

THE FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Kingdom Citizenship: No Longer Tourists

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Let me start with what I'm going to end with. It is time for your unveiling. The day that we live in is going to require this of you. Have you ever been to Austria before? It's a beautiful country, old and ancient. I've never actually been there, but I've seen pictures and videos of it. Have you ever been to France before? I have. I spent a whole week there and I even know a few French words. The first place I ever lived overseas was in Japan. Did you know that Japan has a language called Katakana? It's an alphabet only for foreign words. The Japanese are very aware of foreigners, so if there's a foreign word like an American brand name or South Korean brand name, it doesn't actually get to go into the sacred Japanese alphabet and wording. It goes into a different one.

Let's look at a passage. There is a place where each of us are called to live. I am of course aware that I am a U.S. citizen. I travel a lot and with all the work I do with immigration, I'm very aware of citizenship and what country people are from and where they can go. There is a country you are actually a citizen of, and that country isn't really a country; it's a realm or a world.

Looking at Ephesians 2:19 and Philippians 3:20, let me start with Philippians 3:20 because Paul talks about a world where their minds are set on earthly things and then he says right after that, that our citizenship is in heaven. From it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:19 says, "So then you are no longer strangers. You're not a foreigner. You're not an alien". Don't you like it when he calls people illegal aliens? Like there was another planet that might be out there?

Then he says, "You are not that different anymore. You're not aliens. You are fellow citizens with the saints and the members of the household of God." In other words, there is a citizenship that is ours that is bigger. This sounds really good, but this is really hard to live in. Your citizenship is actually in heaven more than it's here, and we are very self-aware that it's here these days.

It's important to note the fact that this citizenship is in a culture with a language that is totally off from this world, and that's why I mentioned Austria. I know Austria from a video, from things I've read about, and from talking to people, but I don't know it by experience.

My feeling is that for a lot of believers, this is what the Kingdom of heaven or the Spirit realm really is like. It's like a place we've only read about or seen in some travelogue show. Until I breathe the air, eat the food, and talk with people in Austria, I won't really know what it's like.

So, the question I'm asking is, "Where is our home? Where is our citizenship?" When we think of our citizenship being in another realm described in the New Testament, in particular from the Sermon on the Mount, we see a field guide of sorts emerge from the text, giving us cultural tips to the world we are citizens in.

These passages basically make distinctions over and over again between the two worlds; the one we currently live in, and heaven. In the earthly world, people hate their enemies. In God's realm, we love them. By the way, if we dare call someone our enemy, it just means they get premiere status on our prayer list; they go right to the top. We are so wowed and impressed by leaders who, for example, oversee 10,000 people in a big company. There's something in us that thinks, "Oh, this is cool."

But in the world that we're citizens in, the angels would say, "Yeah, that's great, but I want to introduce you to a lady. Here she is, she serves and prays for 10,000 people and all the angels go crazy because in the world that we're citizens in, that's high status. If you want to be great in the world that we're citizens in, what do you do? You serve.

It's easy to forget the world and the culture we live in. Have you ever rented a car in Great Britain? I have. Mistakes can be rather costly when you drive on the wrong side of the road. I could lean out the window and say, "Hey, in America we drive on the right side of the road." They're going to say, "You're not in America." This is a picture of what can happen if we're not careful. We're driving on the wrong side of the road in the Kingdom that we're called to be a part of. Now in missions, if we said, "What's the 101 of going to another country?" It's language and culture. You've got to speak the language of the people and understand the culture. In that culture, how do you work things? What do you do? What's it like?

I think John 4 gives us a little insight into this. True worshipers worship God in Spirit and in truth. I believe that Spirit, if we could say it this way, is culture. We follow the Spirit and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh or the deeds of the things of this earth. The language we speak is His truth, and that truth, the Word of God, has authority behind it. This is another thing I'm leaning into about this culture. Kingdom words have authority. They marveled at Jesus. Why? He was using the same words the scribes and Pharisees did, but His words had authority because He's living in this world called the Kingdom of God. Do you believe that the Kingdom you're a citizen of is actually more real than the one we're sitting in?

Your passport may be denied someplace, but God has stamped your passport. Looking at the Sermon on the Mount, it's easy to think that the Beatitudes are all pretty weak, isn't it? It's a challenge to make them sound really masculine, like it's really "cool" to be those things. But the truth is, those Beatitudes are about being great in the Kingdom of God, a different culture. It says if you'll hunger and thirst for righteousness, you'll be a peacemaker. It says to rejoice when you're beaten or persecuted for following Jesus.

We're followers of Jesus. Randy Remington mentioned the other day that in this culture we're a part of, the widow actually did give more money than anyone else. I know it's symbolic and we're all thinking, "yes, we do need our high donor development," don't we? But this wasn't a metaphor. She actually gave more and held back nothing.

Followers of Jesus don't fear death. Remember the D.C. sniper? He was picking people off everywhere and nobody knew where the next bullet would come from. To me, the greatest moment was when local churches in Maryland and Virginia started volunteering to pump people's gas for them. They stood outside gas stations and told people that while they stayed in their cars, they would pump their gas for them. That's modern-day heroism that says I follow Jesus, this world is not my home, my life is not my own, and I don't fear death.

In Rome, the early church responded to the plague that was taking the city by staying put. They cared compassionately for people, even though everybody else was leaving town. Christians stayed, not necessarily because they believed in healing, but because they didn't fear death.

We live in a world that needs us. It's time to activate in real, practical ways. At the end of the Beatitudes, you'll remember He says that we are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its seasoning or saltiness, what good is it? Do a quick Google study on salt. It adds flavor. Think about the world we're in right now. The world needs flavor. It also melts ice; coldness and hardness. It kills poison ivy and heals bee stings. These are the kinds of things that follow us when we are salt in the world.

Just the other day my daughter said, "I just want to see God." We said, "Sweetie, the Bible says that signs follow those who believe. Would you just look behind you? Because everything you're asking God to do in your life, others can see that God does those things through you."

So, go be your salty self today. The world needs it right now; there's a lot of fear and this is our moment. But realize that just like in Jesus' time, who was it that was drawn to hang out with Jesus? It wasn't the corrupt religious leaders; it was the sinners. Jesus embodied everything we are talking about. He was a true citizen of the Kingdom above citizenship here.

We are not tourists in the Kingdom. What does a tourist look like? When I think of a tourist, I think of somebody with Bermuda shorts, dress socks, sandals, and binoculars, wearing a camera around their neck. I feel like that's me sometimes in the Spirit world, like it's not my home, I'm just checking in from time to time. What would it look like if you really did have all the attire of the Kingdom citizen on?

If you're a citizen of the Kingdom and you follow the Sermon on the Mount, I think there is no question you're going to be very relevant to this world. You're going to be driving on the other side of the road at times in a spiritual sense, but if you're going to go, you'll discover this is what you were built to live for. My goal right now is not to try to keep up with the world, but to let that go and be a citizen of the Kingdom, not a tourist.

I just read an article from Christianity today about the Singapore church. It basically said this about being a light and salt; good deeds will go a long way with a fearful public. In other words, it just got a little darker in our world and that means that a little light will shine all the brighter. So, it's time to get the light out there to work the works of Jesus, to not be afraid, even though there is plenty to be afraid of. We're ok with touching lepers.

I realize there might be fine print or disclaimers on this idea to some people, but I'm just reminding you about the Lord we serve. I would expect to see healings. I would expect to see the miraculous happen, but it won't happen if we don't get out on the dance floor a bit and we try the stuff out that we say we believe in. And so, go in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads you to be a citizen of the Kingdom.

Let me pray for us today. Lord, thank you for citizenship. That we are not aliens or foreigners in this, but are citizens in this place called Spirit, where the language is truth, the Kingdom of God and the rules are very different, the culture is different, and we've been called to live in it. Lord, let us breathe the air of heaven. Let us breathe the air of your presence and of this realm that we are called to live in today. Lord, help us to step it up and to live in the Spirit, to speak the words of love, grace, and truth, not just amongst ourselves, but to this world. Let the gifts of the Spirit not only be present in our churches, let them be present wherever we are as well. I pray that needy and sinful people will find their way, not just because we are doing what they're doing, but because there's something about this other world that we are a part of that attracts lost people and shows them there's hope. And so, Lord, today, let there be a commissioning and an unveiling of your servants in a fresh way in a hurting world. Let us no longer be tourists and travelogue watchers, let us embrace the full benefits and realities of our citizenship together. In Jesus name, amen.