

On August 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C., the moment was tense outside the city. Troops stood ready to move in at the first signs of riots. Businesses closed, uncertain of how the events of that day would unfold. In the White House, lawyers had already drafted martial law orders for President Kennedy to sign if necessary. Yet, as the morning progressed, something remarkable began to take shape on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

A crowd of a quarter million people gathered peacefully at the National Mall. A procession of speakers and artists address the crowd with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King set to give the day's final address. He approached the podium with a carefully crafted manuscript that was initially titled Normalcy, Never Again. The message was iconic. It held the balance between inspiration and vision and a call to action. For the first section of the address, King was calculated, measured his cadence, and methodical. His manuscript was powerful, and his words were crafted in such a way that demonstrated his conviction.

I encourage you to watch it. You will find that about ten minutes into the 17-minute address, there is a noted change in King's demeanor. He shifts. The biographer Taylor Branch notes that at this ten-minute mark, he moves from written text to sensing an opportunity to extemporaneously or preaching. It wasn't unusual for King's style. He would often break from prepared marks and pull from set pieces of scripture, verses, and songs that filled his imagination.

His fellow speechwriter, Clarence Jones, was up on the stage next to him, and when King began to go off script, Clarence Jones, who helped craft that speech with King, leaned to the person next to him and said, "He's off. He's on his own now. He's inspired, and these people don't know it yet, but they're about to go to church." You see it when you watch it. His cadence changes, and his vision shifts. Rather than glancing at his notes, he began to look directly out to the crowd, and as he started to gain steam, Mahalia Jackson, who was one of King's favorite gospel artists, began to shout out. "Tell them about the dream, Martin. Tell them about the dream."

He said that it was at that moment that King paused. He then recites these words: "So I say to you, my friends, that even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream." Iconic words shaping a movement—words ingrained in our consciousness. King would go on to spontaneously preach the rest of the message, mentioning the dream seven more times until he got to the very last time. He mentioned the dream, and he said this,

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places shall be made plain, and the crooked places shall be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be

revealed and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the south with. With this faith, we can hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

What makes this moment so remarkable outside of the history surrounding it is that King's imagination was saturated in hope, but not just any hope. That quote is a direct quote from Isaiah 41 that fueled the passion of King himself. See, King had a wellspring of theological analysis and critique of prophetic vision in his mind. His mind was a reservoir of kingdom imagination, not an abstract theology, but a living reality. The hope had moved from his head into his very feet, and this was no coincidence.

King's doctoral studies at Boston University focused on two theologians, Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman, whose whole work was about how the eternal intersects with our life here and now. At the very core of everything that King preached and did was a resounding belief in the gospel as the radical availability of the kingdom of God.

He moved from a conviction that Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension had initiated the kingdom of God, and he was trying to call a nation to action to live in light of that reality. Every march that King led, every speech he gave, every strategic decision he made, flow from his vision of the hope that he held.

It was a vision of the renewal of all things that he sought. His work intersects with God's work, his grand redemptive work in the renewal of all things. The reason for his nonviolent resistance was not just strategic; although it was tactically brilliant, it was the embodiment of the kingdom of God in an age in which violence would be no more, and he embodied that vision and ripped that into the present. This is what fueled King. This is why he could go off extemporaneously for seven minutes and preach the part that you all remember that wasn't scripted because his mind was so soaked in that vision that God was moving through him.

But we know history, so some of us approach these words and think, how could King speak with such conviction? I mean, he lived in one of the most tumultuous times in our country's history. But there was something about this message, this gospel that King was bearing witness to. It moved from just his head and his heart into action, into a living reality.

We're in week two of our series on Bearing Witness, and we define bearing witness as: "Bearing witness is proclaiming the reality of the

Kingdom of God by reflecting the truth and love of Christ in both word and deed." We'll talk a lot about what that looks like today.

What is the gospel? Last week, to answer that question, we went to the words of Jesus in Mark 1. *"Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news."* So whatever comes next is Jesus' proclamation of the gospel. It says, *"The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news."* That's the gospel message.

Notice that it doesn't talk anything about going to heaven when you die. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It's about heaven appearing, arriving right in the midst of this life. Notice, it's not necessarily about personal salvation, although that's a beautiful, wonderful effect of the gospel that flows from this, but it's a broader vision that Jesus claims is the gospel. Notice that it's not something about the future, but it's about right here and right now. And then notice the final invitation of Jesus to all was to repent and believe it was available to every single person throughout history to step into that reality.

This week we want to begin to answer the question, "How do we bear witness to it?" But I want to do so with one question because the natural follow up is if the kingdom of God is here, then why did King have to stand up and declare racism wrong?

Why was that still around? Why is the brokenness that we experienced, why the disease and the sickness, why all of this sin and brokenness? How is that here? If Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God is available, what would we do with all that? Paul is one of the first writers in the New Testament to flesh out the implications of Jesus' resurrection and his proclamation of the gospel.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Romans 8:18-21

Note right away that Paul talks about this present suffering in contrast to something that will come. Paul is breaking history into the present time and the time to come. Also, notice that he says this present time is filled with suffering. It doesn't take long for us to understand where Paul's coming from here. He says creation itself was subjected to frustration.

For Paul and the New Testament writers, there was a radical fracturing that erupted in Genesis 3, and as sins effects rippled throughout all of creation, the very created order, which includes you, me, the earth, everything around it, has been fractured and is frustrated. He said that creation is frustrated. It's irritated. It's not in the means in which it was supposed to be.

In this moment, Paul says that the present sufferings, when compared to that which is to come, are not worth comparing. It's as if when you put them on the scales of that which will be and the present sufferings,

it tips the scales in that direction. But at the same time, he says you're living within that.

Did you catch it in verse 19? *"For the creation waits an eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed."* What does that mean? It's an interesting comment; creation is longing for the children of God to be seen. Think back to what we talked about last week when we reviewed the whole story of the scriptures beginning in Genesis 1.

Adam and Eve were placed in the garden and were called image bearers, which means we reflect God's glory. But it's a title that relates to their responsibility. They were placed in the garden to co-rule with God, meaning God placed them there and said, be fruitful and multiply, rule over the animals, rule and subdue the earth.

It was language that wasn't talking about domination but cultivation. It was about building a world with God. The problem was Adam and Eve seized autonomy and said, "Actually, God, we don't want to rule in your image. We want to rule in our image." They would rather be God.

They seized that, and God, in his sovereignty, gave them that autonomy in which they began to expand their own kingdom, not the kingdom of God. That's when sin enters into the scene, and it escalates, and the whole Old Testament gives witness to how fractured and wrong the kingdom of Adam and Eve and the kingdom of you and I are. Because that is the source, the locust point of all that is broken in creation—humanity trying to rule and use their power for their own good, not for the extension of God's kingdom.

So when Paul says that creation itself waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed, he's saying that the created order that experiences the tumult of people who aren't ruling properly, is longing for you and I to do our jobs the way God intended us to do. Creation is desiring for us to rule in the way God would have us rule.

The basis of Paul's belief here was that there was a combination of the biblical promise of new heaven and new earth and the creation story in which humans were made in God's image, appointed to steward over creation. But as we fracture and fail to do that, it means we exploit not only one another but we exploit the earth itself and use it for our own ends.

Everything has gone haywire—the communal relationships you and I have with all of humanity, as well as our relationship to God and the created order itself. Paul said that this is the reason creation was subjected to frustration. It didn't have a choice, but it was the will of the one who subjected it.

Then he goes in 21, which sounds a little bit like Exodus language. "The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God." When we are redeemed and begin to image God into the world the way he intended, all of creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay. That is strong language Paul is using to describe the state of the affairs of this world. I don't have to make the case for this. We sense it if we just look around and watch the news, we sense the brokenness, the decay that is wreaking throughout the world.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:22-25

Paul's metaphor for the felt experience of living in this overlap of the kingdom of God being established, yet not fully consummated, is this imagery of a woman in childbirth. To state the obvious, I have not gone through that process. However, I've been in the room, and there's a lot of groaning. That imagery is visceral. What I love about this imagery is that the groaning of labor eventually does give way to new life, to new birth, and the woman in that room is groaning for it to be over because they want the arrival of that new child.

That's what Paul says all creation is going through. Groaning, laboring, trying to figure out why. When will this all end? I would guess some of you here are groaning because of the pains of a world that has gone awry. You're groaning with the realization of a diagnosis you didn't desire, the loss of a job, a marriage that's fractured, or a wayward child. You're asking when this will all be resolved.

The imagery Paul uses; shows he understands that. He says that is the very felt experience, but lest we forget, it will give way to new life. The promise for Paul has always been that there is a day out on the horizon. It's the same hope you and I have. It's the same hope that fueled King's mission. That there is a day in which the world will be set right. That groaning will give birth to that new world, the newly created order.

What I love about this imagery, and of course, King's example, is that it doesn't mean that we sit apathetically by. We're not idlers, just waiting for something to happen beside us. We're invited into that process. That's the whole thing in which you are invited to experience the sonship, to regain that image bearing. This waiting, this patience we have, is not an apathetic hands-off waiting; it's active waiting. It's an invitation to begin to create and live in such a way that brings a little bit of that kingdom of God here and now.

We will never do the final work. That's God's job. But we can alleviate some of that groaning. We can step into this space, following in the example of Jesus, proclaiming the reality of the kingdom of God, but also living it out, bringing about that healing, that redemption. This is the ministry of Jesus. That's why the gospel begins in Mark 1:1.

It's the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Every one of those things is the gospel. When Jesus is doing these performative miracles and healings, he's bringing that new creation to bear into the present. Most of us experience that suffering, but the question that we're often asked in that overlap, that tension of the groaning, is how could a good God allow this? I get that question a lot as a pastor. How could a good God not intervene here?

That's a warranted question. At times, I don't always have the answer. To me, it's an expression of this very groaning that Paul's talking about. But the one thing I'll mention is that when we assume God could just wipe out all of that in an instant, it also means he wipes out our free will. However, God has a high dignity for allowing humans to choose how they live.

This idea of love is that God brings about the kingdom of God, not through domination or coercion, but through self-sacrificial love. That it was the crucifixion of Jesus that is at the very heart of the kingdom of God. So why does God allow those things? I don't quite know, other than he allows us to have the autonomy to choose. We are like Adam and Eve before the tree, and we too often choose to seize our own power and control. The ripple effects of those choices are vast and wreak havoc in the world.

What does this look like? Let's zoom out one layer more. I've already alluded to it, but I want to look at how Paul understands this implication of the kingdom here now and not yet. Paul divides history, as was very common amongst first-century rabbis, into two ages.

Paul would call one the present age. And this age was marked from the ripple effect of Genesis 3. It was marked with evil, both human and systemic of injustice, racism, abuse, sexism, greed, natural disasters, and spiritual evils. That's what this present age is marked by. It's riddled with all of that.

However, Paul would contrast that with the age to come, which is marked by peace and prosperity. The absence of evil human history would reach its glorious culmination when the reign and rule of God extend out across all of the created world. That was to be the age to come, or in Jesus' language, the kingdom of God. It's when that heaven and earth will be reunited.

Heaven is considered God's space or God's dimension, and earth is considered human space and human dimension. The goal is not to blow up the earth and start over. It is to integrate those two and have heaven crash back into the earth in a way in which all death and decay are done away with. Where the powers of sin are broken and fractured. The cross of Jesus breaks the stronghold of the powers of sin and death. This was the age to come.

Now, originally, the hope of the first-century rabbis was that there was a seam between the present age and the age to come. That seam was the day of the Lord or what we would call judgment day. When we hear that, we think of it as a pejorative or negative thing, but that's because we tend to be on the top side of the social hierarchy. But if you're on the underside of Rome's oppression, well, judgment day can't come soon enough. You're longing for judgment. You're longing for the wrongs to be set right.

Judgment day was the day in which God would come and say that this is a part of the present age that's passing away. This all is a part of the age to come, and it's being ushered in. The hope was that Judgment Day would come and liberate the world. However, the resurrection of Jesus messed up all of that timing.

What the resurrection of Jesus did, the shock, the surprise of that first Easter morning, was that God took that future age and placed it right into the middle of time. He had begun that age to come, which was going to happen on the other side of Judgment Day. It was ripped and placed into that first Easter morning. When they were experiencing that reality, it was God saying the age to come is now given birth right in the middle of the present age, not at the end of it.

When Jesus came out of that tomb, he conquered the powers of sin and death. That's the judgment day for them. There will come a time in which there will be another Judgment Day in which we are all resurrected and stand before the Lord. He will make that decision about who is in the kingdom of God, who continues on, and who then is passing away.

The first Easter morning was a massive twist in the plot. It was always one age followed by a second age, but now the two ages have overlapped. Theologians call it inaugurated eschatology. The phrase means this: inaugurated—the age has begun. It means the beginning. Jesus has launched something in the resurrection. Eschatology—the study of future things. I don't like the definitional phrase of the study of the end times because that messes with our understanding of it, but eschatology is the end things, where this whole story is going. So, inaugurated eschatology is the beginning of where the whole thing is going.

The present age is characterized by sin, sickness, injustice, brokenness, and wars—the age in which we live. It's moving through time, but it's passing away, according to Paul. It's literally dying off because Jesus arrives on the scene. That begins, in that moment, the age to come. It's breaking into the present age, and we are right there in the middle, in the overlap between those two ages, this present age and the age to come.

You exist in that overlap, which is why we can hear stories like we did two weeks ago on Easter about lives transformed by the grace of God, and at the same moment, many of you come and carry in here stories marked more by sin, sickness, injustice, brokenness, and wars. We live in that overlap.

When Jesus comes on the scene, his invitation has always been to repent and believe that the kingdom of God is here. Paul understood this when he spoke about this groaning, he's saying that's the experience that we all have is that we're in labor pains. Pregnancy is for a time. It's never intended to be the final resting state.

In the same way that we experience the beauty and grace of the kingdom of God breaking into this moment, which I'd argue it's why you're here—to sing and declare the things we declare—because your life gives testament to that reality. At the same time, there are labor pains, groaning, and longing for something more. We live in that overlap. Here's where the gospel message makes a whole lot of sense and why discipleship isn't just some hopeful add-on. You don't become a Christian and then a disciple. The invitation's always been to be a disciple. It's Jesus walking around saying, "Come, follow me."

What are you learning to do in discipleship? You're learning to live in the age to come. To allow the ways you've been formed by the present age, those ingrained in us, to then be discipled through practice over and over into the way of Jesus. You have been formed into the present age, and discipleship is about that transformation in which you allow the things that organize the present age to die off so you can live according to the age to come.

That's why Jesus would say things like, "It's better to give than to receive." He's contrasting these two ages. The present age would say it's much better to receive, to do all you can to receive. But the way of Jesus invites us to say it's the exact opposite. It's better to give than to receive, which is a benign example. This summer, as we look through the Sermon on the Mount, that's the manifesto of how to live into the age to come, where Jesus lays these things out.

It becomes a whole lot more complicated when Jesus says lust in your heart is like committing adultery. He says, what if we could deal with that? Because that's been formed by the age, the present age. What if you could work that out in which you begin to view people not through the lens of this present age as things to consume but rather through the age to come? Or he'd say things like, "You've heard it said don't murder. That's good. The present age would offer that too." But he says, "It's better if you're not angry. Could you work that out? It's better to love your enemies than to hate them."

All these teachings of Jesus are about life and the age to come. That age is breaking in. It's here; it's available. It will one day be fully consummated on Jesus' return, and all death and decay will be done away with. But that age is coming, and Jesus is saying to live like that now. You're in that overlap. The invitation before you is to become an outpost of the kingdom of God.

We bear witness in that overlap to ask if a person could imagine a different way. We go about our lives, living them, embodying them in word and deed, in community, and in love. We begin to tell this different story.

So this is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7. *"those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31)*. The word behind that present form is the word schema. It's where we get the schematic. It means there is an order, a blueprint for what life in this age is like. You live it, and it tends to be marked by power over, violence, and dominance, where you look out for number one. That's how this world is ordered.

However, Jesus said that a new world is here. That world, Paul says, is passing; it's dying off. You can commit to that world. You can still live with this present age, but church, I warn you, as Jesus often does, that your life will then pass away with that age because there's coming a day when that age is done. The power of sin, brokenness, and death will be done away with. If you are marked by that age, you will be done away with too.

Or you can be found in Christ, all over the New Testament. Paul talks about this language. This is the invitation of the kingdom of God, to

find that salvation where you are in union with Christ, because Christ will live on. That age to come will be marked by the renewal. All things in which Jesus is all in all. If our life is somehow, by the work of Jesus, found in that we will endure throughout eternity with the Lord.

We think of this often. We see the work of the disciples, and we have such a negative view of them. It's a recency bias in which we assume we're enlightened. We live on the other side of the reformation, and so we've got the world figured out, and we look down on the disciples as stupid or naive. Listen to the way N.T. Wright talks about this tension.

The early Christians were not fools. They were not whistling in the dark. They were not claiming that everything was just fine and getting finer by the minute. They faced persecution, prison, suffering, and death on a scale unimaginable to most comfortable Western Christians today. But they didn't give up saying what they said about the present reign of Jesus. And they saw their own work as somehow bound up with that. N.T. Wright, Simply Good News

We look at them proclaiming these things and we wonder if they were stupid. I mean, Rome was so powerful and strong that it continued to crush them, but their hope fueled them at that moment through persecution. Paul said, "I consider the present suffering of no comparison to what is breaking in." He said that's the truth of reality. It wasn't that they were flippant or naive. They faced all of that with the awareness that one day it was all passing away.

I say that to not be like, "Rah rah." Because I know those sermons can get tiring. I say that to just state reality. They understood something about the world and the hope that was to come, which is now present, and they just lived in alignment with that. I am not dismissing the suffering and the experiences you have right now; what you're going through, the groaning pains, are very much real. But I say for you to hold on to hope that you can, in the midst of all of that, bear witness to a new world that's being born right in the midst of this one. The church before us did it, and the church after us will do it. The invitations are for us right here and right now to do that same thing and bear witness to that reality.

So how do we bear witness? There's like a thousand different ways to do that. I'm just going to name four and over the next two weeks we'll talk about these more in depth. There's more than just these four. These are just the four that we're working out.

Bear Witness In Love

The first is we bear witness in love. It seems so basic. I almost didn't write it down because it seems quite cliché, but the reality is, you can't avoid this. Love was at the very heartbeat of all of Jesus' understanding about discipleship. When Jesus was approached by a lawyer of the time trying to trick him about what the greatest commandment was. Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." When questioned about what the one central law was, Jesus said to love God and love your neighbors.

We have to do a little work on what love is. Love has been a word that's been captured by our culture in a way that's different than was

intended. So it's not love as defined by our culture, which realistically, love defined by our culture is a combination of tolerance mixed with hopeful affection, and we think of that as love. But to tolerate someone isn't a loving thing. I'm not against tolerance, but it's not quite the robust understanding of love that we see in Jesus, in which he would say, *"No love is greater than this than to lay your life down for another."*

That's certainly more than tolerance. That's far bigger, and you will see the good of the other when you look at that person and place their needs above yours. That is a much higher call of love. Love, as I define it, would be to will the good of the other. That's what I see Jesus doing throughout his ministry. It's a far greater love, a far thicker understanding of love than our common conceptions of it. Taking communion is such a visceral reminder of Jesus love for us. It's that idea of laying our life down for the sake of the other. Love must permeate everything we do. In church, often when we talk about evangelism or bearing witness, we often overlook love.

Another is to recognize the dignity of the other. To not view them as a project, to not view them as something that you have to accomplish, but to just love the other. We don't love them to gain a hearing so we can preach at them. We love them because that's the people we are. We are called to mature as loving people, and so we just love. That will complicate things and make it harder. You'll see that in the next way we bear witness.

It doesn't mean we don't proclaim the reality of the kingdom of God, but I just need to remind us that love is the baseline posture because the number one commandment that God gave was love God and love others. That'll be messy because love is messy.

This love isn't just outward to those outside the church; it's also horizontally with us in here. In John 13, when he is looking at his disciples, Jesus said, *"By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another."* That's the marker of how the church will know we follow Jesus is that you and I love each other in this room, overseeing the differences in the particularities that we tend to allow.

We so often allow the things that divide in this present age, whether it's politics or economics or social class, vocation, or the neighborhood we live in, we allow those divides to get into the church. When that divides the church, we've lost it because we're defining the state of this community by means of this present age, but the age to come defines it radically differently, where all those things are done away with. The thing that unites us in here is communion, the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's what bonds us.

That doesn't mean we dismiss our particularities. It means we bring them subservient to the greater whole. Instead of allowing them to divide us, we allow them to help us understand one another and the beauty and the tapestry of God's created order. But Jesus was very clear. He said that we love one another, and the world will look on and see that we are his disciples. That's our task.

We Bear Witness In Word

Second, we bear witness in word. We are called just like the disciples, to proclaim the reality of the kingdom of God. You must have a reason for the hope that you hold. Jesus says, he goes out proclaiming, preaching, and speaking about this reality. So, too, we can go around and proclaim this, we can boldly say the reality that God's kingdom is here and is present.

Then we do that with all sorts of nuance. It won't always look like what I'm doing here. It doesn't mean you need to go preach to your neighbors, but you can speak of this reality. We can bring our voice to the public square and say, "Hey, this is what we understand about the kingdom of God." We do not need to dominate to overcome, but we can proclaim the reality of the kingdom of God. There is a different way.

We Bear Witness In Deed

We also bear witness in deed. This is automatically always followed up with how we live. Because if our life is in alignment with that age to come, we live in that direction. Therefore, if that is true that the kingdom of God is here, that means every act of kindness, every act of justice, and every act of love done in the name of Christ is proclaiming the gospel. You see that right as we live out these things, that's us naming and living from that age to come that is present here.

Every one of these, whether it's for reconciliation between divided groups or improving social relations, we are bearing witness to the reality of the kingdom of God here. These acts are not grand or heroic. They will not bring about that ultimate day in which Jesus comes. But it's living out the prayer at the very center of life with Jesus, in which he said, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's our task as we begin to proclaim and live according to a different way.

We Bear Witness In Community

Lastly, we bear witness in community. The gospel has never been about an individual reality, although it has all sorts of individual implications for you, but it is fundamentally a communal reality. God is forming since Genesis 12, a new people, a new community in which their existence within this world is a signpost of the kingdom of God.

It's a way that you see all through the book of Acts in which this church is living in this radically different way, where we're upholding one another, we're bearing each other's burdens. Where no one has needs that aren't met, where we're living in such a way that says there must be a new reality. N.T. Wright summarizes all of this. He says,

Our task in the present is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second.
Wright

Meaning we live in the time between these two times, in that in-between, with our corporate and individual life a witness, a sign of that first resurrection, but also a foretaste of what's to come. That's a beautiful reality in which we are to be, as Paul would say, a colony of heaven, which is never about going elsewhere. It's about bringing that life here. That's what a colony is. So we live in this way as a community, as a stake in the road in which we point to that reality. So when people intersect with us, they're getting a taste of heaven in the kingdom of God. That's the invitation.

The task will not be simple. It poses all sorts of challenges. You get this many people in a room from different backgrounds and stories, and it's messy. But that's the work. We, working through all those things, are bearing witness to that moment.

A couple of years after Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech in 1965, he would stand before a crowd in Detroit and say, "I have had to watch my dream be transformed into a nightmare." Because we live in that overlap. The dream didn't die, but often when we don't step up and live into the call in which Jesus has given for us, the dream can become a nightmare.

So the invitation to you and I is to bear witness to that reality, submitting our lives to the Lordship of Christ, allowing him to disciple us in a new way, to be a foretaste of that which is to come in all creation.

Over the centuries, as the church has tried to figure out their life in that in-between, we've had to wrestle with that tension. There's this simple prayer that was given birth within the church, as we stand in that tension. "Come, Lord Jesus, come." Because as we sit in that tension, we long for the day in which Jesus will set it all to right. We're in the labor pains, and we're hoping and longing for the day in which that child is born, that new creation.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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