

## THE NARROWING KINGDOM | LUKE 13:18-35 | PASTOR MARK BOFILL | 3/8/2026

I. The Expansion of the Kingdom (18-21) | II. The Entrance into the Kingdom (22-30) | III. The Emotion of the King (31-35)

**INTRO: *Are we truly prepared to enter the Kingdom of God, or Merely Content to Stand Near It?*** – Last week in **“Straighten Up,”** we saw Jesus lift what was bent and broken by His restoring grace; **NOW** in (Luke 13:18–35), Jesus Reveals Three Truths about the Kingdom, which begins small, spreads wide, and ultimately **NARROWS to a decisive door** – calling for urgency and true repentance\*

**I. THE EXPANSION OF THE KINGDOM (18–21)** – Jesus had already taught His disciples much about the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:60,62; 10:9,11;11:2) but now mentions it once more in light of the negative context, where the **Fig Tree (Israel) (6-9)**, and the **Hypocritical Synagogue Ruler (14-16)** were both **Rejecting and Unrepentant**. – Therefore, Jesus presents **Two Additional Parables** – **READ:**

**Q: Jesus presents the question (18): “What is the Kingdom like?”** Scripture gives many declarations:

- Broadly speaking, the Kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all the universe (Psalm 103:19; Dan 4:3).
- More narrowly, the Kingdom of God is a spiritual rule over the hearts and lives of those who willingly submit to God’s authority. – Jesus said His kingdom was *not of this world* (John 18:36) and preached that repentance is necessary to be a part of the Kingdom of God (Matt 4:17).
- Scripture also mentions the literal rule of Christ on the earth during the millennium (Jer 23:5-6; Matt 19:28; 20:5-6). – In (Rev 11:15), voices in heaven cry out: *“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”*

**FACT:** The Bible teaches that **the Kingdom of God is Already and Not Yet:** It is currently present in the hearts of believers and the work of the Church yet **Awaits Full Consummation at Christ's return**.

- In context, Jesus presents the **Church** as an Expanding Part of the Kingdom of God, but NOT the Kingdom itself. – He therefore *“likenes it”* to...

**A. A Seed that Surprises (19) – “A mustard seed”** – In (Matt 17:6, 20) Jesus spoke of mustard seed FAITH but uses the term here in a different way. He describes it as...

1. **Small in Appearance (19a):** The mustard seed is nearly invisible. – In (Mark 4:31), Jesus declares that it is *“smaller than all seeds of the earth.”* – *But what Jesus magnifies is the fact that it is...*
2. **Strong in Development (19b): “It grew”** beyond expectation! What normally is just a small shrub became an abnormally “Large Tree,” which *shoots out large branches* (Mark 4:32).
  - **Jesus presents this as A PICTURE of Kingdom growth!** A **Rhetorical Hyperbole**. His emphasis is on the **change of size**—from small to large—and the surprising nature of the growth. *Think of it...*
  - **Jesus was born and walked in a humble manner, with only a few disciples.** – His life and death drew no more attention from the world than a mustard seed lying on the roadside. – However, **This was a Work of God!** – What appeared insignificant GREW into a worldwide movement that **no one could stop!** (cf. Acts 5:38-39) / Some city residents of Thessalonica cried out **“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”** *...and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.”* (Acts 17:6,7) – **AMEN...** The apostles effectively spread the gospel, which attracted many sorts to the Kingdom of God.

3. So Abnormal (19c), that **Bird's nest in it**. – FYI, birds don't usually build their nests in shrubs. But in this case Jesus describe them as *Nesting in its branches*.

- What do the **Birds** mean or Represent? – Unless mentioned otherwise, **BIRDS** usually represent EVIL, as stated by Jesus in the parable of the Sower (**Matt 13:4,19; Mark 4:4,15**)
- The **Birds** in this context Represent the **Evil Men** who will be within the church as it expands into the kingdom of God. – (v.14) reveals that **The Ruler objecting** to the healing of the woman in the synagogue, was a "BIRD". (*Ha... Don't be a Bird...Be Born again!*)

**C. A Leaven that Leavens (20–21)** – This second parable *likens* the **Kingdom of God** to **LEAVEN**. – You may recall back in (12:1), that Jesus warned His disciples about the "Leaven of the Pharisee's." – When teaching that, I explained that the figurative use of **LEAVEN** in the Bible always represents EVIL.

- **The context then points to this being a description of corruption in the Kingdom Community.**

1. **Silent in Operation (20–21a):** *Leaven works quietly, internally!* – The **LEAVEN** is **HIDDEN** by a **WOMAN**, who stuffed it in three measures (40 liters) of MEAL; enough bread to feed 100 people.

- The **MEAL** of bread represents the **Word of God**. (*Which nourishes God's people*)
- The Leaven **HIDDEN** within, **Rots and causes Bread to Rise**. (*Corruption within*)
- The **WOMAN** has to represent evil also, false teaching or religion, confirmed by the Scriptures: (**Zech 5:7-11; Rev 2:20; 17:3,4,6,9,18**)... Jesus labels such a WOMAN as a "*Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*" And also, the **GREAT HARLOT**, who is a **WOMAN drunk with the blood of the saints (6), who reigns over the kings of the earth (18)**. Furthermore (9), such a WOMAN is geographically identified as the WOMAN which sits on seven mountains:

**NOTE:** Wikipedia reports The Roman Catholic Church (specifically its headquarters in Vatican City/Rome) is the entity historically and symbolically associated with being located on seven hills/mountains. – The seven hills are the Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Coelian, Aventine, and Palatine, which form the geographical heart of Rome.

2. **Saturating in Completion (21b):** "*Till it was all leavened.*" – The Kingdom of God would be threatened by corruption and impurity! – This interpretation correctly aligns with the context and two parables, **emphasizing the importance of the warning.**

- Interpreting this as "**Positive Growth and Influence**" contradicts "the mustard seed" and the FULL context of the entire chapter!

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** Yes... God's Kingdom has and will continue to Expand in Number and Reach... and His Kingdom will NOT fail (cf. Dan 7:14b). – But just because the Kingdom Expands... does not mean Everyone ENTERS. – That moves us from **EXPANSION**... to **ENTRANCE**.

**II. THE ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM (22–30)** – **READ:** Once again Luke mentions **Jesus's Constant Progression towards Jerusalem (22)**. – **A Travelogue** which records **Jesus' Purpose and Passion to minister to the Lost** as **He made His way to the Cross!**

**A. A Serious Command (23–24)** – In light of the many crowds that often surrounded Jesus, *one asks...*

1. A Curious Question (23) **"Are there few who are saved?"** – To rephrase the question: **"Is the amount of those saved Greater than those lost?"** – Jesus doesn't give statistics but again provides **an indirect answer** that calls a disciple to STAY FOCUSED on what matters most! – *In this case...*

2. A Command to STRIVE (24) – **"Strive to Enter"** {Grk. **Agonizomai**} an athletic term emphasizing the need to exert oneself to overcome a wrestler, i.e. to Agonize or Strain to Enter the Gate!

- **The STRIVING** isn't a call to save yourself by good works! **Good works aren't the right gate!**  
**The NARROW Gate** is **ENTRANCE to heaven**, which speaks of salvation. – It is opened **by Hearing the Gospel and Responding!** – (John 10:3,7,9) tells us that **Jesus is the Doorkeeper**, the only One who controls the access, thus allowing the flock **ENTRANCE** and thus securing them. (cf. John 14:6)
- **When one hears the gospel, it is HARD TO ENTER...** because it requires **FAITH TO ENTER**. – **It is a NARROW GATE**, which implies that one can't bring unnecessary things with along!

**B. A Shocking Closure (25–27)** – This is another **WARNING** from Jesus about the **Finality of Judgment** and the Insufficiency of Superficial Religious Association.

1. A Closed Door (25): **Opportunity has an expiration date!** – Jesus describes a **"master of the house"** who eventually rises and shuts the door. – **Once closed**, those outside began to knock and plead, **"Lord, open the door for us!"** – His response: **I Do Not Know You!** (Which implies No relationship!)

2. A Desperate Plea (26): Many will **search for some sort of Accreditation...** **"We ate and drank with You... as you taught!"** – Their argument was merely **Proximity without Possession**. (Association)

- Matthew's parallel account mentions **rejection of supposed spiritual manifestations professed in Jesus' name**; **Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' (Matt 7:22)** – (Sounds real spiritual, but still Works)
- **SO MANY** on that day will **Sadly Protest** that they **DESERVE TO ENTER IN!** – *To no avail!*

3. A Final Rejection (27): The Master emphatically repeats, **"I do not know you,"** thus denying them he access they NOW desperately wanted. **Illust: While flying home**, Pastor Mike and I arrived at the gate... we were just too late... the gate was shut! (*Rejection is a horrible experience!*)

**C. A Stunning Reversal (28–30)** – **The Last will be first!** – Jesus' teaching also warned that **mere familiarity with Him** or a certain religious heritage is **not enough** to enter the Kingdom of God.

1. The Exclusion (28) **"Weeping and gnashing of teeth"** *describes a scene of intense regret and anguish*, BECAUSE **Religious insiders** are **CAST OUT** and **Distant outsiders** are **BROUGHT IN** to the Kingdom of God from afar! – The issue is not knowledge, not admiration.... **It is ENTRANCE!**

2. The Inclusion (29) – **The Kingdom will be filled** with people coming **"from the east and west and north and south"** to **FEAST at God's table**

3. The Phrase (30) **"... some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last."** – In this context **the Jews (the first)** are contrasted with **the Gentiles (the Last)...** warning that Salvation is NOT based on heritage or reputation **but on Genuine, Humble Faith in Christ**.

**Application:** You can be near Jesus and not KNOW Jesus! – You can hear sermons and still MISS Salvation. – **The Narrow door demands personal repentance and faith. Do you have it?**

Jesus now reveals His heart as He moves from entrance, to...

**III. THE EMOTION OF THE KING (31–35)** – *Jesus' warnings were mixed with compassion.* He is not speaking coldly about judgment; **He is speaking with the heart of God** who deeply longs for people to Enter the Kingdom while there is still time. – **His passion is revealed in Two Ways...**

**A. Courage Before Herod (31–33)** – **READ:** Evidently **Herod Antipas** intended to kill Jesus. *He was a...*

1. **A Political Threat (31)** – The pharisees informed Jesus of this danger **as a Scare Tactic**, because they **wanted Jesus removed from their region!** – Nevertheless, **Jesus' response was without fear!**
2. **A Divine Determination (32–33)** – He calls **Herod** *“that fox,”* exposing the ruler's **cunning yet limited power.** – Rather than being threatened or hurried by political danger, **Jesus shows Resolute Confidence** knowing that **His mission** will continue until it reaches its fulfillment. *“I must journey.”* – **The cross is not accidental... it was appointed... it would all END in Jerusalem!** – *With that in mind...*

**B. Compassion Over Jerusalem (34-35)** – **READ:** *Jesus utters a Broken Lament, “O Jerusalem...”* which informs us that the core of this passage is NOT Wrath... it is Weeping! – **He wanted to gather them, but they were Unwilling!** – **P/A:** Jesus has the same heart towards all who still reject Him today! ... **(1 Tim 2:3-4)** *God our Savior ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* – **(2 Pet 3:9)** tells us that **God is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”**

- However, **The Divine Godhead** will by no means FORCE anyone to believe in HIM.
- **God grants FREE WILL** so that people could genuinely **Know, Trust, and Love Him BY CHOICE rather than by Compulsion,** making their relationship with Him **REAL** rather than forced!

**C. Consequences of Rejection (35)** – Jesus wept because the Jerusalem of His day chose to REJECT Him as their MESSIAH, and as a result He proclaimed a **twofold prophecy:** *The first was ...*

1. **A Judicial Withdrawal (35a):** *“Your house is left to you desolate.”* [Jerusalem was Destroyed in 70 AD.]
2. **A Future Recognition (35b):** Jesus quoted (Psalm 118:26) *“Blessed is He who comes...”* to REVEAL that the Rejected King will one day be Received at the second coming.
  - Once again, this exposes **The HEART of Christ!** – **He warns because He loves... He laments because He longs.... He judges because they refuse.**

**CLOSING THOUGHTS:** One day **The Narrowing Kingdom will be full,** and it will be a **Glorious Kingdom And the Grieving King...** will return as the **Reigning King!**

- Don't be like the Nation of Israel who rejected their King.
- Don't just analyze the Gate... Don't ignore the grief of Christ: The seed has been planted...The door is open...**The Savior is calling!**
- **Strive to enter... Repent and believe...** Let the King gather you under His wings.