

The One About The Big Party.

Series: The Big Story of the Kingdom of God
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Kingdom of God.

Ever wondered why you so enjoy a good movie? Or a show? Ever wondered why Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood and Kenya's film industry just keep growing no matter what issues moral, political or otherwise we have with them?

Most people's pastime? Netflix and others add the chill. It does not matter who's account it really is, right? Many of you will leave church today and go home and turn straight to a show you left unfinished among the 5 others you have pending.

See, human beings are narrative creatures. We love a good story. We see ourselves in stories. Sometimes to know if I will get along with someone I will ask who they see themselves as in my favourite show. Of course cos its all about me.

It is more than that. We are living out a certain narrative script. You don't think about it but you are living out a narrative script as an individual.

For example, don't answer these out loud but just mentally complete them.

1. The best age to get married is...?
2. You should have kids by age...?
3. You should retire at age...?

Do you realise you have an answer to those questions that you did not have to think about? And if you look at how you are living your life you will find that it is shaped by the narrative script you are leaning into.

And it is not just surface things like those but also deep things. Finish these statements mentally

1. Good Work is...?
2. A Good Family is...?
3. Sex is...?
4. God is...?

You see even the big things of life, we live them out from a certain narrative template. You are playing out a drama whether you are aware of it or not. Too sad, that we are often unaware of it though.

So why don't we spend a few weeks talking about Jesus' Big Story. What was his narrative? What drama was he living out. What narrative is he inviting you to. Because if you do not know what the narrative is, how do you know if you are leaning into it or not? How do you know if you like the narrative in the first place?

(Let's Pray)

So the Bible is a collection of stories and poems and teachings and they all tell one big story. Have you ever wondered why God comes to us through a teacher and one who uses stories? Jesus was a story teller. He taught very big truths and almost always through short stories. It is because, again, human beings are narrative creatures.

So many times Jesus taught, most times he opened his mouth to speak he would talk about the Kingdom of God. Most of the stories he told were about giving people a picture of the Kingdom of God. He would say things like, "This is what the Kingdom of God is like". Which is like saying, this is how to think of the Kingdom of God and then he would go ahead and tell a story.

Other times he would tell stories to describe God, the King of the Kingdom. Jesus was preoccupied by this one narrative. The Big story, the story of the Kingdom of God. And if someone is talking about the same thing over and over again, every time they speak, that thing must be a very big deal.

But every time I talk about this I have to put this in the right context. When we hear Kingdoms we often think of places, like Eswatini in South Africa or the United Kingdom. We often think of physical borders.

But this is not what Jesus was referring to. It was not limited to a place. We need to get that right because often people get confused and think that it must have meant the nation of Israel and then for those who think the church has replaced Israel end up thinking that the church is the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus thought and taught of the Kingdom of God, he was more precisely referring to the dynamic rule and reign of God.

Think about it this way, if you are a citizen of Kenya, no matter where you are the rule of Kenya extends to you. You have Kenya's protection and your responsibilities towards the government of Kenya remain.

So when Jesus talks about the Kingdom he meant God's rule and reign and the extend of his authority and power. The will of God.

And because Jesus is King in the Kingdom, everywhere he went he would authoritatively declare that the Kingdom of God had come. It is about the presence, the authority and the will of the King more than a place. Everywhere the will of God is done, the Kingdom of God has come.

So for example when we get over bitterness and we forgive each other, that is God's Kingdom come. When we overcome addictions we though we just could not, this God's Kingdom come. When an orphaned child is adopted into a loving family, this is God's Kingdom come. When we see people get healed, this is God's Kingdom come. When those oppressed by evil spirits are set free, this is God's kingdom come. When a government official does not ask you for bribe at the Kenya border without which you won't be allowed back into your home country, this is God's Kingdom.

So what we will do in the next few weeks is take one of the mini stories Jesus told about the Big story and use those to step ourselves into the Story of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible often uses certain images to illustrate the Kingdom of God. One of the pictures is that of a big party.

So when God was just about to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt and they enter into the Kingdom of God as his chosen nation, guess what happens? They have one big party, the feast of the Lamb. This is just before the final defeat of Egypt and their Kings and gods and where Israel then becomes God's people and He becomes their King.

After that the way they would celebrate God their King is in several celebrations through the year that were mostly big parties.

Then they have the peak of their Kingdom under the Davidic Kingdom. Under David and his son Solomon. Do you know one of the ways they talk about the success of Solomon's Kingdom? They talk about just how much food would be at his table each day.

Then they go into exile after disobedience and they no longer have their Kingdom. And you have prophet after another prophecy about when God would come and set things straight and some of the famous pictures are centred around a party God would host in his Kingdom. Like this one

6 On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare

*a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.
7 On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.
The Lord has spoken.
9 In that day they will say,*

*"Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."*

Isaiah 25:6-9

I am so happy that God seems to be a wine connoisseur. As the prophets foretell and look forward to God's dramatic salvation and fulfilment of the great promise, at the center of it is a big party.

Does this sound reminiscent of another famous picture from the bible that is probably hanging on some of your walls?

*The Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need
He makes me rest by green pastures
He leads by still waters and refreshes my soul
He guides me by the right path for his name's sake
Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I fear no evil for you are with me
Your rod and your staff bring me comfort*

Then check this out,

You prepare a table before me, in the presence of my enemies.

Does anyone still think there will be no eating in heaven? That all we will be doing is singing? I mean come on. There is so much about the party of God, the table.

So when Jesus comes to the scene and talks about God's party, he is drawing heavily on such narratives. Parties and meals were hugely important in Jesus' stories. But Jesus is not just all talk. He lives out what he teaches. He was always at a meal, going to one or coming from one.

We all know the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 and another one where he fed the 4000. What was Jesus doing? He was replaying out the big drama of the feast of the Kingdom of God.

Then we have Jesus going at people's houses. He had a meal at a pharisees house, he had a meal at a tax collectors house. And every where Jesus went he was the host. He took over the party and told stories and decided the direction. Jesus was playing out the same drama over and over again, the party of the Kingdom of God.

So here is one of the stories Jesus told

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

So, big party. Some people are invited but they say no. Then the King opens his door to everyone else. Let us not miss how revolutionary. this is. Not everyone gets to eat with the King.

You wonder why Jesus was killed just for telling stories? We see ourselves in stories. There are those who thought they deserve to be at the table and they saw themselves in this story. Then there was everyone who knew that they would not eat with the King and Jesus was telling them that they were invited in.

Now, often in the church when we read the stories of Jesus, we like seeing ourselves as the good person. But for a moment I want you to realise you could be the one saying no to the party.

You could be the one offended at the King for inviting the kind of people he has invited.

Close your eyes and imagine the father's table. Who do you feel offended at their invitation? The republicans or the democrats? Raila's people or Ruto's? Oh no you are Christians, you do not just get upset at silly politics but what is the gay person doing at that table? What is the terrorist doing at that table?

Do you realise how God's invitation can be offensive to any of us?

But I want you to see that for Jesus one of the best pictures he uses to talk about the most important story and vision for life is a party. Now even introverts like a good party, all they want is that none of you talks to them.

So why a party

God is the great host. Now the host of the party takes care of the menu and the invitation and the clean up. You just show up.

Listen, everyone is invited and you will see some people at the party that you did not expect there. Isn't annoying when you invite someone to your house and they ask you who else is gonna be there? Well, that is me nowadays.

We don't get to ask God, hey, who else is gonna be at the party. Some of you have to get rid of the offence in your heart about who God has invited in.

The other thing about the host is that the menu is taken care of. Now, if you came to my house for a party, it would be kind to bring a bottle of wine or dessert. It is just a kind gesture.

But imagine being invited to State House for a party or to Queen Elizabeth's for dinner. What are you gonna take? Some biscuits for tea? Not even her dogs are going to eat that.

God has not invited you because you have something to bring, rather he has brought all there is needed, you just need to be there.

Some of us need to repent for thinking we need to bring something to the father to be allowed at the table. Some of you are resisting God's goodness because you think you need to first bring something to the table. There is nothing you could bring to make you more invited.

Can you accept God's forgiveness? Can you accept God's peace? Can you pray for healing? Can you receive joy?

Yes it is true, you did not live the last 24 hours so well. Yes, you woke up in a bed you should not have been in. Yes, it is true you have not tithed. And yes, none of these things are the prerequisite for being at the party.

So who comes to the party? What is the difference between those who came and those who did not? Hunger. If you are full and invited to a party, you don't go. If you are hungry, you hear an invitation you say yes before they could finish.

What does hunger for the Kingdom look like? When you decide that God is a better host than you. When you decide that God is better at defining marriage than our culture. When you decide that God's idea of sex is better than yours. When you decide that God is better at life than you, you have discovered how hungry you are and you will be ready for the party.

Until we realise our need and hunger and inadequacy, we will miss the invitation. Until we realise the inadequacy of the stories of our culture and our families and our worldview and our politics, we will not respond to the invitation yet.

So there is a party happening. How hungry are you?

There is a guy who came to the party in the story Jesus told but he did not dress up for a party. The King was so mad he was kicked out. That has got a lot in it that hopefully we will unpack polepole.

But here is the thing, some of you are at the table but you are not ready to party. You don't think there is enough. First you don't think you belong and so you are just waiting to be kicked out and then some are stuck with a scarcity mentality and you do not think there is enough.

God the King is extravagant in what he is offering. It is a party. God is not limited. Some of you have been sick for a while now but you would not ask for healing because you do not think God can go that far. Some of you are holding out on God and trying so hard because you don't think he can forgive you this time. Some of you are not accepting kindness because you don't think you deserve it. There is enough even to spare.