

God's Story and Our Story Come to Life in the Parables

Jesus Used to Teach on the Kingdom of Heaven

Week of January 17, 2016

Sunday, January 17, 2015

Matthew 6:31-33 *Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Reflection: The kingdom of God was Jesus' primary focus throughout his ministry. More than 70 times in the first three Gospels he talks about it. He tells people that it is all around them and inside them. For Jesus there was nothing more important for a person to discover in their lifetime. And yet what we will see is this kingdom is not off in the clouds. It is right here in this moment as you read these words. It is full of life. It is full of struggles, temptations, victories and defeats. It includes all people regardless. This kingdom of God that Jesus preaches is the heart and soul of the New Testament. How would you describe the kingdom of God to someone? How do you see yourself living in the kingdom of God in your everyday life?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *is in me.*

Monday, January 18, 2015

Matthew 13:25-30 *"The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. While people were sleeping, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat and went away. When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared. "The servants of the landowner came and said to him, 'Master, didn't you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?' " "An enemy has done this," he answered. "The servants said to him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them?' " "But the landowner said, 'No, because if you gather the weeds, you'll pull up the wheat along with them. Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvest time I'll say to the harvesters, "First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn."'*

Reflection: In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus teaches with seven parables. Six of them have to do with the kingdom of heaven. This one compares the kingdom to someone who plants a field and soon discovers that someone has sabotaged his gardens with weeds. Surprisingly the owner says to leave the weeds alone – let them grow side-by-side. And in this parable Jesus is describing what the kingdom of heaven is like. How would you interpret this parable? What does it say about segregating the good from the bad? What does this non-dualistic view say about God's kingdom? How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *is all around me.*

Tuesday, January 19, 2015

Matthew 13: 31-32 *He told another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. It's the smallest of all seeds. But when it's grown, it's the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches."*

Reflection: Here Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a tiny little seed and yet when it grows it turns into one of the largest of plants. It provides a place for the birds to come and rest. What's the point Jesus is trying to make with this parable? What does such a kingdom look like? Is it real or is it make-believe? How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *has no fences.*

Wednesday, January 20, 2015

Matthew 13:33 *He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough."*

Reflection: Here is a comparison right out of the kitchen. Have you noticed how Jesus used everyday examples to paint a picture of the kingdom of heaven? The wheat flour wasn't ready until the yeast worked its way all the way through the dough. What's the point Jesus is trying to make here about the kingdom of heaven? If you aren't familiar with making bread or the use of yeast maybe you can do a bit of research to see how this parable reveals something wonderful about the kingdom of heaven. How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *is in everything.*

Thursday, January 21, 2015

Matthew 13:44 *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that somebody hid in a field, which someone else found and covered up. Full of joy, the finder sold everything and bought that field.*

Reflection: Let your imagination go with this parable. How is the kingdom of heaven like a hidden treasure? What do you think this treasure looks like? Have you seen and experienced such a treasure in your life? How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *is like a priceless treasure.*

Friday, January 22, 2015

Matthew 13:45 *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it.*

Reflection: Here is a very similar parable that compares the kingdom of heaven to a precious find. In both parables the person who experienced the value of the kingdom of heaven was willing to sell everything in order to have it. What does that say to you about the beauty of God's kingdom? What is so valuable to you that you would sell everything to have it? How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *gives me hope.*

Saturday, January 23, 2015

Matthew 13:47-50 *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that people threw into the lake and gathered all kinds of fish. When it was full, they pulled it to the shore, where they sat down and put the good fish together into containers. But the bad fish they threw away. That's the way it will be at the end of the present age. The angels will go out and separate the evil people from the righteous people, and will throw the evil ones into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth.*

Reflection: Where did this come from? What happened to all the inclusion and immeasurable value and the beauty of God's kingdom? How can Jesus be so dualistic here when he so non-dualistic in the other parables? Maybe Jesus is helping us to see that there is no utopian kingdom of heaven on earth. The kingdom thrives even with good and evil, justice and injustice, people who are honest and people who are not. Could it be that Jesus is helping us to see that the world, our families, even our own personal lives don't have to be pure before the kingdom of heaven can come? Maybe the kingdom of heaven is like that seed growing alongside the weeds and the owner said to let them grow up together. Or like that tree that welcomes all the birds of the air, not just one breed of bird, to come and nest. Could it be that the kingdom of heaven on earth is just that big – big enough to hold even the paradox of this parable? What do you think? How does your view of the kingdom of heaven and this one line up?

Breath Prayer: (Inhale) *Behold the Kingdom of God...* (Exhale) *holds the paradoxes of life.*