

## Kindom Kinship

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Rev. Daein Park

In recent days, we've seen a shifting perception of monarchies worldwide. Recently, King Charles of the United Kingdom convened a Commonwealth meeting. Yet major nations, including Canada and India, announced they would not attend, and several Commonwealth countries are exploring transitions to republics. When King Charles visited Australia, all of Australia's governors declined to attend the welcome dinner, citing political commitments. These events reveal a shifting world, where traditional structures of authority are being re-evaluated.

The United States, too, was founded on the principle of government by the people, breaking from the concept of monarchy. Even today, it continues to stand for democratic ideals based on citizens' rights over monarchical power.

This understanding of authority has also influenced Christian theology. Some now prefer the term "kindom" over "kingdom" to describe God's community—a reimagined concept that emphasizes kinship over hierarchy. "Kindom" conveys an image of God's people connected not by structures of power but by bonds of love, support, and mutual care. In God's kindom, we are united not by titles or status but by the idea of being kin, bound together as family.

The story of Ruth in the Old Testament gives us a powerful illustration of kindom kinship. When Ruth, a Moabite and foreigner, chose to stay with her mother-in-law Naomi, she embraced a community she was not born into. Ruth's declaration, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God," shows a commitment rooted in love and faith, not heritage or obligation. Ruth, by choice, created kinship with Naomi and became part of God's family. She reminds us that true kinship transcends boundaries of ethnicity, nationality, status, and stance.

In this act, Ruth demonstrated kindom kinship—a loyalty and compassion that go beyond expectation or personal benefit. Ruth did not have to stay with Naomi, and there was no certainty of acceptance in Naomi’s homeland. Yet, she chose to walk with Naomi through loss and uncertainty, showing that genuine kinship is about steadfast, sacrificial love. Her decision reflects the kind of love that God calls us to embody—a love that is present in hardship and unwavering in commitment.

Ruth’s story also foreshadows Jesus’ ministry. Jesus, like Ruth, crossed social and cultural boundaries to invite all people into God’s family. In his ministry, Jesus welcomed those on society’s margins—tax collectors, sinners, the sick, and the outcasts—and invited them to find belonging in God’s community. Just as Ruth, an outsider, became part of Israel’s story, Jesus demonstrated that God’s love transcends all barriers.

In Mark 12:28-34, we see Jesus speaking with a scribe who asks him about the greatest commandment. Jesus replies, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength,” and adds, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” These two commandments, Jesus explains, are more important than all other sacrifices and offerings. His response radically re-centers faith away from ritual and toward love of God and neighbor as the core of what it means to live in God’s kindom.

The scribe’s response to Jesus reveals a profound understanding of this teaching. He agrees that to love God and neighbor is “much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Jesus then says to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” In these words, Jesus shows that true faith is not rooted in hierarchy or ritual but in relationships of love and compassion.

Both Ruth and Jesus understood that faith and love are what define God’s community. Ruth’s choice to stay with Naomi and Jesus’ ministry both show that God’s family is not bound by bloodlines or borders. Instead, God’s kindom is open to anyone willing to live in love and faithfulness.

This idea of kindom kinship is especially relevant as we approach the presidential election on Tuesday. In this season, we often feel pressured to define ourselves by political divisions, to see each other as opponents rather than neighbors. But Ruth's story reminds us that God's community is beyond political affiliation or cultural differences. God's kindom calls us to unity beyond division, love beyond labels, and compassion beyond exclusion.

In today's political climate, we are often encouraged to categorize ourselves by who we align with and who we stand against. Yet, the kindom of God, as Ruth's story teaches us, is not about human boundaries. Ruth entered God's family not out of obligation, but out of love and trust in God. This is the kinship we are called to in Christ—one that sees beyond labels, reminding us that we are one family under God.

As citizens of God's kindom, we are called to approach this election season with hearts open to one another, remembering that our faith invites us to unity beyond political lines. Just as Ruth committed herself to Naomi, saying, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God," we, too, are invited to recognize each person as kin in God's family. In doing so, we reflect the kindom here on earth—a community based on compassion, humility, and steadfast love.

To live out kindom kinship means adopting Ruth's spirit of commitment and Jesus' command to love. It means letting go of our attachment to titles, hierarchies, and barriers, seeing each person as a beloved member of God's community. In our world today, we see kindom kinship when communities come together, transcending divisions of race, nationality, and belief. It's evident in acts of kindness to strangers, in welcoming those who are different, and in treating others with the love and compassion that God has shown to us.

To live in the kindom is to choose love over exclusion, community over division, and kinship over power. This kindom kinship is not an abstract idea but a calling that can be seen in our daily interactions, our relationships, and our commitment to building communities rooted in God's love.

As we go forth, let us carry the vision of kingdom kinship into our relationships, our communities, and, yes, even our politics. May we commit ourselves to live out God's love, to transcend earthly divisions, and to embrace each other as kin in God's family. This election season, may we reflect on the values that define us as members of God's kingdom. Let us seek unity over division, compassion over judgment, and love over all.

May God's love guide us through this election and into a deeper understanding of what it means to be kin in God's kingdom. Just as Ruth chose to enter into a family of faith and love, may we choose each day to create kingdom here on earth, a community marked by boundless compassion and unity in God's love. Amen.