

The Humble King: The Life and Teachings of Jesus

Jesus Teaches the People by the Sea, James Tissot





Previously, on Theology for Life:

1. The prophetic promises: when will they come true? How?
2. The Maccabean revolt
3. The Roman conquest
4. Zealots, Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees: how will the story continue?

“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:3)

Reconstruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, James Tissot



“The time of fulfillment has arrived, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe in the good news!” (Mark 1:15)



“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” (Matt. 18:21-22)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:43-45)

“Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”” (Matt. 26:52)



What is the kingdom of God like?

1) Inside out, not top down

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’”

He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

(Matt. 13:31-33)



2) An upside down kingdom

“Let the little children come unto me, for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:14)

“For many who are first shall be last, and many who are last shall be first” (Matt. 19:30)

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” (Luke 6:20-21)

Let the Little Children Come Unto Me, Hubert Maurer



3) A kingdom of all nations and peoples

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19-20)

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho...” (Luke 10:25-30)

The Golden Rule, Normal Rockwell



4) A kingdom of grace and faith

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:10-13)



4) A kingdom of hope and love

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25–26).

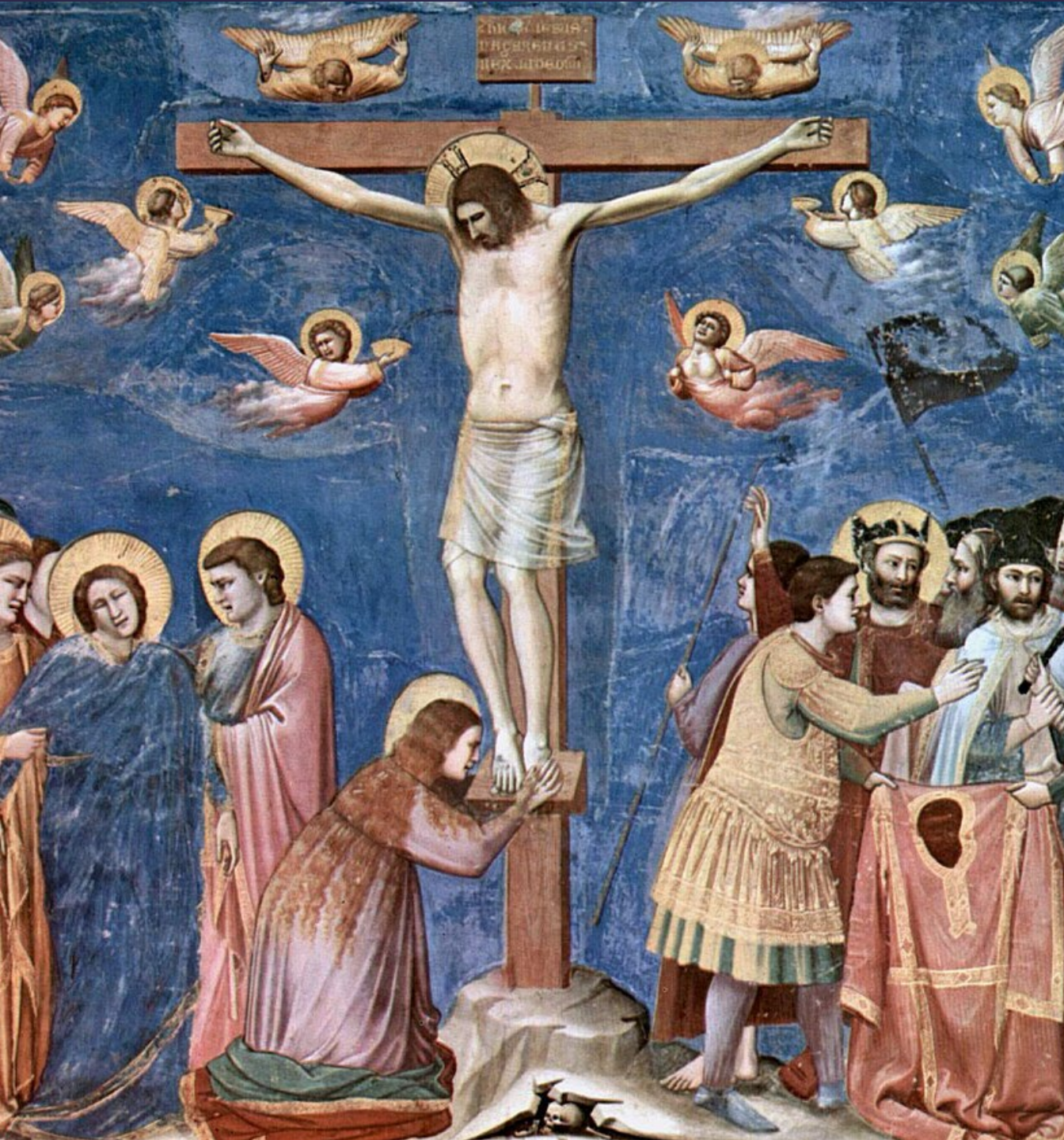
“In this world you shall have trouble, but take heart, for I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)



4) A kingdom of hope and love

“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:34-39)

Christ and St John the Evangelist, unknown 14th c. artist, Swabia (Cleveland Museum of Art)



4) A kingdom of hope and love

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3:16-20)

Crucifixion, Giotto



The great detachment: life today

“We’re seeing a systematic weakening of the loving bonds that hold society together — for community, for nation, for friends and on and on. What’s going on? My short answer would be that you can build a culture around loving commitments, or you can build a culture around individual autonomy, but you can’t do both.”

David Brooks, *The New York Times*, Jan. 2, 2026

