**PREACHING NOTES: DON’T LOSE THE WONDER!**

**INTRODUCTION: CITIZENS OF GOD’S KINGDOM**

**(Leon Mileham)**

**MAY I NEVER LOSE THE WONDER!**

*“May I never lose the wonder, oh, the wonder of your mercy. May I sing your ‘hallelujah, hallelujah, amen’”*

*“Mercy”* by Jonas Myrin & Matt Redman

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We must never lose the wonder of the amazing truths of God’s word! The revelation of who God is, of all that he has done and of who we are in him should compel us to wholeheartedly devote our lives to being Christ’s disciples and “citizens of his kingdom” on earth.

A study of the Book of Romans reveals a wealth of truth which, the more it is grasped, builds a sense of wonder within us:

**A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ROMANS:**

1. The Gospel is intended for Jews and Gentiles [non-Jews]. The world is under God’s judgment due to man’s rejection of God.
2. True Judaism is demonstrated by inward devotion – mere outward signs without such inward devotion have no merit – God looks at the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7).
3. The Jews have been entrusted with God’s word to share; God’s laws make us conscious of sin.
4. Righteousness comes through faith, not religious adherence.
5. We are justified by faith, not works; sin entered the world through Adam, but grace entered the world through Jesus.
6. We have new life in Christ! We have been brought from a place of slavery to sin to a place righteousness.
7. We have been released to live in a new way by the Holy Spirit. However, we still have a sinful nature that has to be overcome.
8. There is no condemnation for those in Christ! We have been adopted as children into God’s family. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray and intercedes [prays] for us. We were called to be God’s children. No charge levied against us will stand and nothing can separate us from God’s love!
9. God’s purpose for the temporary hardening of Israel is to enable his mercy to flow to others. A remnant of Israel has been set apart to carry out God’s purposes.
10. Salvation comes through belief and confession. Faith comes from hearing God’s word.
11. God’s will restore Israel. Paul gives a “Doxology” [a hymn or declaration of praise], flowing from what God is revealing to and through him!
12. In response we are to offer ourselves fully to God [our true worship] and allow God to transform us. We are to love one another sincerely.
13. We are to submit to the authorities of our day, obey the law and love our neighbours.
14. We are to make every effort to live at peace with each other.
15. There is to be unity amongst Jews and Gentiles
16. Paul closes with personal greetings.

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**CITIZENSHIP**

Romans 12:2 – *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world …”* – Be citizens of God’s kingdom above your kingdom of birth.

Paul is writing to Christians in the Roman Empire. Roman citizenship conferred certain rights privileges, such as holding office, owning property, immunity from flogging or incarceration without trial etc.

Paul himself was a Roman citizen [he was a Jew from Tarsus in Turkey]. Citizenship could be obtained through having two parents who were Roman citizens, through service to the Empire or through paying a high price.

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This non-conforming to the pattern of the world, and conforming rather to the pattern of God’s kingdom rule, should flow, and continually flow, from a deeper revelation and appreciation of God and all that he has done – “Therefore … in view of God's mercy …” (Romans 12:1) – this is not a one-off occurrence.

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**DISCIPLESHIP**

We are to be more than mere appreciators and followers of Jesus – he calls people to be his disciples – disciples seek to become like their master. The Great Commission instructs us to “make disciples” – we need to be such in order to do this (see Matthew 28:19).

Discipleship/citizenship of God’s kingdom can be unpopular, meet resistance and can bring persecution.

Christians in the first century used the greeting “Jesus is Lord” with one another.

NT Wright observes that Rome believed it had brought justice to the world and that the emperor was “lord of the world”, a deity to be worshipped, their state visits being described as “parousia”, the Greek term used to describe the second coming of Christ.

Rome’s decree was “Caesar is Lord”. This was the pattern of the world to be conformed to at the time of writing Romans (circa 57 AD). Who or what has lordship in our day and in our lives?

Disciples are called to take up their cross – it is a sign of citizenship of God’s kingdom.

The Christian life, with all its many joys and wonders, can at times be hard. Having a good foundation of God’s word, and a sense of wonder thereof, will help sustain and drive us to keep going, to keep taking up our crosses.

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**GOD HAS GIVEN HIS KINGDOM TO HIS DISCIPLES**

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

*Luke 12:32 NIV*

God’s people have been given his kingdom to live, move and act in with authority and the power of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to transform the world, to make people and whole communities sit up and take notice.

This chimes with some recent words Connect Church has received:

* Have a different spirit (see Numbers 14:24)
* “Who are you bringing with you?” There is someone to bring with you – “Look at the fields”.
* God wants to stretch us
* We are to minister in power of the Holy Spirit
* “I want you to be where I live, above your natural self”
* Be disciples.

This is a call to each of us – we are to *“Be Family to Win Family”*.

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**An encouragement:**

A picture of a barometer with the words “Change”, “Rain”, “Stormy”, “Fair, “Very Dry”, with the indicator at “Change”.

God does not change (see Malachi 3:6). Jesus’s words will not pass away (see Matthew 24:35).

Whatever the circumstances, rainy, stormy, fair, dry, whatever changes may come, God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) – we should lean on and trust in this. All his promises are “Yes and Amen”! (2 Corinthians 1:20). We should focus on being his disciples and citizens of his kingdom. Look to Jesus.

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 15:5-6, 13 NIV*

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