

The Kingdom Of God
Luke 13:18-21

Each time that I open these precious words of scripture to study them, I am reminded of just how gracious and generous our Lord is to us in the manner that He has given these truths to us, that He has given these precious truths with the intention that they would minister to all the many different people that would read them over these millennia, many of them from differing cultures, and with varying degrees of education and with varying abilities to comprehend the meaning of His words.

And knowing that that would take place, our Lord Jesus was considerate in His teaching methods, often using analogies and allegories and parables, even using the simplest of wording to explain His truths.

And so it is here in these allegories describing the "Kingdom of God". These are simple words, but as we'll find as we study them in depth, it will take more than just our intellect to comprehend their meaning. It will require the very Spirit of God to explain them to us. Listen, beginning in verse 18 of Luke 13,

¹⁸Then He (the Lord Jesus) said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

²⁰And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."(Luke 13:18-20)

As I first began to study through these words, my mind was drawn again to the understanding that there are many, many things within the realms of God that are beyond the common and finite abilities of our minds to comprehend. And this one that Jesus is speaking about here, the "Kingdom of God" is one of them.

But do you not love the way in which God is so loving and gracious as He condescends to us to help us to grasp these meanings, to say to us, His beloved children, "Come on up closer to Me and learn of Me. The more you learn of Me and My kingdom, the more you will be delighted with this path of righteousness that you have chosen to walk."

As God bows low to help us in our limitations, He makes the perfect provision for our needs. He gives us Himself, His Holy Spirit, to live within us, to be in us and to be available every moment of every day, to “fill in all of the blanks” that arise in our understanding, in our discernment and in our judgment.

Listen again to these scripture passages that I repeat to you often, special words that explain to us how God gives His precious provision of understanding and comprehension to our otherwise meager and finite minds.

First, in Ezekiel 36, He tells us that He will give us a new heart and a new spirit to help us with our understanding. Listen,

²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

And then also in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, precious words that I often remind myself of, here God speaking through the words of the Apostle Paul saying,

⁷ . . . we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹But as it is written:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

¹⁰But (Listen) God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:7-14)

This was what Jesus was doing each time that he preached and each time that He taught His disciples. He was not just passing along some good principles of life for us to live by. He did that yes, but much more importantly, His words were the very Spirit of God, and they spoke forth life into our souls.

And as Jesus spoke words like these in the passage we're studying today, words telling about the hidden realms of His kingdom, "The Kingdom of God", He was conveying a Spiritual understanding about a very special Spiritual place, one that exists out there in the heavens, yes, but (listen) much, much more, it is a Spiritual kingdom that also and especially exists, right here, right now, all around us, and within the heart and soul of each and every person who receives Christ and His salvation and His Holy Spirit.

But again, the reality is, even with the Holy Spirit doing His work in us, Jesus' disciples and you and I, we still do struggle to comprehend deeper truths such as this one about "The Kingdom of God". We are still part of a crooked and perverse world, with minds that are distorted with all sorts of wrong ideas and perceptions.

Science has been so effective in its demands that we perceive and believe only in those things that we can actually see and touch in this natural world. So that, when Jesus speaks to us about a Spiritual "Kingdom of God", our small minds can only take us so far. We are only able to imagine visible kinds of images of that kingdom, images like palaces and beautiful gardens and streets of gold and gates with jewels.

And yes, those really are a part of God's kingdom, but those images are not the part of His "Kingdom" that Jesus was speaking about in these words.

Here, Jesus is conveying a vision to us of another part of His kingdom, a Spiritual kingdom that resides all in amongst the otherwise crooked and depraved kingdoms of this world, a Spiritual Kingdom that has its home within the hearts and minds and souls of people like you and me. And while we are unable to see that Spiritual Kingdom with our natural eyes, it is still nonetheless real, as real as real can be, even more real than the foolish façade that this world, the flesh and the devil presents to us each day.

But we must be careful as we try to separate out the Spiritual world from our natural world. They are separate yes, but in so many, many ways they are not

separate. They are mysteriously intertwined with each other. And that is the special message that Jesus is trying to get our feeble minds to comprehend. He said on one occasion,

The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17:20-21)

The Spirit of the Lord Jesus now fills and permeates everything that exists, all around us and in us. In every idea, every action, every behavior, every deed, and yes, even every misdeed that takes place on this earth.

He is preeminently present all of the time and in everything that exists. In Colossians 1, we read,

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— (Listen) all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Colossians 1:15-18)

These words speak a truth that you and I truly need to understand and to accept.

We dare not continue to allow the notions of our natural minds to blot out the presence of the Spiritual kingdom of the living God within the daily activities of our lives, quenching His mighty preeminent presence, spoken about here.

And no, we can't see it with our natural eyes, that is true, but on the authority of these words that we are studying here today, this "Kingdom of God", His Holy Spirit and all of the pleasant pastures that it offers are right here, right now, with and within all of us who believe. And to the degree that you and I will invite Him, He will spread His presence throughout every moment and every activity of our life, His Spirit interacting with our spirit, convicting us, guiding us and directing us. That is what this Kingdom of God that Jesus was speaking about here is all about.

His Spirit, interacting with our Spirit, will be like yeast, instantly spreading throughout everything that we are, not only bringing about changes in us, but

also causing us to bring about those same changes in others with whom we have to do.

Given the opportunity, His Spirit is like the tiny mustard seed that will grow from an almost imperceptible seed into a mammoth tree, the tree of life. And not only for us to enjoy, but also, as these words tell us, others are invited to join with us and rest in the comfort of its presence.

All these things, and much, much more are part of the “Kingdom of God” that has come to earth, first through the person of Jesus Christ and then through the gift of His Holy Spirit, living in and interacting with our spirit, all throughout all of the many and varied activities and behaviors of our day.

This was God's plan! Beginning with these disciples, and then moving on out to others through their witness, and now today through you and me and our witness, the “Kingdom of God” is able to spread into the hearts and minds of men and women throughout the whole world.

The question for you and me is, “How do we move on ahead and join in with and become a part of this special “Kingdom of God”?”

The answer is, our part is to “seek it”, and to “pursue after it”. In Matthew chapter 6, we are told to do that, to “seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness” and then all of the things that we need in this life will be given to us, by Him.

Those words in that passage express, so simply, the concerns, the involvements, the worries about all of the common things of this life that keep each of us so captivated each day. But again, Jesus wants you and me to “see” on past those visible things, on into the invisible realm of His Spirit, the “Kingdom of God”.

Listen to some of those words that He gives to us in Matthew chapter 6.

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?
²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But (Listen) seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:25-33)

As we read these words, can we not hear and see the ever-present Hand of God interwoven within all that is taking place on this earth, in the flowers of the fields, His feeding the birds of the air, and His clothing and feeding you and me each and every day. How utterly amazing our God is!

And our part in this whole transaction and in this relationship with Christ is a simple one. It is to simply “seek after Him, to seek after His Kingdom and His righteousness”. And please note clearly that we are to do that first, long before we resort to falling back onto our own ideas and philosophies and behaviors.

And our “seeking” is not to be half-hearted, as we so often tend to do, throw up a quick prayer and then get on about doing natural things in the natural world and having only minimal success in our efforts.

As Jesus said in another place, “Ask, seek and knock”. We are to be persistent in our seeking, allowing nothing to keep us from it.

A book that I have spoken to you about on other occasions is one by A.W. Tozer, entitled “The Pursuit of God”. In that book, Tozer describes our seeking after God as a kind of relentless pursuit, a pursuit that provides for no measure of giving up.

And truly, we must not ever give up, because the prize that lies before us is much too valuable for us to waver, even for a moment.

And folks, the wonderful thing about this seeking after God that we don't realize until we get fully into the pursuit is, it get sweeter and more appealing and more

desirable with each step that we take, making our next steps easier and even more desirable.

Tozer compares the pursuit to that of tasting a most delicious delicacy. Perhaps for you, it might be a small taste of a delicious piece of chocolate. One bite is never enough. The first bite only demands that we take another and another.

And I agree. The more that I, myself, seek after Christ and seek to live within this Spiritual kingdom that He has brought to us on the earth, the more that I want of it.

Folks, His kingdom, the Kingdom of God, the one that Jesus is telling us about here, is real. Really real! And no, we can't see it with our natural eyes. But as we ask and seek and knock, the Holy Spirit will give us "Spiritual eyes" to see it. He will folks, and He does.

And His provision is all around us each day as we go through the moments of our day.

And we must not let the innerworkings of the natural world confuse us. Remember the words that we just read! God will simply use the provisions within the natural world to meet our needs within the "Kingdom of God", our food, our clothing, our shelter, and the other things necessary to this life. God owns it all, and in that sense so do we.

But again, as we enjoy His bountiful provision, we really do need to be careful to not get confused. With our Lord's "narrow path" often winding right through the middle of that "broad path" of this world, it's easy to go astray.

Thankfully, though both kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God are so often intertwined with each other, by the power and the presence of God's Holy Spirit, we are able to live within this natural world, while at the same time separating ourselves out from it, so that we can seek after His kingdom and His righteousness.

And as I do that, I can see all the many provisions for this life being given to me and to my family from that other kingdom, the kingdom of God.

It is a delightful existence to experience, to be in the world, but not really a part of it, to use its provisions, but to not be captivated and controlled by it.

I'm reminded that for all the many years that we worked in the ministry to youth at French Camp, having very little money, we were still able to sometimes enjoy living as if we were wealthy, generous friends providing us with opportunities to eat in fine restaurants, sometimes wonderful vacations, even traveling to foreign countries, and on and on and on, not being wealthy, but sure being able to live as if we were.

And I believe that the key to our having received those sweet gifts from God is that we really do want to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and then let Him add to us the provisions that He desires us to have.

And let me say further, that even if God had chosen not to shower us with all those temporal gifts, just the sweetness of walking daily in His presence, would have been enough.

I hope to continue to consider these words in our study next week. And in those words, to delve more deeply into the manner in which God's Holy Spirit fills the most intimate moments and details of our lives.

Listen to these words as we close!

The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."(Luke 17:20-21)

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.

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Let's pray.