

FOCAL SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 13:24-43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² 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."

³³ He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds^[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough."

³⁴ Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵ So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."^[b]

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

As Jesus began his ministry, the Bible says in Luke 8:1 that Jesus, “traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1).

And Matthew says “From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Matthew 4:17

The concept of the kingdom of God was central to the teaching of Jesus, and therefore it is critical to our understanding of what it is to believe in and follow after Christ.

The scripture also makes it clear that our enemy satan will do all that he can to confuse and dilute the message of God, and the message about the kingdom of God, so it is important that we from time to time re-visit and familiarize ourselves with this basic message that Christ preached of the Kingdom of God.

American Methodist Christian missionary, theologian, author and Christian Scholar E. Stanley Jones defined the kingdom of God like this: “The kingdom of God is God’s total order, expressed as realm and reign, in the individual and in society; and which is to replace the present unworkable world order with God’s order in the individual and in society; and while the nature of the Kingdom is social, the entrance into it is by a personal new birth now; the character of that kingdom is seen in the character of Jesus — the Kingdom is Christlikeness universalized; while it comes on earth in the time process it is eternal and is the same rule which is in heaven and because it is Christlikeness this makes it heaven — there and here; and while it is a total order demanding a total obedience, it brings total freedom.”

As we see in Psalm 93, God our creator, eternal and mighty God established his reign over all creation.

“**1 Chronicles 29:11**” Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

Humanity's relationship with God under that reign, is messed up by our disobedience first in the Garden of Eden, and continues to this day.

Christ came to reclaim that which was his own, and to proclaim God's rule and reign over all the earth through Christ's victory, as he overcame the cross and arose from the grave and purchased a place for us in heaven.

Colossians 1:13-14 puts it like this "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Philippians 2:10-11, proclaims that Christ's victory is complete and Christ will come again and at that time ".. every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.."

I imagine in the last days as earthly rulers have always done, that the kingdoms, rulers and principalities of this world go blindly on, believing that their power and glory is the only thing that counts in this world.

They simply do not have as Jesus Christ proclaimed “eyes to see” and minds and hearts to understand, God’s eternal might and will shaping the destiny of even their perceived earthly realms.

The Psalmist assures us in Psalm 93 that “The Lord reigns...on a throne established long ago” as he reminds us that the Lord’s holiness adorns God’s house for endless days. Psalm 93 1-2, 5.

God is in control even when we feel out of control.

God is in control even when pandemic, economic loss and the whole host of things that life can throw at us, can make us feel out of control.

Even then, God is still in control and His love for us is everlasting.

Jesus even tells us in Luke 12:22-26 “²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you

will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Indeed, God is still in control, so much that worry is absolutely useless.

And Jesus tells us further in vs. 31 “seek his kingdom, and these things will be given you as well”

Seek first God’s kingdom and all good things shall be added unto you.

So then what is this “Kingdom of God we should be seeking.

As we consider the kingdom of God, there are four major truths we need to understand.

First, the reality of the kingdom of God affects us all individually and collectively.

The Kingdom of God has the power to transform us. Knowing more of God and His will for us opens us up to knowing God more intimately.

Those who walked the earth when Christ did, only focused on the Messiah's kingdom being national in scope, political in nature and would only be for their community and their own nation.

They had difficulty seeing that Christ's appearance would be for all the world.

Remember last week when we talked about Jonah?

I called Jonah the 'reluctant kingdom builder'.

God told Jonah to go to the city of Ninevah, the enemies of his people.

His mind could only imagine an act of God that would exclude those whom Jonah felt were his enemies.

His mindset couldn't allow for a God who would be carrying His love to those whom Jonah could not even stomach.

His understanding of God could only accept a God who loved Jonah and Jonah's people and left no room for an expression of God's love to 'the other'.

Poor Jonah could not fathom God's love being so great that it included even those who had been unrighteous in their acts.

“The time has come,” he (Jesus) said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” **Mark 1:15**

There is no qualifier in that statement. It does not say only Jews come. It does not say only men come. It does not say only friends come. It is a clarion call for all to repent and believe the good news.

This is an invitation for all who hear to accept and be transformed by the living God.

In addition to the Kingdom of God being a place for those who love God and repent and believe the good news of Christ

Luke writes of a conversation with Christ, “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you’” (Luke 17:20-21). Within you.

Earlier, we sang the hymn “sanctuary”. Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary. Pure and Holy, Tried and true.

It is an invitation in song for the spirit of God to rest within each of us.

Within you resides the power of the Universe. You have a Kingdom within.

How does this happen? It happens when we accept God's invitation to be a part of his Kingdom. Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). Just as you have had a physical birth, so you must have a spiritual birth. We become subjects of a kingdom within a kingdom. We are a part of the kingdom of this world, but our allegiance is to another Kingdom.

We must be extremely careful when others who have accepted a misguided understanding of God proclaim that Christ has come again, and is embodied in this person over there or that person over here.

The scripture in Matt 24:24 says "For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if

possible, even God's chosen ones.

We must carefully guard our ears and be careful not to expose ourselves to those who are peddling a lesser and a false god.

There is one God, in three persons. Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The scripture speaks of no other Kingdom of God, and no other God but the Triune God.

I am always intrigued by the training that FBI agents as agents of the treasury department determine fake currency.

They do so by training to understand what the real handheld currency looks like, feels like, smells like.

By the time of their training conclusion, they have spent so much time understanding every detail of the genuine article, that they can spot a fake because they know the real thing that intimately.

That's how we have to be with understanding and knowing God.

We have to study His Word, His teachings, His Spirit, that we can spot a fake messiah or a fake offering of the kingdom of God and remove ourselves from it's influence.

So, we've talked about how the Kingdom of God transforms the individual.

Lets turn now to see how the Kingdom of God transforms our communities and our world.

The transformation of ourselves is too good to keep to ourselves.

The church was never meant to be a 'little holy sorority or fraternity or club'.

We were designed to share God and the blessings of His Kingdom with others that they too may be transformed not by us but by God.

The Kingdom of God stands against the cult of individualism that we find so prevalent in our culture. When we belong to Christ, we become a tool for His use. We are intended to serve the larger community.

Paul wrote: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). It is frightening to realize that God’s plan is to reconcile the world to himself and use us to bring about that reconciliation. But what could be a higher honor or privilege?

There is such fear, hopelessness, unhappiness, injustice, and violence in the world

We are Christ's hands and feet and the ambassadors of His Kingdom and as such were maybe called upon to take our ambassadorship and 'speak truth to power', or to support those who do so out of love, devotion to and calling from God.

We are called to take God's reconciling message into the world. We have allowed God to transform us and we take that transforming message and energy into the world as God moves us to share it that all might be reconciled to God.

.We are not called to 'be church apart from the church.

Rev. Buchanan put it this way

"Never in the New Testament do we see individual Christians operating separately from the church. Always we see Christians working together for the purpose of bringing the world to Christ. In the second chapter of the book of Acts, we see them selling everything they own in order to provide for the needs of others. They pool their resources and do not

consider themselves to own anything. Their relationships with each other take on a new importance, as well as their responsibility toward the world. They are ministering to the poor and proclaiming good news to the outcasts. When we begin to focus on the kingdom of God, we begin to focus on the world. It is not just about our personal faith, it is about being a community of faith which is faithful to God in reaching out to the world around us.”

We should not be afraid to step out of our comfort zones and serve as he calls.

And we should not be like Jonah who out of fear and hatred ran from the call of God to do God’s will for the benefit of the Kingdom

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32

God has been pleased to give us the kingdom and it is His will that we accept it and share it with all the others we meet as He grows the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

The third point I would like us to consider is this:

The kingdom of God is Now. The kingdom of God is not in the distant future, it is now.

When Jesus showed up on earth, the Kingdom had effectively come. That was what Jesus preached

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus proclaimed “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The one who was in authority gives us the power to achieve much in our prayers.

Binding and loosening are actions words.

God intends us to be active in our prayers and to understand that He is active in receiving them as well.

If you have had your sins forgiven by accepting Jesus as your savior, you are already experiencing a unique phenomena. That God dwells richly within you. That the piece of heaven that came to earth in the form of the baby boy of Mary, and went voluntarily to the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

This same Jesus ministering in the power of the Spirit, said: “. . .the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28). And in the sermon on the mount, he said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20).

God has and continues to transform us, and others.

That was not a promise about the future, but a statement about the present.

After the resurrection, Jesus continued to emphasize the importance of the Kingdom. Luke writes: “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). This idea of the present reign of God was preeminent on his mind. It was also on the mind of the apostles. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he was allowed to meet with people and preach. The book of Acts says, “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God. . . .” (Acts 28:23).

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Matthew 19:14

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

John 3:3

Live according to the principles of the Kingdom and you will discover that life works and your life is filled with certain blessings.

Go against the principles of the kingdom of God and your life will experience the consequences of your actions.

God made the world, and he also built laws into it which determined the way we are to live. God made the world and He reigns supreme, not us.

We have to seek Him out that the furtherance of His Kingdom will be made manifest.

The principles of the Kingdom are a blessing that flow from the rule and reign of Christ. They are not confining rules, they are the liberating secrets of life itself.

But living in the kingdom of God does not guarantee that things will always go well with us — anymore than it did for Jesus or Paul.

Things will always go better when we live by the principles of the Kingdom, but they will not always go well.

The book of Acts tells us that Paul worked to strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith by saying, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Dr. Stanley Hauerwas, professor at Duke University, says, “It’s hard to remember that Jesus did not come to make us safe, but rather to make us disciples, citizens of God’s new age, a kingdom of surprise.”

So here’s the other principle of the Kingdom of God.

Christ has come and He is returning.

We believe there will be a final resurrection, a judgment, the separation of good and evil and new heaven and a new earth.

Wrongs will be righted; wounds will be healed; sorrow will be turned to joy, and we and the whole world will be changed, as the Bible puts it: “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

So as Kingdom Kids we have much to look forward to.

We are the Kids of the Now Kingdom that we receive the inheritance to, but we are also Kids of the Not Yet Kingdom that God has something wonderful in store for us. The Bible talks about the time when: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

It's important to understand that Christ holds the keys to the kingdom. And as long as we are holding onto Him and His promised return, they are mighty keys indeed, because we serve a mighty God.

Seek first God's kingdom and all good things shall be added unto you.

Amen.

