

DISCIPLES LIVE FOR THE KINGDOM

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

In telling the kingdom parables, Jesus taught that His kingdom is unique and of unsurpassed value.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Matthew 13

+ **SETTING:**

Having come to seek and to save the lost, Jesus now tells His followers what a life devoted to Him looks like. Those who have been pursued and rescued by God will now in turn pursue His kingdom and His righteousness. Jesus illustrates this discipleship by telling His listeners several parables about the kingdom of heaven. By telling these stories, Jesus is provoking His listeners to think deeply about the growth, value, and purity of His kingdom.

DAY 1

READ:

Matthew 13:31-33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 13:31-32

NOTES

In a culture that is increasingly secular and easily distracted, Christians are tempted to think that what is needed is to gain people's attention through big programs, big names, big churches, and big activities. Lights, sound, production, and an emphasis on performance and cultural credibility are all tempting in light of the greatness of the kingdom we serve. If God is great, shouldn't we do something great for Him?

An obsession with being attractive by our performance and big productions often reveals that we have misunderstood how the kingdom of God works. In the first of two similar parables, Jesus says that the way the kingdom grows is not with human fertilizer and human ingenuity. Rather, the kingdom starts off incredibly small, like a tiny mustard seed. The beauty of the kingdom of God is that it does not depend upon the greatness of our clever ideas or creativity but upon the power of the message of the Savior who has come to rescue people from sin and death.

You don't have to do something great for God for His kingdom to advance and grow. Our confidence is not in big names, big events, or big programs. Instead, we trust in the power of the One who promised to build His church and overthrow the gates of Hades. The power of the kingdom is in the message of life, forgiveness, joy, and hope of the crucified and resurrected Savior.

How are some tempted to trust in large productions in the way they view discipleship or evangelism?

DAY 2

READ:

Matthew 13:31-33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 13:33

NOTES

During the recent pandemic, people found themselves at home and in isolation. The result was many people returned to previous homemaking practices, including baking bread. With supply chain issues and yeast in high demand, yeast was in short supply, so many people ventured into the realm of sourdough. By capturing the natural yeasts in the environment within a jar of water and flour, people could make their own bread at home without having store-bought yeast.

When making sourdough bread, a small portion of the starter is used to combine with the other ingredients necessary for making the bread. Even though a small amount of starter seems insignificant to cause the bread to rise, the result is the same as it has been for generations: a large, risen loaf of bread that is tasty and enjoyable.

In the same way that yeast overtakes the entire batch of dough, so it is with the kingdom of God. The Lord's salvation comes to those near and far, in small yet substantial ways that bring about a radical transformation of the heart and soul. Just as Jesus promised, He will build His church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). And just like we wait for the dough to rise before we bake, so we wait for God's kingdom to come in greater degrees of glory.

Where have you seen the growth of the kingdom of God?

DAY 3

READ:

Matthew 13:44-46

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 13:44

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #68: FAITH

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

If you have ever found yourself shopping in a store and found that there was only one remaining item that you really wanted, then you know people will go to great lengths to ensure that they get what they want. They may hide the item on a different rack or shelf; they may ask the store manager if they can have the item laid away; others will make a call for someone to bring them some money while they hold onto it to ensure that no one else might pick it up and buy it.

When the man who found the treasure in the field buried it again, he acted in a way that was far more radical than a shopper who found a precious item they wanted. He went to great lengths to purchase this field, making sure that what was valuable could be secured, giving up everything for the sake of this treasure.

Our behavior shows the value that we place on something. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Our hearts will go to great lengths to secure the things we love. We will act in irrational ways to the common person.

Jesus, however, says that this is what happens when someone discovers the value of the kingdom: they act in a radical way, willing to lose everything else in order to have this one thing. To have Christ and to belong to His kingdom is worth more than anything this world could ever offer, and it is worth losing everything else to gain the greatest joy that exists!

What sacrifices might you need to make for the kingdom of God?

DAY 4

READ:

Matthew 13:44-46

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 13:45-46

NOTES

In 1904, William Borden graduated from high school, and his wealthy family gave him a remarkable gift: a trip around the world. As heir to the Borden family fortune, his future was promising and looked bright. But upon seeing the plight of the poor in Asia and in the Middle East, Borden wrote to his family that he wanted to become a missionary.

Friends thought young Borden had lost his mind. He would attend Yale University, yet he remained focused on this one aim: to know Christ and to take Him to those who were in need of help. Although he was a millionaire, Borden had made it his aim to pursue Christ and not be distracted by the amusements of the world.

Even upon his graduation, Borden was offered some well-paying jobs. But Borden boarded a ship to China. But when his ship stopped in Egypt, where he planned to study Arabic, he contracted spinal meningitis and died within a month.

In the back of Borden's Bible were inscribed three phrases: No reserves. No retreats. No regrets. These three phrases characterized this young man's life. He would not be reserved about his calling. He would not retreat from going to those who were in need. And he had no regrets about following Christ.¹

When the treasure of the kingdom grips you, as it did young Borden, there is no loss in following Christ even to the ends of the world.

Where might Christ be calling you to bring the good news for the growth of His kingdom?

DAY 5

READ:

Matthew 13:47-50

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 13:47-50

NOTES

Hell has come on hard times. To talk about it is to sound harsh, judgmental, and not nice. Certainly there have been those who have talked much about hell without proclaiming the good news of the glories of heaven. It is possible to have an unhealthy fixation on judgment and damnation, but it is also unhealthy to avoid the topic altogether.

To talk about hell and the seriousness of the final judgment in the context of the goodness of God's saving grace is what Christians have done throughout history. Consider the eighteenth-century pastor Jonathan Edwards's thoughts about why we should consider and warn others about hell:

If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger—and into which the greater part of men in Christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so their danger of it, and so for want of taking due care to avoid it—then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possibly I can of the dreadfulness of it. If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness who does most to represent me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.³

Whom should you warn about the dangers of the final judgment?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Beware and do not be deceived: Although the punishment is hidden, it is nonetheless certain and will not fail to come."²

—Martin Luther (1483–1546)

GROUP

NOTES

POINT 1: The Growth of the Kingdom

(Matthew 13:31-33)

The _____ of God may have started in meager ways, but it grows _____ .



From Day 2: **Where have you seen the growth of the kingdom of God?**

The kingdom of God may seem insignificant, but it has the _____ to _____ the world.



For what reasons might God be pleased to build His kingdom through small and insignificant things?

POINT 2: The Value of the Kingdom

(Matthew 13:44-46)

KEY DOCTRINE #68:

FAITH

Biblical faith is the resting, or _____ , in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and _____ of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.



In what ways have you radically embraced the kingdom of heaven in faith?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"His kingdom cannot fail, He rules o'er earth and heav'n; The keys of death and hell Are to our Jesus giv'n: Lift up your heart, Lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!"⁴

—Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

The kingdom of heaven is _____ the _____
of giving up everything else for it.

? How has following Christ brought you great joy?

POINT 3: The Purity of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:47-50)

The kingdom of _____ will only have those
who have put their _____ in Jesus as Lord
and Savior.

? Why is judgment a necessary part of God's
final work?

_____ will come at the end times for those
who have _____ Christ.

? What should be our response to the warning of
God's judgment?

MY RESPONSE

Because we have come to know the unmatched
value of God's kingdom, we live willing to sacrifice
everything so that others may be part of the kingdom
through faith in Jesus.

- **HEAD:** Based on Scripture, how would you describe the kingdom of God?
- **HEART:** How can you praise and thank God for the growth and advance of His kingdom across the world and throughout history?
- **HANDS:** Who is someone you can tell about the great joy of the kingdom of God?



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Mission begins with a kind of
explosion of joy."⁵

—Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998)