

## **“ Violent Hands” (Acts 12:1-24)**

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*Acts 12:1-5 (ESV)*

*<sup>1</sup> About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup> He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup> and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.<sup>1</sup>*

There’s a tension between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. The kingdom of God is God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule. These people acknowledge that God rules by his word, and his word tells us things that contradict the ways of the world. The kingdom of man is the people opposed to God’s ways, who aren’t in God’s place, and who don’t want to come under his rule.

Sometimes people call God’s kingdom an “upside-down kingdom.” What they mean is that the way things go in God’s kingdom is the opposite of the way things go in man’s kingdom. It’s not really that God’s kingdom is upside-down, or backwards. It would be better to say that people who are not a part of God’s kingdom do things backwards.

What do I mean? Well, consider some of the things that Jesus taught. He began his “Sermon on the Mount” with the beatitudes, or statements of blessing. Consider just one: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The world would say, “Blessed are the strong, who take the world by force.” Jesus also said, “the last will be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16). The world has no time for those who finish last. He said, “whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” (Matt. 20:26-27). Do people who aspire to greatness in the world serve others? Jesus’ teachings seem counterintuitive. After all, in the kingdom of man, it’s wrong to be meek. In the kingdom of man, it’s all about power. Instead of being humble and serving others, we’re encouraged to assert ourselves, to follow our dreams. The whole world of social media seems set

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

up to shout, “Look at me! I’m great!” But Christians shouldn’t be that way. Paul tells us, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17).

Because the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man have different values, it’s no surprise when they come into conflict. After all, Christians say that Jesus is Lord. He is the ultimate authority. People who have authority in the kingdom of man want to believe that they are lords. When rulers understand that Christians obey a greater authority, they can be threatened. Later on in the book of Acts, we’ll see that when Paul is in the city of Thessalonica, some unbelieving Jews form a mob. They end up bringing a Christian named Jason and some other believers before the city’s authorities, and they say, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also . . . and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7). Jesus was accused by Jews of challenging Caesar’s authority, too (Luke 23:2).

Though the kingdom of man’s rulers try to stop Christians, they’ve never stopped Christianity. The kingdom of God continues to grow. It cannot be thwarted.

Today, as we continue to look at the book of Acts, we’ll see the conflict between these two kingdoms. We’ll see one apostle die and another one imprisoned, yet by the end of today’s passage, we’ll see that the word of God continues to grow.

So let’s turn to Acts 12. I’ll read again verses 1-5:

<sup>1</sup> About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup> He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup> and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup> And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. <sup>5</sup> So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

The Herod mentioned here isn’t Herod the Great, who was still alive when Jesus was born, the Herod who had babies in Bethlehem killed (Matt. 2:1-18). And this Herod isn’t Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist killed (Matt. 14:1-12) and who played a role in Jesus’ death (Luke 23:6-12). This is Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great and the nephew of Herod Antipas. He reigned over Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and parts of Syria in A.D. 41-44. This means that a number of years have passed since the beginning of Acts. Since Acts 9, it’s possible that roughly ten years have passed.

After Agrippa's father, Aristobulus, was executed in 7 B.C. (at the command of his own father, Herod the Great), Agrippa was sent to Rome by his mother. While he was there, he made friends with some powerful people, including the future Roman emperors, Gaius and Claudius. When Gaius and Claudius came to power, they gave Agrippa territories to rule over. Agrippa was well-regarded by the Jewish people for his relative piety. (He was certainly more pious than his grandfather.) For example, he helped block Gaius, his friend and the emperor, from putting an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem. But he also put images of himself and the emperor on coins in Caesarea and he had statues of his daughters erected there as well. Such actions illustrate the pride of this leader.

Agrippa had the apostle James killed. This James isn't the brother of Jesus, but he was one of the sons of Zebedee, the brother of John. We're not told why Agrippa had James killed, but he must have perceived that Christianity was a threat to his rule. It's also possible that since Agrippa was Jewish, he thought that Christianity was a heresy. Perhaps the fact that now Gentiles were becoming Christians bothered him. Surely, he thought that if he took out the leaders of this group, he could stop Christianity from spreading.

When Agrippa had James killed, the people were pleased, so Herod kept going. This time, he went after Peter. First, he arrested him and put him in prison. Since it was the time of the Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Herod was going to wait until the festival passed before he brought Peter out to the people. After the festival ended, Peter would be put on trial, and he would likely have been executed, too. Remember that the chief priests and scribes had Jesus arrested away from the crowds at the time of the Passover. They said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people" (Mark 14:2). Herod is doing the same thing here.

Peter was such an important prisoner that he was guarded by four squads of soldiers. As we'll see, he was bound in chains and placed between two guards, with two other guards watching the prison door. Agrippa knew that Peter was the leader of the apostles and he was the one who was responsible for bringing the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea.

But the church was praying earnestly for Peter.

Before we move on, let's think for a moment about the kind of leader that Agrippa was. He seems to combine some of the worst traits of rulers. First, he was king because of his family ties and his personal connections. And second, he was pandering to the crowds. Does any of that sound familiar? A leader who always does what the people want cannot be respected. Winston

Churchill, the British Prime Minister, once said, “I hear it said that leaders should keep their ears to the ground. All I can say is that the British nation will find it very hard to look up to leaders who are detected in that someone ungainly posture.” In other words, it’s hard to look up to a leader whose decisions are determined by the will of the people. Real leaders can’t simply placate the masses, giving them what they want. President Harry Truman said, “I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt.”<sup>2</sup> Real leaders need to do what is right, not what is popular.

Unfortunately, we often have leaders who want to gain more power and money. To keep that power, they have to give people what they want, not what they need. So we have this dance where politicians will give the masses what they want so that they can retain their power. Their pride causes them to do things that will give them an air of significance. But they don’t seem to think of doing what is right. Where are the true leaders who don’t pander to the base of their political party? Where are the leaders who are humble and servants, not power-hungry people who boast about how great and rich they are? America is lacking in leaders who have principles, who are self-disciplined and selfless.

The hypocrisy and hubris of today’s politicians can be seen on both sides of the aisle. This is particularly true when they talk about Christianity. Consider Hillary Clinton. In 2014, she said in an interview in the *New York Times*, “the Bible was and remains the biggest influence on my thinking.”<sup>3</sup> In 2015, she said that “religious beliefs . . . have to be changed.” The context was abortion, which Mrs. Clinton considers to be a fundamental right.<sup>4</sup> She apparently thinks she knows better than God. And she is not alone. Donald Trump recently claimed, “Nobody reads the Bible more than me.” When he was asked last August what his favorite verse in the Bible was, he couldn’t say.<sup>5</sup> He also said he hasn’t asked God for forgiveness. He said, “I think if I do something wrong, I think, I just try and make it right. I don't bring God into that picture. I don't.” When asked more recently about those comments, he said, “I like to be good. I don't like to have

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Os Guinness, *A Free People’s Suicide* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 183.

<sup>3</sup> “Hillary Rodham Clinton: By the Book,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/15/books/review/hillary-rodham-clinton-by-the-book.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/15/books/review/hillary-rodham-clinton-by-the-book.html?_r=1) (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> “Hillary Clinton’s Keynote Address at the 2015 Women in the World Summit,” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=544&v=pVTiAJ1e9SM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=544&v=pVTiAJ1e9SM) (accessed May 7, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Stoyan Zaimov, “Donald Trump: 'Nobody Reads Bible More Than Me; John Kerry Hasn't Read the Bible',” *Christian Post*, February 25, 2016, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/donald-trump-nobody-reads-bible-more-than-me-john-kerry-158651/> (accessed May 7, 2016).

to ask for forgiveness. And I am good. I don't do a lot of things that are bad. I try to do nothing that is bad.”<sup>6</sup> I don't know how a person who has read and believed the Bible could ever say such things. Now, I don't point these things out because I think a president should or must be a Christian. But these are examples of politicians who both pander to the masses and yet show that they consider themselves above God. In other words, they try to fool Christians by claiming to be people of faith, all the while denying that faith by other things they do and say.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the kingdom of man are more committed to building up their own kingdoms than they are committed to doing what is right. Their pride leads them to think that their agenda is more important than God's. And their pride causes them to come into conflict with God's kingdom. But only one kingdom will endure forever.

Now back to the story. Peter was in great danger, but in the next few verses, we see that he is miraculously rescued from prison. Let's read verse 6-11:

<sup>6</sup> Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. <sup>7</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. <sup>8</sup> And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” <sup>9</sup> And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup> When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. <sup>11</sup> When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

Peter was being watched by at least four guards at a time. He was in chains. Yet an angel comes and tells him to get up, and to do so quickly. and his chains fall off. As always, Peter doesn't immediately realize what is happening. In fact, the angel has to strike Peter on the side in order to wake him up. Then Peter thinks he's having a vision, that what was happening wasn't real. But when he leaves the prison, he realizes what is happening. Then he says he knows that God has rescued him from what was about to happen. In other words, the night before he would likely die, Peter is freed from prison.

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<sup>6</sup> “Trump Has ‘Great Relationship with God.’” an interview on CNN with Jake Tapper, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/01/17/sotu-tapper-trump-has-great-relationship-with-god.cnn>.

There are some clues in this story that tell us we're supposed to be reminded of the original Passover. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, under the oppressive rule of another wicked leader, Pharaoh. And God visited ten plagues on Egypt to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. The last plague was the death of all the firstborn in the land. The Israelites were instructed to kill lambs and put some of the blood on their door frames. The houses that were covered by the blood of the lambs would be spared, while those not covered would have their firstborn die. The Israelites were then told to eat a quick meal before God brought them out of the land. After they were told to eat roast lamb with unleavened bread, God said,

<sup>11</sup> In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. <sup>12</sup> For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

Here, in this story of Peter, we're told it's the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And Peter is told to get up quickly and put on his sandals. No plague would fall on him. But, as we'll soon see, God would execute a judgment on Herod Agrippa.

The point is that evil rulers will always be against God's people. But God is greater than those rulers. God's plan was not for Peter to die. He had more work to do. So he was freed.

After Peter was freed, he goes to meet a group of Christians who were meeting in a house. This was probably a house church, where people were gathered to pray. Let's read verses 12-17:

<sup>12</sup> When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. <sup>13</sup> And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup> Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. <sup>15</sup> They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" <sup>16</sup> But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. <sup>17</sup> But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.

Peter goes to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark. We'll meet him later in Acts. When Peter knocks on the door of the gate leading to the door, a servant named Rhoda come. She hears Peter's voice and recognizes it. Instead of opening the door, she rushes back into the prayer meeting and says that Peter is outside. The others think she is crazy and say, "It is his angel!" The word translated as "angel" is *angelos* and it can mean "angel" or "messenger." Whether they think it is a messenger with news about Peter, or an angel related somehow to Peter, we don't know. The Bible doesn't really teach that each of us has an angel assigned to us to protect and represent us. But apparently there was a Jewish belief that a person's ghost or angel lingered on earth for a number of days immediately after that person died. Today, some people might say, "You saw Peter's ghost!" At any rate, this is a bit of humor in the midst of a serious chapter. Finally, the people inside come to Peter. He tells them what happened and he tells them to notify James and the other apostles. It seems that now the other James, the brother of Jesus, has become the leader of the apostles in Jerusalem. Then Peter goes "to another place."

After Peter escapes, there is a problem. We're told that Herod searches for him, but can't find him. The guards who let Peter go will have to pay the price. Let's read verses 18-19:

<sup>18</sup> Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. <sup>19</sup> And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there.

A roman law stated that a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape would be subject to the penalty that the escaped prisoner would have received. Though Agrippa was not bound by this law, he employed it. He was the kind of ruler who didn't appreciate escaped prisoners. He made an example of the guards who couldn't hold Peter in prison. Then he went to Caesarea, the seat of the government.

When Herod Agrippa was in Caesarea, people from the cities of Tyre and Sidon came to him. We don't know the details of what happened, but Herod had been angry with them and since they depended upon him for food, they wanted to make peace. Luke is giving us some historical data to tell us when the event that followed occurred. What happens next is the important information that Luke wants his readers to know. Let's read verses 20-23:

<sup>20</sup> Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they

asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food.

<sup>21</sup> On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. <sup>22</sup> And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" <sup>23</sup> Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

Again, we don't know exactly what happened between Agrippa and the people of Tyre and Sidon. What's important is that they said that Herod had a "voice of a god, and not a man!" Herod didn't correct them. He received their glory. And because of his pride, God judged him.

That may sound like a bit much, but the Jewish historian Josephus writes about Agrippa's death and he describes it in somewhat similar terms.

Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city C[ae]sarea . . . and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. . . . On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out . . . that he was a god; and they added, "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. A severe pain . . . arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, "I whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. . . . And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life.<sup>7</sup>

I'm a bit skeptical about parts of Josephus's report, like the speech he credits to Agrippa at the end. But his report is very similar to Luke's. The people said he was a god, and Herod didn't correct them. Therefore, he immediately had a pain in his abdomen and days later he died.

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<sup>7</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.343-351, in William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).



In this chapter of Acts, we have reversals. It begins with Herod killing an apostle, and it ends with Herod dying. It begins with an apostle being imprisoned but it ends with him going free.

Really, that's the gospel in a nutshell. Though God's people may suffer for a time, they will ultimately be free. And though the world's rulers may prosper for a time, and may receive praise from large crowds, if they don't willingly come under the rule of Christ, they will eventually be judged for their sins and die eternally. That doesn't mean Christians won't face tribulation. After all, James was killed. And years later, Peter died for the faith, too. But ultimately, God's people will be free, and ultimately, those opposed to God will be condemned.

And how is it that God's people can go free? Is it because we're such good people? No! After all, Peter denied knowing Jesus when Jesus was on trial. Peter failed. Yet he was forgiven. How can that happen?

Consider this: What happens to Peter in this chapter is an echo of what Jesus went through. Peter was arrested, he was put in prison, had a miraculous escape, he appeared first to a woman who said she saw Peter and wasn't believed by her friends, he visited his friends in a house, and then he went to "another place." In a similar way, Jesus was arrested, he was put in the prison of the tomb, he had a miraculous escape, he first appeared to women who weren't believed by the disciples (Luke 24:11), then he appeared to his followers in a house (John 20:19), his disciples were incredulous and thought they saw a ghost (Luke 24:37), and then Jesus ascended to "another place," heaven. Of course, Jesus did what Peter couldn't do: Jesus died not simply because people hated him. It was God's plan. He died for the sins of his people so that they wouldn't have to be punished. He received the penalty for their crimes. He served their prison sentence. When he rose from the grave, he walked out of that prison, showing that he served that sentence. He suffered and died in our place. His resurrection also shows that all his followers will one day have life after death. And Jesus ascended to heaven, where he presented himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He also serves as our high priest, interceding for us. That means Jesus is praying for his people.

When Peter was freed from prison, in a sense he defeated Herod. When Jesus died on the cross, he "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Col. 2:15). He conquered Satan as well as all the human rulers opposed to him. Death cannot stop Jesus and his kingdom.

In verse 24, we see that what happened to James and Peter couldn't stop the gospel message from going out to the world. We're told: "But the word of God increased and multiplied." The commandment to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, which finds its fulfillment in the Great Commission, to make disciples, was being fulfilled by Jesus. It was the risen Lord who freed Peter and it's the risen Lord who is making sure the gospel message multiplies and bears fruit.

Nothing stops the movement of the word of God, not even wicked rulers or the rising and falling of empires. That's important for us to remember at this time. Things don't look good in America now. We don't have great choices for political candidates. The way the prevailing culture is going doesn't seem hopeful. We need to remember that though we may lose political power, we will never lose spiritual power. God's kingdom will not fail, but the kingdom of man will.

It may actually be very good for us to be in this moment. American Christians have long been too desirous of political power. We've too often confused Christianity with American culture and politics. Jesus never promised us political power. He never promised us we would live in a godly nation. But he did promise us tribulation (John 16:33). When we strive after political power, we lose sight of the gospel. We lose sight of the values of the "upside-down kingdom" of God, where the last will be first and the first will be last. We trade an eternal birthright for a mess of temporary pottage. And what does it profit a man if we wins the White House and the Congress and the Supreme Court and loses his soul?

What I'm saying is that we need to care more about the mission of the church and the ministry of the gospel than we care about national politics. It's not that politics doesn't matter. That's not what I'm saying. But politics is a messy affair, and it's one dominated by power. John Dalberg-Acton (1834-1902), better known as Lord Acton, once wrote, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority."<sup>8</sup> Our obsession with political power often causes us to compromise the values of the kingdom of God. And when we align ourselves with a political party, we tend

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to Archbishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887, [http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/acton-acton-creighton-correspondence#lf1524\\_label\\_010](http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/acton-acton-creighton-correspondence#lf1524_label_010) (accessed May 8, 2016).

not to speak out against its own abuses. We lose our ability to speak prophetically to the powers that be. And such compromise causes us to lose credibility in the long run.

It's good to care about politics. Public policy is a way of loving our neighbors. It's a way of caring for the common good. But we need to be more committed to the kingdom of God than the kingdom of man. We need to be more committed to the church than our country. We need to be more committed to our local church than local politics.

That way, we can effectively tell people of a better kingdom and a better King. I don't know that anyone thinks of Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton as "a god," but people do look to these candidates for a kind of political and economic salvation. But time and again, these candidates will let us down. They lie to us. They promise things they can't deliver. I suspect they care more about power and fame and money than they do about the American people. And when others are disappointed by these politicians, we can tell them about someone who will reign forever and who will never disappoint us. We can tell them about a King who is also a servant, one who would die for his people so that they don't have to die forever. Even though Jesus always gave God glory, he was struck down on the cross so that we don't have to be. I guarantee you that Trump and Clinton won't do that for you.

So let us make sure we have our priorities right. Let's be like James and Peter, willing to suffer for the kingdom of God. Being citizens of that kingdom may mean we're enemies of the kingdom of man. So be it. Only one kingdom will last forever.

If you are here today and you're not a part of the kingdom of God, I would urge you to consider how fleeting the things of this world are. I would urge you to make Jesus your King. I would urge you to confess your sins to him and ask for the forgiveness that only he can give you.

Consider what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades

when the breath of the LORD blows on it;

surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,

but the word of our God will stand forever (Isa. 40:6-8).