



gracefellowship

Series: The Kingdom
Date: April 16, 2023

Title: The Patient King
Passage: Matthew 21:33-46

Scripture: Isaiah 5:1-7

Last week we celebrated Easter and the victory Jesus brought to us as He rose from the dead! Following the resurrection of Jesus some people think He almost immediately ascended back to heaven, but that's not the case. Jesus spent 40 days on earth with His disciples. Luke, in the book of Acts, tells us what Jesus was doing during those 40 days.

:: Acts 1:1-11

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach

2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them 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.

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Talking Points:

1. Jesus presented Himself and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive.
2. He spoke about the Kingdom of God.

If you have a limited time with someone, you are strategic and intentional about what you share with them.

Illustration: School is winding down for the year and teachers know they have precious few days left to get all the information they need to pass along to their students before they take their final exams for the year. Every day in a classroom is strategic and intentional until the test happens.

Jesus knew after he rose from the dead that His time on earth with His disciples was short, so He spent all His time talking to them about the Kingdom of God. Jesus was obsessed with the Kingdom! And this wasn't a new aspect of His teaching that He waited to pull out until after the resurrection; Jesus had spent His entire ministry teaching about the Kingdom.

Mark 1 and Matthew 4 tell us that when Jesus started preaching, His first message was short and sweet:

:: Mark 1:15

15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

- Jesus identifies the Kingdom as belonging to God.
- He says it has come near, not in location, but in culture (we'll talk about that in a min).
- To gain access to the Kingdom we have to repent and believe the good news
 - o Repent- not saying “I'm sorry.” That's remorse. Repentance is changing your mind so you change your direction.
 - o We have to change our minds because the ways of God's Kingdom don't line up with the way we think about Kingdom.
 - o Believe the good news: In the Roman world when a ruler had a son they would send out ambassadors to proclaim the good news that a child had come to extend the reign of his father. This was the *euangelion, or gospel*. It is where we get our word “evangelist/ evangelism- we spread the good news that Jesus has come as the Son of the King of heaven in order to extend His rule and reign on the earth!

The focus and emphasis Jesus had in His earthly ministry was introducing the ideas of God's Kingdom to the world. It's an upside down Kingdom- which is why we have to change our thinking to embrace it! The Kingdom of God doesn't operate like the world does.

The idea of a Kingdom or Empire in the eye of the world is to have power and authority and control and influence. God's Kingdom looks a lot more like self-denial, sacrifice, humility, meekness, being poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting for righteousness and providing justice for the poor, the alien, the widows and the orphans.

Here's the first thing we need to understand about this Kingdom that Jesus is talking about:

The Kingdom is a culture Jesus unleashed on the earth.

A lot of people have this idea that the Kingdom of God is a location we will go to one day and we are not experiencing God's rule and reign until we get there. And there is an element of truth to that. One day we will die and be in the presence of God in heaven, or God will come back and bring His dwelling to earth where He will rule in absolute perfection and there will be no sin or death or wicked government competing with His reign.

But the Kingdom is not simply a location. Here's the tension:

We live in an already, but not yet Kingdom.

The Kingdom is already here as the culture of God's Kingdom permeates the earth. But the final and full expression of the Kingdom is not yet realized until Jesus returns and brings His full reign to the earth, making all things new.

Even after Jesus returned from the dead and spent 40 days teaching about the Kingdom, the disciples still didn't fully get it! Look at verses 6-8:

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

What are the disciples looking for? Location! We want an earthly kingdom. So Jesus has told them, since you guys are getting it, go back to Jerusalem and pray

and wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit comes you will understand what I'm doing and what this Kingdom is all about!

Translation: Don't mess this up by going and telling people in your own power and understanding what the Kingdom of God is about! Wait for the Holy Spirit! So that's what they did. Look at verse 14:

:: Acts 1:14

14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Looking ahead: This series is focused on the Kingdom and over the same 40 day period Jesus was on earth following His resurrection we are going to talk about what He talked about- the Kingdom of God! Our next series will be on the Holy Spirit and the power He brought to the Church at Pentecost.

The 10 days between when Jesus left earth and the Holy Spirit came down were filled with prayer (they joined together constantly in prayer). We are going to introduce a 10 period of unceasing prayer with 1 hour time slots. In those days we are going to ask the Holy Spirit to unleash His power in our lives and in the life of our church! We want to experience a movement of the Holy Spirit like we haven't seen in our church and our community. God's Kingdom is about more than growing churches; it's about changing communities as we live in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring His Kingdom to earth as light that shines in the darkness.

This morning I want to define God's Kingdom and then look at one of the teachings Jesus used to help us understand what His Kingdom is like.

"The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God and derivatively, the sphere in which His rule is experienced." – George Ladd

Here's what we need to know about the Kingdom today:

There is a King who establishes the Kingdom and He reigns with sovereignty.

God invites us to be citizens of the Kingdom and to live under the rule and reign of the King.

To help us grasp these two things Jesus tells a story about a vineyard. This morning we heard a reading from Isaiah that Jesus was drawing from. The audience listening to Him would have been intimately associated with the teaching. But Jesus is going to change things up just a little.

In Isaiah's teaching, God plants a vineyard, identified as Israel, and has the expectations that they will produce grapes in keeping with His culture and Kingdom. But we're told that the vines He planted only yielded bad fruit. Then at the end of the story we are told that God looked for justice, but found only

bloodshed; He looked for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. The culture of God's Kingdom was not being replicated within the nation He chose as His representatives. God is looking for them to take care of the widows and orphans, to be a place of refuge for the alien and stranger, but instead they are acting with selfish, evil intent and abusing power rather than bringing peace.

With that as the backdrop, Jesus tells a story about a vineyard.

:: Matthew 21:33-46

33 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.

34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.'

39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes' ?

43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

44 Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Because of the teaching in Isaiah we already know some things:

1. God is the landowner
2. Israel is the vineyard

God has done everything for the success of the vineyard: He put up walls, built a watchtower, dug a winepress...everything you would need to have a successful vineyard has been provided. God is sovereign over His vineyard.

Then He puts tenants in place to care for and cultivate the garden. These are the religious leaders at the time of Jesus. We know that because at the end of the story they say, "He's talking about us!"

The problem with these tenants was they started thinking like owners instead of stewards. Rather than representing God in the way He expected, they started wanting control of the vineyard without the authority of God over them.

How many times have we taken that mentality? "I know better than God." Or, "I don't need God telling me what to do with my life." Or even, "I know what God says, but I don't care and I'm not going to submit to Him."

Back to the story:

At harvest time the landowner sent a servant to collect what was rightfully His from the vineyard. But they beat him and sent him away. The audience who was listening to Jesus tell this story would be thinking that next sentence out of Jesus' mouth would be, "So the owner came with a mighty army and destroyed those unruly tenants." But that's not what Jesus says. Look at the text again.

35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.'

39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Here's what Jesus tells us about the King of the Kingdom:

The King is patient, giving excessive and unnecessary opportunities to repent and embrace His Kingdom.

The King is patient and shows grace and mercy as He sends servant after servant to the farmers. These servants Jesus is speaking of are the prophets of the Old Testament. They gave the word of God to the people calling people to repent and turn to God. But by and large, no one listened to them. So, God even goes to the extreme of sending His Son. But the tenants rejected Him, also.

Which leads us to a personal question: If you haven't embraced Jesus as your King and become part of His Kingdom, how many times will you reject Him? God is being patient with you and giving you opportunities to hear His invitation to join

His Kingdom. However, a day is coming when God's patience will run out, and you don't know when that will be for you.

Jesus asks the crowd listening to this story: "...when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

The crowd answers the question:

41 "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

Those who want the rule and reign of God are welcomed into His Kingdom. Those who reject Him will be sent away to an eternal destruction.

As subjects of God's Kingdom we are meant to produce fruit that is consistent with His character.

What is our King like? He is merciful and gracious and kind and long-suffering and meek and humble and forgiving. We embrace His Kingdom as we bear fruit that is in keeping with the culture of heaven. We learn to do that by honoring His Word and honoring His heir. Recognize that while God is patient with you to come to Him, He is not eternally patient and a day of judgment will come where He will hold you accountable to what you did with His Son.

Over the course of this series we are going to look at Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God and I have two big prayers for this series:

1. Believers in Jesus will understand how to live as citizens of His Kingdom that brings the light of His Kingdom into daily life, changing our community.
 2. If you are not currently a follower of Jesus, I pray you find your way into the Kingdom and are forever changed by the power of God.
- Response
 - Closing Song