesus for my king," or, "I do not want this brother to dictate to me about my course in life;" or "they tell me they don't want me to be the elder

of the class for the next season, but I am not going to respect their election, I am going to have my way anyhow and start up a class of my own," it would indicate a wrong condition of heart; it would indicate that we were not willing to play kingdom, and unless we are willing to do that we will not get into the kingdom of God in the greater sense. As children we are going to play that we are in the kingdom of God; to play that we are in the Millennium. In other words, we will do His will voluntarily now, as the world will have to do it when Christ shall reign in righteousness.

We remind you that the kingdom of God will be universal. What a terrible thing if it was not so. What an awful thing it would be if, when the kingdom is set up in power, we found that the Lord had taken in Chili but had left out Patagonia; that He had taken in New York but left our Missouri. The Scriptures tell us that Christ's dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We understand the River Jordan is here referred to, because the work of the next age will begin there and continue to the ends of the earth. Finally there will not be one person living who will not acknowledge His supremacy; there will not be one corner of the earth that will not acknowledge His sovereignty.

So if we are going to play kingdom we will say, "I want every part of me, every one of my powers, every corner of my being in subjection to Jesus, as in the next age every corner of the earth will be in subjection to Him. In the next age it will not all come into subjection to Him everywhere at one time. The work will have its beginning and sweep out over the world until every land, every place will be in subjection to Him. So when we make a consecration of our wills, the reign of Christ is established in our heart, the Jerusalem of the body. We give our heart to him and everything else is supposed to go with the heart, but the full realization of it and the complete bringing of all into subjection to Him is a gradual process. The spirit of consecration reaches our hands and feet and tongue, our ears and eyes and we say, "I want every single part of my being, every element of my existence to be brought into subjection to the will of Christ. What a terrible thing it would be if the Lord Jesus reigned over the ears but not over the tongue; if He reigned over the hands but not over the pocketbook. What an awful thing it would be if the Lord reigned over us when meeting with the Lord's people, but not in our own homes. We recognize that this reign of Christ will be universal in the next age, so if we are the proper kind of children we will want it to be universal in us now. I believe that is one of the things which causes spiritual weaknesses and sickness in the Lord's people; they pay so much attention to one thing and neglect another.

Would it not be terrible to have some part of that glorious kingdom to come prove a failure? (Of course we know it will not) Is not the same thing true of us? If the rule of Christ has taken hold upon us, and we find ourselves careful about some things but indifferent about others, there is something wrong. I was thinking about this the other day while the convention was going on. If the good sister we are about to speak of

recognizes this she will doubtless be glad that her experience may bring blessing to someone else. In the midst of the service this sister left the auditorium. She forgot that there were others listening and every step she took could be heard for quite a distance. I am sure everyone near by lost a few words. I could not help but think, "There is one good sister (I am sure she a good, noble sister) who may have the rule of Christ controlling her tongue, and her eyes and ears, but He is evidently not ruling over her feet." The rule of Christ in us should control our every act; in everything, whether great or small; in the matter of using our money; as to the words we speak; the use we make of our hands; the matter of the way we walk; we want to do everything with an eye single to His honor and glory. When we feel that way we are playing kingdom pretty well.

We recognize another wonderful thing about that kingdom is that each moment will be made to count as much as possible. Christ and the church will not be saying during the first hundred years or so, "There are several hundred years yet and there is plenty of time to lift up the world." I am confident them will not be one wasted moment during that thousand years. If you and I are neglecting the hours and moments here we will not be in that company, because we would want to waste the time there, too. It will be a great help in making our calling and election sure if we impress this thought upon our minds.

Sometimes we make the mistake of ignoring the moments, and again we make the mistake of crowding the experience of several days into one moment. A brother told his experience in learning the lesson of "moment by moment." He was a traveling man and thought that he should distribute the literature as he went from place to place on the train. He said it was very humiliating to go through the train and have people look at him questioningly, or smile in a way that expressed "you are a fool to engage in work like that." He really got to the place where he thought it would bring on nervous prostration or something worse. He said, "This is something awful; I am going to take the train again and I suppose the Lord will expect me to distribute tracts. I will have to do it this week and next month and -- O, I wish I did not feel this way about it. I wish I could do it as easy as other brethren." He was getting distracted when the Lord made clear to him that he could do the work moment by moment. It was like this. As he was packing up his grip for one of his trips, he thought, "I suppose the Lord will expect me to take some of those tracts along; the Lord will want you to distribute tracts on the train." Then he thought, "No, the Lord only wants you to put some of the tracts in the grip. Well, I guess I can do that." The Lord says, "That is all I want you to do; just take the tracts along." "Well now, is this enough, Lord?" "No, you had better take a few more; my rule is full measure pressed down." "But you want me to put these out on the train, Lord?" "No, just put them in the grip." "Well, what now?" "Close the grip up; it is time to go to the station." "You want me to give out those tracts on the train." "No, just carry them to the station." After the conductor had taken the tickets the Lord says to him, "Now open your grip." "O, you want me to hand out the tracts to the passengers?" "No, just open the grip." "Now, take out an armful of tracts." "But you want me to hand them out?" "No,

just take them on your arm, a few more. Now, that will do; walk down to the end of the car." "O, you want me to give a tract to each of this trainload?" "No, just walk down to the end of the car. Now, hand a tract to that lady." "But you expect me to go through the whole train and give one to each person" "No, just give a tract to that lady. Now hand one to that man across the aisle; now another to that man on this side." The dear brother told me he no longer has trouble about handing out the tracts as he used to because does it moment by moment. I think that is just the way the kingdom will be run in the next age. I think each one of the Christ will be striving to make each moment the best of the whole millennium; and when in the next moment comes it will be the same way with that. Think what a thousand years of such moments will be. That is the way to play millennium. What does the Lord want me to do this moment? Do it as though this was the only thing you would ever have an opportunity to do for the Lord. This does not mean that we are to be foolish. Let us be faithful this moment, and that will make it easier to be faithful the next moment. This is the best way of playing "Kingdom of God" that I know of.

If we are going to play kingdom it will not do for us to get very much discouraged. I notice when the little boy and girl are playing, if there is something they cannot do they try over and over again. We read in Isaiah 42:4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth," until the favorable opportunities of divine grace shall have reached everywhere. We should be developing this same spirit. You say, "I cannot help feeling discouraged. If discouraged, perhaps you have been expecting too much of yourself. We are glad that the Father and Son make allowance for our weaknesses, but sometimes we do not make allowance for ourselves. Not that we should make allowance in the sense of being careless or indifferent, but we should keep before our minds the fact that we are imperfect. We fail, and will fail every day down to the end of our lives. I fail every day, and expect I will until death. I realize we cannot live a perfect life, and have no expectation of living one day perfectly. We expect to blunder, but that does not mean we try to blunder. We need to say, "I am going to try it over; if I fail I will try again. I am going to keep on trying; I mean to win in this race; nothing is going to turn me aside; by God's grace I am determined to be faithful, realizing I have the Lord's help."

If you say, "I cannot be an overcomer; I do not believe I can be of that class. It is as much assaying, "I do not believe God is almighty believe He can do everything else, but He cannot make an overcomer of me." We have a helper to bless and uphold and uplift us, and I know He can make an overcomer of me. If I am made an overcomer it will be because of what He has done; if I am an overcomer it will be because I have been willing He should make me one.

You hear people say, "The time is so short; I would not be discouraged but for the shortness of the time." My dear friends, I believe when the church is made up we will find that some who have made their calling and election sure will have come to learn

God's will, made a consecration and run the race faithfully and come out amongst that glorious company, probably within a few weeks. You say, "Is there any scriptural substantiation of that?" No, but it is so much like the Lord that I think it will be that way. It would so wonderfully manifest the fact that the excellency of the power was of God and not of us; that it was His power working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.

I know the time is short. Not many years ago when a stone building was to be constructed it was a tedious process to shape and fit the stones. Now they have a pneumatic chisel which strikes about 1,500 blows a minute and they can do more in an hour with it than could be done before in a day. Don't you think God has some pneumatic tools, too? If the time is short and the work must be finished the Lord can bring a pneumatic chisel into play and the work will be quickly finished. The Lord is able to bring us off more than conquerors.

We come to another thought. We realize that the work of the next age will be done in the way that will glorify God most. Nothing will be done in a mechanical or perfunctory way. They will say, "how can we do this work so as to bring most glory to the name of the Father?" I believe that is the spirit we should have today; not merely to do something, but that which will be to His honor and glory. We see this spirit of wanting to do something leads to fanaticism. We read not long since of a man who cut off his hand because he wanted to please God. The spirit of the Christian is to make his hands do more to the glory of God. We are to glorify God, not in a single respect, but in every particular.

Suppose a brother is sick, should I go to visit him or would it be better to spend the time reading something of a scriptural nature. What would the Lord want me to do? I would think it over. If I found the sick brother had not been receiving as many visits as it seemed to me he should have, and I believed it would be to God's glory to visit him, I would go. It seems to me here is one way in which we may all test ourselves and determine what God would have us do. If you are anxious to glorify Him, to do with you hands, with you feet, with your tongue, with your pocketbook, and with all of your powers what will be to His glory, then the Lord knows that you will glorify Him when you get the divine body. If you are trying to bring all of these things into subjection to Him now, you will want to bring all of mankind into subjection to God's will when the time comes that His kingdom is established, and His will must be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

There is a great deal of food in this illustration. You can recognize a great many ways in which the things to be done in the next age are such as we must be doing in ourselves at the present time. Let us keep in mind, "except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Except ye play kingdom in

yourself, subjecting your own will, members, powers, possessions, etc., to the Lord your God, you will not be fit to be entrusted with the responsibilities, etc., of that coming kingdom.