

The Stories Of Jesus Part 2

The Kingdom Of Heaven Is Like...

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Memory Verses: Matthew 13:44

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We are in a series talking about the Stories of Jesus. Don't you just love stories? I like a good story just as much as the next person. Sometimes the plot is pretty straight forward, but sometimes they catch you off guard. Have you ever read a book or watched a movie that you thought was going in one direction and then at the end it goes a totally different way? We call that a plot twist.

Think about the most famous plot twist you can think of. For me it is the fact that in Star Wars, Darth Vader is set up to be this notorious villain which Luke must face in order to destroy the evil Empire. It's a pretty straight forward plot. But plot twist (and spoiler alert for all of those who have yet to see Star Wars, I mean its only 50 years old now), Darth Vader turns out to actually be Luke's father. Crazy right?

But even more crazy is the fact that the Jewish people thought that the story of the Messiah was also pretty straight forward. When he came, they thought that he would come with great power, overthrow the Roman occupation, and reestablish Israel as the world's greatest kingdom! But, plot twist! Jesus, the true Messiah, didn't come to establish his kingdom here on the earth, but rather in the hearts of his followers. And guess what; some people couldn't understand this; they couldn't grasp it. So to explain it to them, Jesus gave them parables.

Last week Jesus explained the Kingdom of God like this; "a sower went out to sow seeds." In that parable the Kingdom of God is revealed to be Jesus the sower and the Gospel His seed. Those seeds which fall on good soil; good and faithful hearts, will grow to be a part of His kingdom.

This week we are going to look at the remainder of the kingdom parables in Matthew 13. **A kingdom parable is a story used by Jesus to explain the differences between men's expectations of Christ's kingdom and it's actual spiritual realities.** And as we look at them we will find that too often what we expect from Jesus and what we get from Him are quite different, but in the end it is exactly what we need. **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see today is that... **The Kingdom of**

Heaven Can't Be Suppressed.

Here we have to similar parables. Let's begin with The Parable of the Mustard Seed. Look with me in **Matthew 13:31-32**, **Mark 4:30-32**, and **Luke 13:18-19**. The **mustard seed** which represents the kingdom of heaven is very small. Right now our ushers are handing each of you a mustard seed. But even though it is small it grows into one of the largest plants in the garden, so large that some mistake it for a tree.

Now let's look at The Parable of The Leaven. Look with me again in **Matthew 13:33**, and **Luke 13:20-21**. Leaven is any agent which causes bread to rise. In Jesus's time, as it mostly is still today, it would have been the fungi yeast. Yeast is a microscopic single celled organism which consumes sugar to produce carbon dioxide and alcohol. When just a little amount is put into bread it eats the sugars in the dough and releases CO2 which causes bread to rise and become fluffy, at that point the bread is considered leavened.

The point of both of these parables is simple. The Kingdom of God can't not be suppressed. Outwardly in the world the kingdom of God started with Jesus and 12 outsiders we call the apostles, and now today it has grown to be the leading religion in the world with Billions of followers.

Inwardly, it begins small in our hearts but then as the Holy Spirit works in us, the inner transformation of our soul becomes clear on the outside as well. The effect of the kingdom in our hearts is complete transformation. Every aspect of our lives will be changed. Every thought and value reevaluated in the light of the Gospel. There is no part of our lives that will not be confronted by the kingdom of God.

In short, the Kingdom can't be stopped, controlled, or contained; In this world and in our lives. Through every course of history, men have tried to stamp out the Gospel, destroy the Bibles, kill Christ's followers, and tear down the churches, and when they do the church rises even stronger than before. It can't be suppressed because he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world and the gates of hell can't stand against him!

The same is in our hearts. If the seed of the Gospel has truly been planted in us, and we have by grace through faith and repentance given our lives over to Christ, then there may be times where the devil, or the flesh, or the world tempt us to sin, or become idle, or give up, but their attempts will fall flat as true believers will rise even greater than before! **If Jesus has chosen us, and if by the power of the cross He has saved us, and if the Holy Spirit reigns in us, then there is nothing that can stop what is growing in our souls!** It cannot be suppressed! **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For.**

The second thing we need to see here is that... **The Kingdom of Heaven is Sovereign.** Let's look at our next parable in **Mark 4:26-29**. Here

we see The Parable of the Growing Seed. Here Jesus tells of a man who scatters seed on the ground and then allows nature to take its course. As the man who sowed the seed goes about his business day by day, the seed begins to have an effect. First, the seed sprouts; then it produces a stalk and leaves, then a head of grain, and, finally, fully developed kernels in the head. Jesus emphasizes that all of this happens without the man's help. The man who scattered the seed cannot even fully understand how it happens; it is simply the work of nature.

Taking the seed to be the Word of God, we can interpret the growth of the plants as the working of God's Word in individual hearts. The fact that the crop grows without the farmer's intervention means that God can accomplish His purposes even when we are absent or unaware of what He's doing. The goal is the ripened grain. At the proper time, the Word will bring forth its fruit, and the Lord of the harvest will be glorified.

The point is simple; we play a very small role in the spiritual growth of the kingdom of God in the hearts of a believer. Just like a farmer cannot force a crop to grow, an evangelist cannot force spiritual life or growth on others. God's going to do what God wants to do in the life of believers. Yes we are responsible for our maturation in Christ, but ultimately, God by means of the Holy Spirit will grow us supernaturally. It is a paradox, we must train our bodies to be spiritually strong, but we ultimately rely on God to grow his kingdom in us. **In the end we will look back and see that the only way we could have been transformed from to who we used to be to who we are now is the providence of God.** He is sovereign over the growth of the kingdom in our hearts. The way God uses His Word in the heart of an individual is mysterious and completely independent of human effort. May we be faithful in "sowing the seed," praying for a harvest, and leaving the results to the Lord! **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For.**

The next thing we need to see here is that... **The Kingdom of Heaven Is Supreme.** Here as with the mustard seed and the leaven, we see two very similar parables. Let's look at both The Parable of The Hidden Treasure and The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. Look with me in **Matthew 13:44-46.**

The similarities of these two short parables make it clear they teach the same lesson; the kingdom of heaven is of incalculable value. Both parables involve a man who sold all he had to possess the kingdom. The treasure and the pearl clearly represent Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers.

And while we cannot pay for salvation by selling all our worldly goods, once we have found the prize, we are willing to give up everything to possess it. But what is attained in exchange is so much more valuable

that it is comparable to trading an ounce of trash for a ton of diamonds.

In both parables, the treasures are hidden, indicating that spiritual truth is missed by many and cannot be found by intelligence or power or worldly wisdom. Those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit do discern spiritual truth, and they, like the men in the parable, understand its great value. This presents us with a question; "Are you looking for the greatest treasure?" You may look for it in the pleasures and practices of the world but I assure you, it can only be found in Christ and his kingdom.

And, notice that the merchant stopped seeking for pearls when he found the pearl of great price. Why? Because he finally found what he was looking for his whole life. When you find true satisfaction in Christ, nothing else will satisfy your soul. **Eternal life, and the love of God through Christ constitute the supreme treasure which, once found, makes further searching undesirable and unnecessary.** Christ fulfills our greatest needs, satisfies our longings, makes us whole and clean before God, calms and quiets our hearts, and gives us hope for the future.

The "great price," of course, is that which was paid by Christ for our redemption. He emptied Himself of His glory, came to earth in the form of a lowly man and shed His precious blood on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The Kingdom may be free to those who find it, but it cost a heavy price. I hope, if you haven't already found it, you will today. **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For.**

Next we must see that... **The Kingdom of Heaven Brings A Final Sentence.** Let us observe The Parable of the Dragnet in **Matthew 13:47-50.** In the parable, the dragnet is cast into the sea and pulled onto shore full of all kinds of fish. Then the fishermen sat down to the business of sorting the fish into the "good" and the "bad." The fish worth keeping were gathered into containers, but the rest were tossed away.

Fortunately, Jesus interprets this parable for the disciples so there is no guessing on our part. Just like with the parable of the wheat and tares which we discussed at the end of the sermon last week, this parable discusses those who will be judged at the end of days. Just as the net was cast into the sea drawing many fish, the gospel message is spread into the world, drawing many people to it. Just as the net gathered all types of fish, regardless of their value, so the gospel attracts many people who neither repent nor desire to follow Christ. Just as the fish could not be sorted until the net was pulled ashore, so false believers masquerading as true Christians will not be made known until judgment day.

These "bad fish," or false believers, can be likened to the rocky soil and to the tares. They claim to have a relationship with Jesus, saying "Lord, Lord" and Jesus' reply will be "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" The sobering main point of the parable can be stated thus: **"A day**

of final sentencing will come in which God will separate the true believers from mere pretenders, and those found to be false will be cast into hell." **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For.**

Lastly, we must see that... **The Kingdom of Heaven Is Scriptural.** Let's look at the last of these kingdom parables; The Parable of the Homeowner in **Matthew 13:51-52**. When a homeowner shows off his treasure he shows both his antique collection and his new stuff too. As Will Smith says in Men In Black, the "old busted" and "the new hotness."

Christ has asked the disciples if they understood His explanation of the parables. They have said they do. Now, He explains the parable by referring to scribes, who, at that time, were Israel's teachers of the law. They studied and interpreted Scripture and told the people the proper way to live by it. In a very meaningful sense, these disciples are being taught deeper truths by Jesus, and so are like "scribes trained for the kingdom of heaven." As such, the disciples' work would be to teach these truths to others, both "old" and "new."

Christ is teaching that both the old scriptures, and the new fulfillments are both coming from God. The call is then that they and we should teach others what He has taught them: the unified meaning of Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Gospel. **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For**

Application

The application for us this morning is simple. The Kingdom of God and Heaven is not what anyone expected. They wanted a triumphant king to overthrow their physical foes. Instead Jesus came as a humble servant to help us overthrow our spiritual foes. His kingdom cannot be stopped. As the Holy Spirit inhabits His people, they will continue to mature, and their numbers will continue to grow, until the harvest.

His kingdom is Sovereign. Of course His followers are responsible to some degree to mature in their faith, but over all, the supernatural power of Christ will transform us into something we could never manufacture on our own.

His kingdom is Supreme. There is nothing greater than being transformed by the power of Christ in our lives. The old has gone, the new has come. We are new creations in Him and we have eternal life through Him. He is the greatest treasure we could ever have or hope for.

His kingdom brings a final Sentence. In the end He will divide the false believers and the real believers. The Gospel is so good it draws

both the lost and the saved, however, only those who surrender their lives to Christ in faith and repentance will inherit Heaven.

And His Kingdom is Scriptural. The only way for anyone to know of it is through those of us who will be willing to preach it. We preach both the Old Testament which leads to Christ, and the New Testament that reveals how to have a relationship with Him.

Conclusion

So, are you all about His kingdom? Are you willing to search for it? Are you willing to give up everything else for it? Are you willing to be transformed by it? Are you willing to be judged by it? And are you willing to share it? **Though The Kingdom of Heaven May Be Different Than What We Had In Mind, It Is Still The Greatest Kingdom We Could Ever Hope For**