



Session 3

The Church

Question

Why do you suppose week 3 is about the Church, rather than the Bible? Are you surprised by this?

“Away from actual, historical community, whatever its faults, we have an open field to live an unchallenged life, to make religion a private fantasy that we can selectively share with a few likeminded individuals who will never confront us where we most need challenge. The churches are compromised, dirty, and sinful, but, just like our blood families, they are also real. In the presence of people who share life with us regularly we cannot lie, especially to ourselves, and delude ourselves into thinking we are generous and noble. In community the truth emerges and fantasies are dispelled”
(Rollheiser, R *The Holy Longing*)

Starting Point

What is the Gospel –
the Good News?



Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the *good news of the kingdom* and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23

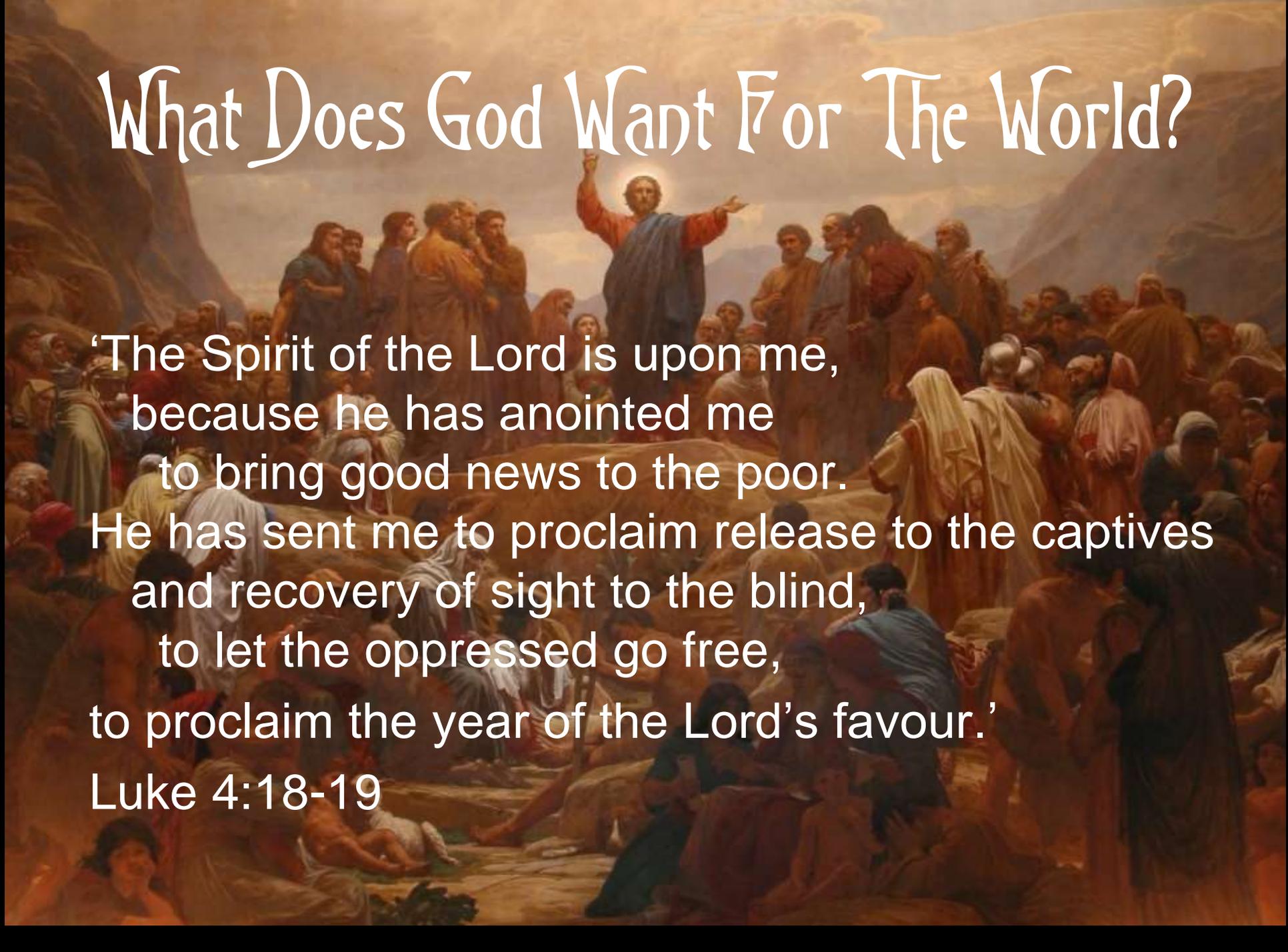


Question

- What *is* the Kingdom of God?
- Why is it “good news”?



What Does God Want For The World?



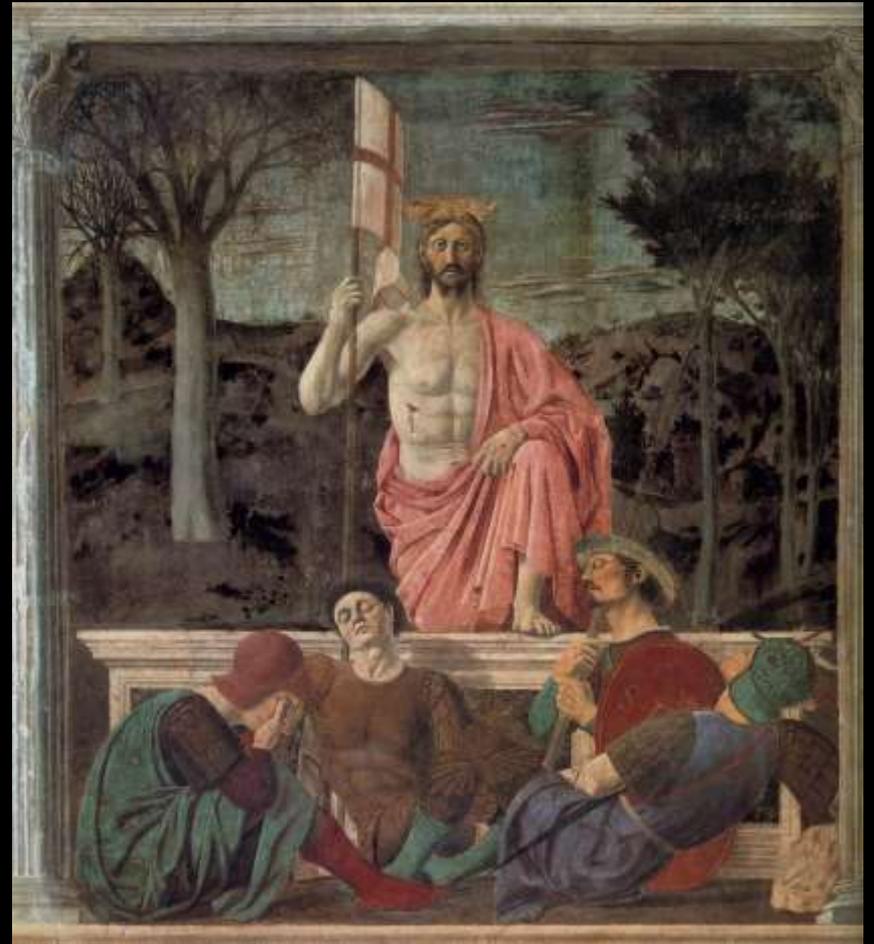
‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Luke 4:18-19

The Good News

Through Jesus Christ, his life, teaching, death, and resurrection, God reveals Godself to us, and reconciles the world to Godself.

This makes everything different



So?

To be a Christian is to live in the light of this news about God and humanity, opened up to collaboration with God



The Internal Logic of the Gospel

Jesus reveals God as fundamentally about community. He shows us a new way to relate to the Other. Church is the community where we are attempting to live this out.



Disciples

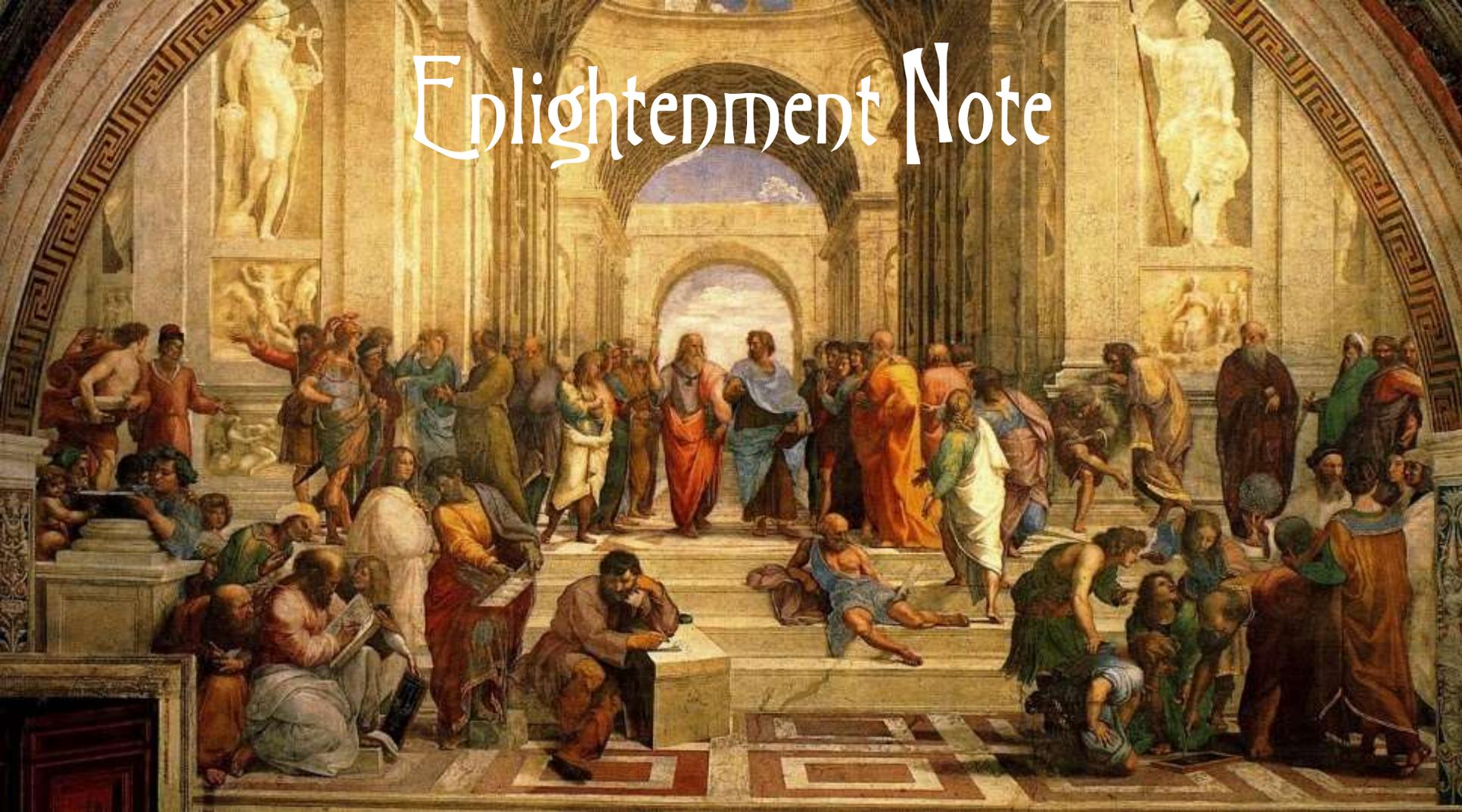
Jesus acts so as to restore people into community (e.g. in his healings) and to draw people into new community (his disciples)



Biblical Images for The Church

- Abiding in Jesus, the true vine (John 15:4-5)
- Being grafted onto the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11:17)
- Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-23) Revelations 19.7)

Enlightenment Note



Biblical images for the church are not of a collection of people who all think the same thing, rather something to do with belonging to Christ

Missio Dei



Missio Dei = God's mission
i.e. What God is doing in the world

Missio Dei & the Church



“It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way”

Jürgen Moltmann

As God's visible people, the church has its purpose in relation to the kingdom of God, which was a central theme in Jesus' ministry. In Luke 4.17–9, for instance, Jesus identified himself with Isaiah's vision of the kingdom. The vision included peace for the entire earth (Isa. 2.4), light where there has been darkness (9.2), harmony in the whole of creation (11.6) and a world of health, justice and abundance (65.17–24). Jesus taught the values of the kingdom, challenged the assumptions of his society from a kingdom perspective and demonstrated the power of the kingdom through his miracles. His life, death and resurrection inaugurated the kingdom, which will be established in full when he returns. In the 'between time' church bears witness to the kingdom. But what does bearing witness involve?

Moynagh, Michael. *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice*

Church vs Kingdom

Jesus talked about the Kingdom, but left the church instead?



Kingdom of God

Jesus



The Present –
Between time



The
Consummation
of All Things



The tension between the “now” and the “not yet”

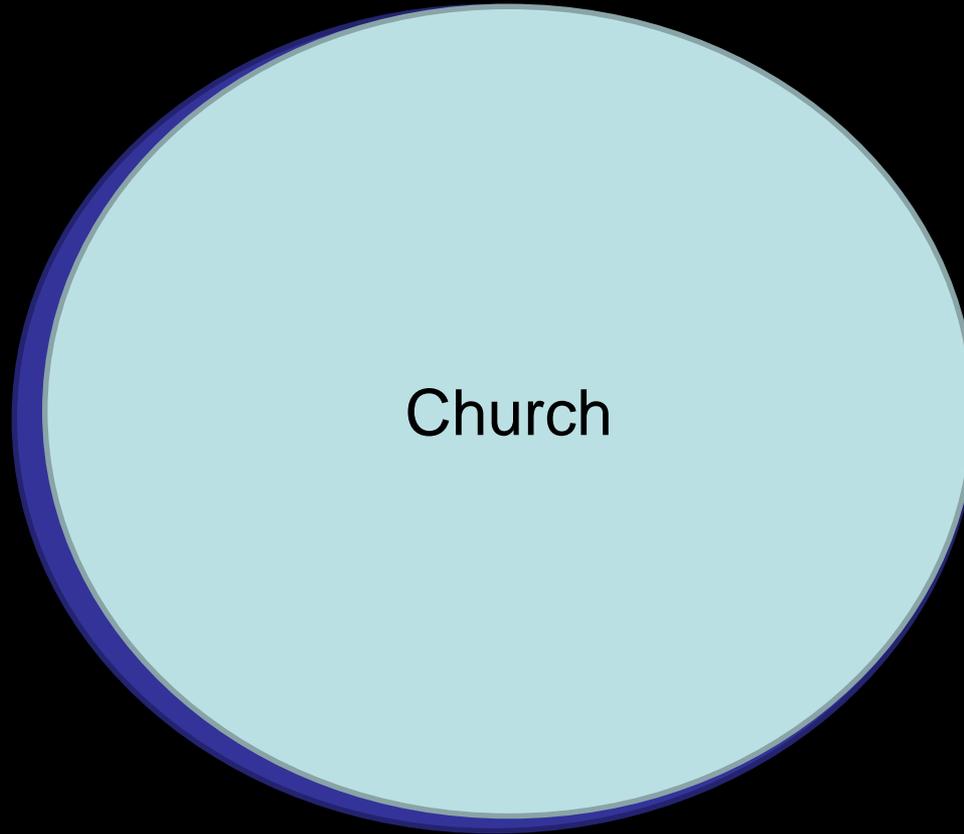
Kingdom, Church, World

- Church Shaped Kingdom
- World Shaped Kingdom
- Kingdom Shaped Church

Quotes in this section are from Moynagh, Michael. *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice*

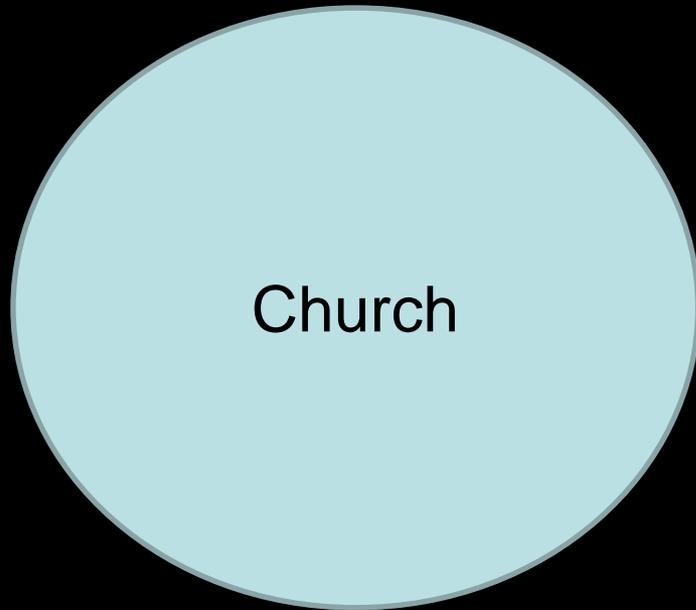
Church Shaped Kingdom

Kingdom



There is a spectrum in how theologians understand the relationship between church and kingdom. At one end are those who say the church is where the kingdom is made real in the present

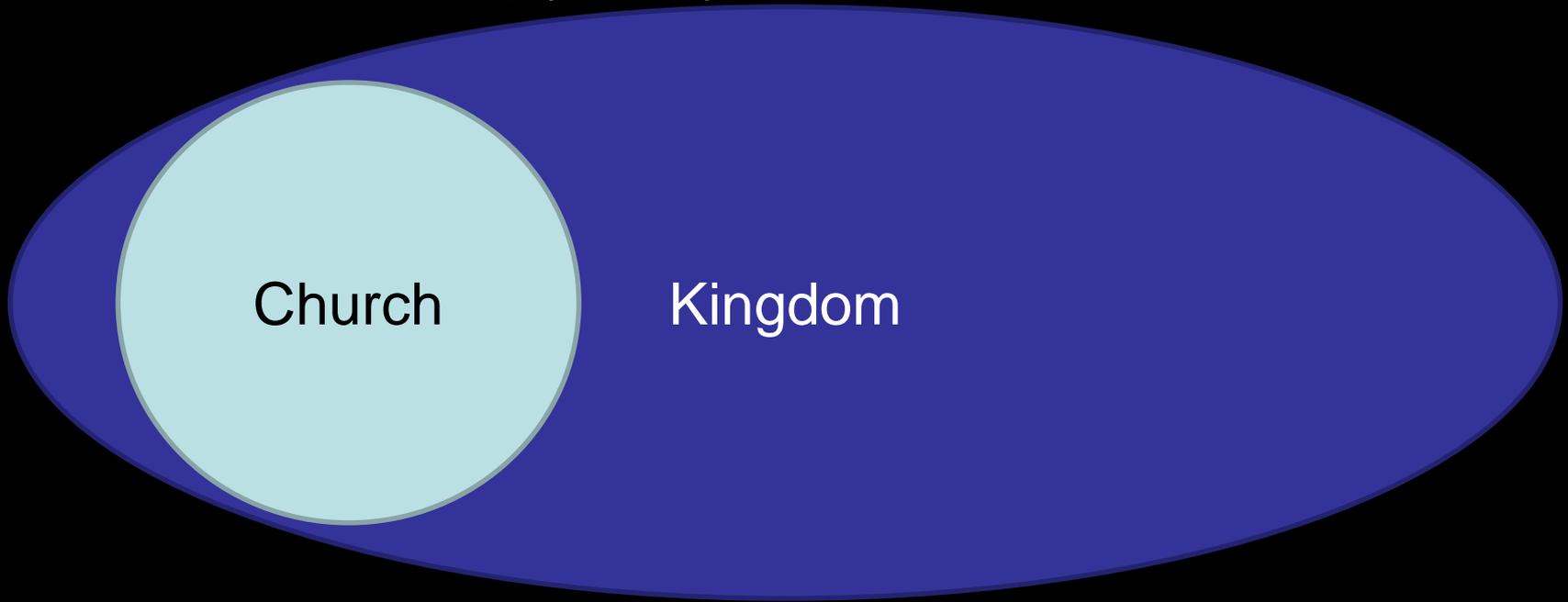
World Shaped Kingdom



“God’s mission is about the Spirit growing the kingdom in society and in creation. The church’s task is to recognize signs of this growth, help other people to see it too and work with it.”

Moynagh

Kingdom Shaped Church



‘Kingdom-shaped church’ is shorthand for the church’s life being read back from the kingdom, which is partly present in the world and the church but will fully arrive when Christ returns. Thanks to the Spirit, foretastes of the kingdom exist in the world. They are present wherever the Spirit is at work. As in the previous view but unlike the first one, the church is to be alert to traces of the kingdom outside the church.

Church, Kingdom, Call

- Christian tradition seems to say that some people are called to
 - Bear witness to God's action
 - Collaborate with God's mission in the world
 - Somehow be unified with Christ (through baptism, through the eucharist, etc)



How Does This Relate to the PostModernist Stuff

- Church is a community of practice – the tacit knowledge of God
- A community trying to live adequately to God's
- A way to authentically affirm faith in the face of pluralism

Orthodoxy

- Far from being (necessarily) a stick to beat people with, is a deep river of reflection on what it means to be human

References

Moynagh, Michael. *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice*

Rowan Williams *Being Christian*

Geoff Thompson *Disturbing Much, Disturbing Many*

