

KINGDOM RENAISSANCE

Could History be Repeating Itself Right Before Our Eyes?

WILDFLOWERS

Our family lived in San Antonio, Texas, for many years. And one of the things I remember most vividly is bluebonnet season.

Every spring, the South Texas landscape would come alive with miles and miles of bluebonnets, carpeting fields and roadsides in breathtaking hues of purple and blue. Nobody planted them. Nobody carefully arranged them. They simply emerged, transforming the ordinarily dry landscapes into something extraordinary.



I've been fascinated by wildflowers ever since.

Unlike the carefully cultivated flowers in our gardens, wildflowers have a way of appearing in the most unexpected places. Along roadsides, in abandoned fields, between cracks in sidewalks, and even in places where nothing else seems capable of growing. Nobody designed the landscape around them, and nobody gave them permission to grow. They simply appear. And when the conditions are right, they flourish, scatter their seeds, and begin showing up in places we never expected.

I'm seeing something similar happening with the Kingdom of God.

People are openly following Jesus in places that don't look anything like what we've traditionally considered ministry. Musicians, actors, artists, entrepreneurs, teachers, hospitality workers, and everyday people whose lives unfold primarily outside the organized activities of the Church.

Some are remarkably successful. Others are virtually unknown. Some are deeply connected to local churches. Others are still trying to figure out where they belong. But something is happening.

Some are expressing their faith in ways that are raw, unrefined, and occasionally uncomfortable for those accustomed to more organized expressions of Christianity. They don't always use the language we expect, follow familiar patterns, or fit neatly into the categories we've created for ministry.

But that doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong. It may mean we're witnessing something we haven't quite learned to recognize.

And what intrigues me isn't simply that these people are talking about Jesus. It's that their lives are becoming expressions of His Kingdom in places where we've often struggled to imagine ministry happening.

It reminds me of something that happened centuries ago. Something we call the **Renaissance**.

A TIME OF REDISCOVERY

Beginning in Italy during the 14th century, a remarkable cultural awakening gradually spread across Europe. We know it as *the Renaissance*, a word meaning rebirth.

It was a period of extraordinary creativity, exploration, discovery, and renewed imagination.

Artists, architects, scientists, philosophers, and others began reconsidering assumptions that had shaped European life for centuries. One of its most significant developments was a renewed fascination with human potential.

The Renaissance didn't invent human creativity or curiosity. It rediscovered ancient treasures, particularly those of Greece and Rome, and began imagining new possibilities for art, science, learning, and everyday life.

Humanism became an influential way of thinking. Greater attention was given to human experience, reason, observation, and the possibilities of life in this world. Many of the Renaissance's influential figures were deeply Christian, and their faith often inspired their creativity and discoveries.

But something was shifting in how people understood themselves and the world around them.

People were looking again at things they thought they already understood. They were questioning inherited assumptions, making new discoveries, and imagining possibilities that previous generations had struggled to see.

And the world would never be quite the same.

There's something about that period of history that intrigues me.

Sometimes the greatest obstacle to seeing something extraordinary isn't our ignorance of it. It's our familiarity with the way we've learned to see it.

I wonder if something similar is happening in our understanding of the Kingdom of God. We've become so familiar with certain expressions of Christianity that we may have unintentionally narrowed our imagination for what the Kingdom looks like, where it's present, and how Jesus is at work.

What if the Kingdom isn't waiting for us to develop a new strategy, launch another initiative, or create something extraordinary? What if it's already far more present and active than we've learned to recognize?

A DIFFERENT KIND OF RENAISSANCE

I wonder if we're witnessing another Renaissance today. But this one may be moving in a different direction.

The original Renaissance awakened a renewed imagination for what human beings could discover and create. What if this Kingdom Renaissance is awakening a renewed imagination for what Jesus is already doing among humanity, and what His Kingdom can express through those who follow Him?

That possibility fascinates me.

For centuries, we've become remarkably skilled at organizing Christianity. We've built extraordinary churches, institutions, ministries, programs, and organizations. We've developed strategies for reaching people, gathering communities, teaching Scripture, and expanding our influence. Much of that has produced tremendous good.

But have we become so preoccupied with what we can accomplish for God that we've gradually lost sight of what God is already doing?

Have we become so accustomed to thinking about ministry in terms of what we can build, organize, fund, and manage that we struggle to recognize Kingdom life appearing beyond those familiar expressions?

Jesus didn't announce that the Church was near. He announced that the Kingdom of God was near (Mark 1:15). And when He looked at the crowds, He didn't see a shortage of people interested in attending religious gatherings. He saw a plentiful harvest (Matthew 9:37).

Those two observations should profoundly influence how we see the world. Yet much of our contemporary approach to ministry begins somewhere else.

We start with the Church and ask how we can attract people into it.

What if we're starting in the wrong place?

What if the Kingdom is far more present, the harvest far more plentiful, and the possibilities far more extraordinary than our familiar approaches have allowed us to recognize?

THE LORD OF THE HARVEST

There's something about Jesus' description of the harvest that I find particularly intriguing. He doesn't simply describe the harvest as plentiful. He identifies God as the "Lord of the harvest."

Think about that for a moment. If God is the Lord of the harvest, then the harvest belongs to Him. It doesn't become His harvest when we arrive, when someone expresses an interest in

Christianity, or when a church establishes a ministry in that community. It was His harvest before we ever recognized it.

And if He is the Lord of the harvest, shouldn't we expect Him to already be active within it?

In John 4, Jesus tells His disciples to lift their eyes and look at the fields, because they're already ready for harvest. He even tells them that others have labored and they're entering into work already underway.

I find that extraordinary. The disciples weren't being sent to initiate something God had neglected. They were being invited to participate in something already happening.

I wonder how differently we might approach the people and places around us if we began with that expectation. Instead of assuming we're bringing Jesus into situations where He's absent, what if we entered with the curiosity of someone expecting to discover where and how He's already at work?

What questions might we ask?

What might we notice?

What assumptions might we reconsider?

And what possibilities might we uncover?

A DIFFERENT CENTER OF GRAVITY

For much of contemporary Christianity, the Church has become the center of our imagination.

We build buildings, develop programs, organize ministries, and create experiences designed to attract people into our communities. We invest enormous amounts of time, energy, creativity, and resources into making those experiences meaningful and effective. And then we wonder why so much of the harvest remains untouched.

What if the problem isn't that we need better programs, more compelling worship experiences, or more innovative ways to attract people? What if we're starting in the wrong place?

I don't believe this emerging Renaissance is a movement away from the Church. Quite the opposite. I wonder if it's an invitation for the Church to rediscover something essential about her identity and calling.

The Church is the people of God, called together under the Kingship of Jesus. Gathering for worship, teaching, prayer, fellowship, and encouragement is a beautiful and essential part of our life together. But the Kingdom of God is bigger than our gatherings, and the Church's calling extends far beyond the activities we organize.

What happens when our primary imagination for Kingdom advancement becomes centered on growing our institutions rather than recognizing and participating in the Kingdom?

We begin measuring what we can count. Attendance. Participation. Programs. Buildings. Budgets. Organizational growth. Those things can tell us something important, but they can't tell us everything.

A young woman revealing Jesus through her kindness in a restaurant may never appear in a church growth report.

An artist whose work awakens spiritual curiosity may never be recognized as a ministry leader.

A friendship that gradually opens someone's heart to Jesus may never become part of an organized outreach strategy.

And yet, something profoundly significant may be happening. How much Kingdom fruitfulness are we overlooking simply because it doesn't look like what we've learned to recognize as ministry.

What if we've become so preoccupied with growing the Church that we've lost sight of the Kingdom Jesus told us to seek first?

That question isn't an accusation.

It's an invitation to look again.

BEYOND THE GARDEN WALLS

This brings me back to wildflowers.

Gardens are wonderful places. They provide beauty, order, care, and the conditions for certain kinds of plants to flourish. But gardens aren't the only places where life grows, and gardeners aren't the only people who get to participate in what God is growing.

I wonder if we've spent so much time cultivating our gardens that we've forgotten to look beyond the walls.

The greatest shift may not be from one model of ministry to another, but from assuming we must create Kingdom opportunities to recognizing the possibilities already present around us.

That requires a different kind of imagination. One shaped by Holy Curiosity rather than familiar assumptions. One that begins with observation rather than organization. One that sees ordinary people and everyday places as extraordinary possibilities for Kingdom expression.

The Lord of the harvest is already at work in His harvest. And He's inviting us to lift our eyes.

RECOGNIZE. RESOURCE. RELEASE.

If something like a Kingdom Renaissance is emerging, I wonder what it might mean for those of us who lead churches, ministries, and Christian organizations.

What if one of our greatest opportunities isn't to create more programs, but to recognize the Kingdom possibilities already present among the people we know? What if we began looking differently at the artists, entrepreneurs, teachers, musicians, healthcare workers, hospitality professionals, and countless others who make up our communities?

Instead of immediately asking how we can get them more involved in our activities, what if we became curious about how Jesus is already working through their lives? And what if we invested in those possibilities?

Not by creating another ministry department or adding another program to an already crowded calendar. But by recognizing what God is stirring, providing encouragement and resources where needed, and releasing people to follow Jesus into places we may never personally go.

Recognize.

Resource.

Release.

Not another ministry strategy to implement, but a different way of seeing the people God has already placed in our lives.

***Imagine** churches becoming communities that celebrate Kingdom fruitfulness wherever it appears, whether or not it contributes to the growth of their own organizations.*

***Imagine** pastors recognizing that some of the most significant Kingdom activity among their people may happen in places they will never visit and through relationships they will never personally know.*

***Imagine** followers of Jesus discovering that their everyday lives aren't interruptions to ministry. They're places where ministry is already possible.*

PATRONS OF POSSIBILITY

There's another fascinating connection to the original Renaissance.

Many of the artists, architects, scientists, and thinkers we associate with that era were supported by patrons. These individuals and families recognized unusual gifts, invested resources, opened doors, and created opportunities for creativity and discovery to flourish.

They didn't necessarily produce the art themselves. They recognized its potential and made room for it.

I wonder what might happen if more of our churches and Christian organizations began thinking of themselves as patrons of Kingdom possibility. Not simply as institutions responsible for delivering religious experiences, but as communities that recognize, encourage, and invest in the Kingdom expressions emerging among their people.

This wouldn't require abandoning our gatherings or dismantling our organizations. It would require expanding our imagination.

Instead of assuming that meaningful ministry must fit within something we've already organized, we could become curious about what Jesus might be doing beyond our existing structures. And rather than feeling threatened by expressions we cannot manage or measure, we could learn to celebrate them.

That would be a remarkable shift from an institution-centered imagination to a Kingdom-centered one.

A LIVING EXAMPLE

For the past fifteen years, Lucia and I have had the extraordinary privilege of being intertwined in the lives of young Disney Cast Members around the world.

Most of our time together happens around dinner tables, over coffee, during conversations, and in the ordinary rhythms of everyday life. We don't have a church building, a large staff, or an elaborate collection of programs. And yet, we've watched Jesus work in ways we could never have planned or orchestrated.

We've seen friendships become places of extraordinary spiritual discovery. We've watched people who had little interest in religion become curious about Jesus. And we've seen those relationships continue long after our friends returned to their home countries.

Those experiences have challenged many of my assumptions about where ministry happens, what fruitfulness looks like, and how the Kingdom advances. They've also convinced me that the most important thing we bring into the harvest isn't a program.

It's our presence, our curiosity, our willingness to listen, and our readiness to respond when Jesus opens a door.

We haven't discovered a new Kingdom. We've simply begun recognizing possibilities that were there long before we arrived.

And I suspect we're only seeing a fraction of what's happening.

WHAT IF WE LOOKED AGAIN?

I don't know whether historians will look back on this period and describe it as a Kingdom Renaissance. And I'm certainly not suggesting that we need to launch another movement, develop another ministry model, or create a new expression of Christianity.

In fact, I wonder if that's part of what we're being invited to reconsider.

What if Kingdom Renaissance isn't something we need to create, but something we need to recognize?

What if Jesus is already stirring something extraordinary among people and in places we've largely overlooked?

What if the next great awakening of Christian imagination isn't centered on what we can build for God, but on discovering what He's already doing?

And what if our invitation isn't to organize it, manage it, or claim ownership of it, but to recognize His activity and discover how we might participate?

I don't know how widespread this is or where it might lead. But I'm seeing enough to make me curious.

The original Renaissance helped awaken a new imagination for what human beings could discover and create. This Kingdom Renaissance may be awakening a new imagination for what Jesus is already doing among humanity, and what His Kingdom can express through those who follow Him.

Not an abandonment of the Church.

Not another attempt to reinvent Christianity.

But a rediscovery of something ancient that has never stopped being true.

The Kingdom is near.

The harvest is plentiful.

And the Lord of the harvest is already at work.

Perhaps we're not being invited to start a Renaissance. Perhaps we're being invited to recognize one.

After all, wildflowers have been growing beyond our garden walls all along.

For another surprising glimpse of what can be hidden beneath the surface, explore the Field Note [The Death Valley Surprise](#).