

The Two Kingdoms Luke 13:18-21

Some years ago, Chuck Colson wrote a book entitled, "Kingdoms In Conflict", a book that describes two very different kingdoms that co-exist together on this earth, "the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man", kingdoms that continually intermingle with each other and are continually in conflict with each other.

And though we can't clearly see either of those kingdoms with our natural eyes, we are able to see the "effects" of each of those kingdoms as we live and move and have our being within them each day.

And no, it was not God's plan for it to be that way. From the beginning, God wanted His kingdom, the Kingdom of God, to be the only kingdom that would rule the earth. But because of His gracious gift to us of "free will", we very quickly changed the course of humankind and set up our own kingdom.

From that first moment that Adam and Eve decided to make their own choices of who to serve, we have had two kingdoms co-existing together, intermingling and for the most part, making a real mess out of daily life for all of God's creatures.

Thankfully, when the Lord Jesus came to live among us, He began to change all of that, to begin to bring His Kingdom, the "Kingdom of God", back into the forefront of daily life.

And here, in the scripture passage that we have been studying in the Book of Luke chapter 13, Jesus is telling us about how He is going about bringing His special kingdom, the "Kingdom of God", back into our view. Listen beginning in verse 18 of chapter 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 13:18-21)

As we said in the first part of the study of these precious words, as the Lord Jesus preached and taught the people, especially His disciples, He frequently used very simple parables, short stories, examples and metaphors.

But even though His explanations were simple, many with even the most brilliant of minds of that day fell short in their ability to understand His truths.

And that is so also even today. Many, many people with the most brilliant of minds fall woefully short in their ability to understand the things of God.

But thankfully, and for reasons known only to God, by His grace and by His Spirit He enables some of us to have eyes that are able to see Him and to know and love Him and to see the mysterious Kingdom of God that He is telling us about here.

And so He says to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 that,

⁹ . . . “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 God has revealed (those things) . . . to us through His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Left to our natural abilities and our natural senses, our “eyes” are simply unable to see and to comprehend this Spiritual Kingdom of God that Jesus is here telling us about. It's only as we are saved and the Spirit of Christ comes to live within us that we can begin to perceive, to “see”, the mysterious wonders of the “Kingdom of God”, that we can begin to separate out those common things of the “Kingdom of man” and to know that there is a sweet and wonderful difference between living in the corrupt conditions of the “world, the flesh and the devil” and the conditions that exist within the blessed “Kingdom of God”.

And again, it is only the precious Spirit of Christ living within us who can really and truly define and explain those many deeper things of God to us. And that is exactly what these words about the “Kingdom of God” are conveying to us.

And that is exactly what the Lord Jesus is telling us throughout these gospels, that there is more, so much, much more taking place all in and around our natural world each day, but that those things are only discernable if we have His Holy Spirit living within us.

Jesus is saying here that “yes, all around us is the visible world, the kingdom of man, that we can easily see, but far, far more importantly, there is also intertwined within this visible world a hidden kingdom, the “Kingdom of God”.

And although it remains unseen to our natural eyes, it is still absolutely real. And it is imminently involved with us and it is continually interacting with all the matters of our visible world, guiding and controlling all that takes place, all that we see, all that we hear, taste and feel.

And God further reinforces that truth in other places in the scriptures, by telling us that even though on the surface of daily life, man is busily making his plans, hidden beneath all of our activities, He Himself is actually guiding our steps.

But when we hear those words, our minds immediately go to the question, “but what about all those times that we follow paths of unrighteousness? Surely He doesn’t guide us into those?” And that is true! It’s in those moments that we choose to pull ourselves free from His loving Hand and engage ourselves in our “freewill” behaviors.

May I confess to you that I have many very devoutly believing Christian friends that “treasure” the idea of “free will”. And I really don’t know why they treasure it so much. For myself, it seems that my “free will” only gets me into trouble. My “free will” is what seems to entice me over into the “kingdom of man” with all of its temptations and corruptions.

And yes, I do enjoy when my “free will” helps me to “will to do God’s will”, but that doesn’t seem to happen often enough for me.

With all of that being said, if a person does choose to use their free will to do right and Godly things, then God guides and He directs them into pleasant pastures. But, if that person chooses to misuse their free will and to do ungodly things with their life, then that too has its path and its consequences, and it’s not a good path to follow.

God speaks a lot about those opportunities and those struggles all throughout these scriptures. He gives us special insight in the words of Psalm 37. Listen carefully to these very contrasting words!

18 The Lord knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the Lord, Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish, into smoke they shall vanish away.

21 The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives.

22 For *those* blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, But *those* cursed by Him shall be cut off.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds *him with* His hand.

25 I have been young, and *now* am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his children begging for bread. (Psalm 37:18-25)

These are precious words, both of delight and of warning. And they are all very true. In these words, we can see both the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of man intersecting with each other, and we can see the effects of both.

And we can especially see from these words that God really does reach from His invisible realm over into our natural realm to bless and to reward those of us who choose to follow His paths of righteousness.

But please note also that if we choose to follow wrong paths, He will lovingly reach in from His invisible world into our natural world and bring discipline to us.

Dear friends, it is imperative that we come to full realization and acceptance that God and the Kingdom of God are not just "out there somewhere", far away in the heavens, watching and observing from a distance, perhaps just taking notes about us for later.

Not at all! And that is what Jesus is very clearly saying to us in declaring the imminent presence and the constant involvement of the "Kingdom of God".

He is telling us that He and His kingdom are right here, right now, all around us, interwoven into all that we do and say, and yes, interwoven into our very souls and spirits.

And that truly is a blessed and wonderful thought for those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus and receive Him as our Savior and Lord. But please know that all people everywhere are accountable to Him, even and especially those who do not want to believe in Him and do not want Him to be involved in their lives.

I'm reminded of a parable in these scriptures that speaks about a Master who was preparing to go away for a while to be crowned King. As He was leaving, He left certain gifts with His servants to be rightly used while He was away.

But also, as He was leaving, other people of the town came to Him and said to Him that they did not want Him to be their King.

Later, upon the Master's return, after He had been crowned King, He spoke with and He rewarded those servants who did well. But to those people who had told Him that they did not want Him to be their King, He said, "Bring those people to me and kill them in front of me".

Folks, this is the Lord Jesus that this parable is speaking about. And while we can't imagine the loving and tender Lord Jesus giving such severe punishments to the wicked, it is still true, so very true.

There really will be a time of accounting for all people and for the things they have done in this life. Thankfully, for those of us who have received Christ as our Savior and Lord, God has made ample provision for us to really do well, and not just after we go to heaven, but also during all the days that we live here on this earth. And it is through what Jesus calls here, "the Kingdom of God" that He makes those provisions.

But may we please understand clearly that our being able to enter into this precious "Kingdom of God" has a condition, a requirement, that must first be met. For us to "see" His kingdom and then "enter into it", we must first be "born again". "Born again"!

Listen carefully to that requirement being explained by the Lord Jesus as He was speaking with the Jewish leader Nicodemus. In John chapter 3,

³Jesus (said) "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁵ “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3,5)

Folks, these simple words clearly tell us that unless we surrender our hearts to Christ and are “born again”, we will not only not enter into the Kingdom of God, we will not even be able to know that it exists. Those words again,

³Jesus (said) “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

To “see” the Kingdom of God, to perceive that it exists, we must have, as Jesus often said, “eyes to see”, “Spiritual eyes”, and those Spiritual eyes come only through being born again.

We can clearly observe that lack of ability to see spiritual things in the manner and the lifestyle of most of the people of our world today. They can’t see Christ or His Kingdom, so they choose to simply ignore that He and His kingdom exists, hoping that by simply ignoring it all, it will somehow not affect them.

And how sad that is! They are like little children who put their hands over their eyes and think that people can’t see them.

But please listen! And tell others, especially your loved ones! All of this is really real. There really is a Kingdom of God and it is all around each of us each day.

Jesus brought it with Him when He came to earth, and it is invasive. He and His kingdom reach across the boundaries of the natural realms and engage in every activity of our day. And it is utter foolishness to just try to ignore its presence.

I’m reminded of one of the times when Jesus sent His disciples out into the surrounding cities to minister. He told them in Luke chapter 10,

⁸Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ ¹²But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city. (Luke 10:8-12)

Those words, “the kingdom of God has come near to you” speak a strong message to each of us, both of promise and of warning. It is just as Jesus said. God truly has brought His Kingdom to earth to be near to us and to be in us.

And for those of us who receive Him and accept Him into our lives as Lord, He will graciously guide our steps and make our days joyful. But to those who ignore His presence and the presence of His Kingdom, there will surely be consequences.

Again, let me read those words of Psalm 37,

¹⁸ The Lord knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever.

¹⁹ They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. (Psalm 37:18-19)

The provisions spoken about here come from the Kingdom of God that resides in among us. But listen further . . .

²⁰ But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the Lord, Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. (Psalm 37:20)

This discipline also comes from His Kingdom that resides among us. Listen further,

²¹ The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives.

²² For *those* blessed by Him shall inherit the earth, But *those* cursed by Him shall be cut off. (Psalm 37:21-22)

Both these blessings and these curses come from across Kingdom lines, the “Kingdom of God to the Kingdom of Man”. And please know that these things are taking place right here and right now, during our living years.

Do we not want His blessings? Listen to these next words!

²³ The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way.

²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds *him with* His hand. (Psalm 37:23-24)

Aren't these comforting words, and especially these next words of the Psalmist!

²⁵ I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his children begging bread. (Psalm 37:25)

What again is the simple truth that these words are conveying to us? It's this! The "kingdom of man" and the "Kingdom of God" are both closely intertwined together. And too often, we find ourselves stepping from one path to the other, sometimes walking in one kingdom and at other times walking in the other. It's a danger that is ever before us. But if, and as, we surrender to His presence in us, the Lord Jesus will guide and direct our paths, and make every provision that we will need.

May I close our time today with an example of one common way that the Kingdom of man interposes itself into the affairs of so many of us bringing great difficulty with it?

As we well know, money and the desire for the things money can buy is one of the strongest driving forces within most every person. In Mark chapter 10, Jesus said,

²³ "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ . . . ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:23-25)

Folks, the world's "mammon", its money and its wealth is one of the most captivating forces within the "kingdom of man". And yes, the desire to have as much of it as we can get is common to each of us.

And while, as we read words such as these about wealthy people having difficulty in entering into heaven when they die, the truth is, we, you and I are not much different from them.

I think of all the many advertisements that I see daily calling out for anyone and everyone, especially the common and ordinary "not so wealthy" people to buy lottery tickets. Recently, those drawings have been for over a billion dollars. And those amounts of money cause so many, many people to imagine possibilities that they should not imagine.

And when Jesus speaks here about such desires preventing us from entering into the Kingdom of God, He's speaking about so many things yes, but especially about just this sort of thing, about your and my desire for money and the things

that money can buy. And about how it can captivate our desires and become a very serious roadblock to our truly entering into and enjoying His Kingdom that is among us here on earth.

How does that manifest itself in our daily lives? It does it in familiar ways, especially for those of us who are barely scraping by, but still desire all the many things around us each day. As with the lures of all the many lotteries that take place, too often, we take the last few dollars that our family needs to pay the bills and we waste them on the fruitless purchase of lottery tickets.

For others of us, we pursue after a few extra dollars by working overtime. While that might seem good, it still takes us away from our families and from our times of daily bible reading and especially away from attending church. So often, we have to work on Sunday, or we are out of town at a meeting. Does that not sound familiar for you or for your family members?

Folks, this Kingdom of God that is spoken about so much throughout these scriptures is really real. It is in among us and is in all that we do. And Jesus wants you and me to deny all those other things of the "kingdom of man" and to join in with Him in His Kingdom, to let His Kingdom take form and grow within us. And like leaven, to let it well up within us until it fills every part of our being, who we are and what we do. It is then that we will experience the greatest joy we have ever known, a joy unspeakable, both now in these living years and forever more.

Listen, as we close.

¹⁰Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Let's pray.