

Good Morning! I am grateful for the opportunity to be with you this morning! I am grateful for this church. It has been a blessing to be here and a great place to serve the Lord! I am also grateful for Pastor Joey! He is a great leader here and has personally been a blessing to me and my family!

My name is Jacob Sparks! I am the Communities Pastor here at FBCPTC. I work across the street managing the ministries at the Bridge Community Center.

Joey asked me last week if I would preach today and gave me a blank slate to preach on whatever I want (that was pretty brave of Joey).

As the Community Pastor, I wanted to take this opportunity to talk with you about God's plan for reaching people within the church age that we live it in! And how that fits into what we are doing at the Bridge Community Center.

I don't know if I have ever shared my story here of how I came to faith.

But my mother died when I was 4 years old. My father got remarried when I was in the 3rd grade. That turbulence over shadowed my childhood.

I didn't get along well with my step mother. We had a hard relationship and that left me looking outside the home for belonging. I got into some really stupid things.

But there were two families that really had an impact on my coming to the Lord. There was a chiropractor Trent and his wife Olivia as well as a man who owned a trophy and monogramming shop, Jason and Holly. They were

my life Group leaders when I started going to church my senior year of high school.

I want to be honest with you. I don't recall any of the lessons they taught in class. I know they were good teachers and maybe if I thought real hard I could remember something. But my memory is not so great!

What I remember the most, is them opening up their lives to me. I remember walking into the trophy shop and hanging or sitting at Trent and Olivia's house in their living room and hanging out.

It was through that investment of time, of life that I came to faith in Jesus. And I would not be here without it!

Relationships are the rails on which the Gospel is preached.

I would go so far as to say, most people don't have a story where they walked into church one Sunday AM on their own and get saved and have a new life.

Most people have someone who invited them to church, someone who invested in them, who cared for them, who built a relationship with them, built trust. And over time, God worked to break down walls and bring them to faith!

People typically don't change their minds in an instant. While the salvation experience may take a moment, discipleship happens over time through **investment of relationship**.

If you have your Bible today, would you turn with me to Matthew 13:24-30.

The Gospel of Matthew is discipleship manual that teaches us about Jesus' ministry and it is meant to bring the Jewish Community to faith in Jesus. It lays out Jesus life and **teaching in a systematic way** to prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah. It is built around 5 major sermons that Jesus taught during His Ministry.

Matthew starts by making the case that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. If you go through Matthew, you will see this pattern:

Jesus is the Messiah because he fulfilled the scriptures (1-4).

Jesus is the Messiah because he taught the kinds of things that only God would teach (5-7).

Jesus is the Messiah because he did miracles that only God could do (8-9)

Then Jesus sends out the 70 disciples and they find rejection. In Matthew 11, 12, we see the Jewish people not believing and not accepting Christ.

Jesus sermon in Matthew 13 is a response the rejection in Matthew 11, 12. Jesus begins to change the way he preaches. He begins to preach in parables.

In Matthew 13, Jesus teaches his 3rd sermon in Matthew and he lays out what the coming of the Kingdom of God looks like in the church age. He basically answers the question, How does the kingdom of God come on earth?

Jesus answers this question in parables.

He says, The Kingdom comes as his servants spreads the seeds of the Gospel onto fertile soil.

The kingdom comes on earth like a small tiny mustard seed that explodes into a huge movement.

The kingdom comes on earth from the inside, bubbling up like bread rising when yeast is mixed in until it explodes outward.

The Kingdom comes as people give up the treasures of this world for the unsurpassed value of the kingdom of God

The kingdom comes like a fisherman who casts out his net and draws in a huge catch of fish, then he sorts the good fish from the bad!

Here in our text, the Kingdom comes amidst the Weeds of the world!

Read Matthew 13:24-30

This parable explains how the kingdom is meant to come on earth!

A man sows good wheat seeds in his field. This is a parable so there is an implied meaning. Christians who proclaim the Gospel and the Gospel seeds settle into people's hearts and take root. And that is how the church grows.

It's pretty simple. People can't believe unless they 1) hear the gospel and 2) have a fertile heart that is willing to receive the Gospel.

This begs the question, "What happens to people who do not hear the "Good News? What happens if

someone doesn't get a chance to receive the Gospel because they didn't get to hear the Gospel?"

Well the obvious answer is that they will perish.

There are places in the world today where if a helicopter lands and people get out and start walking in any direction, north south east west, it doesn't matter. If you walk all day and all night, you will not see a church building (because there are not any) and you will not meet another Christian.

In areas like this, the only way that someone can come to faith in God is if a Christian decides to go, that a Christian decides to take their pack and spread Gospel seeds, praying that they fall on fertile soil.

Now I do believe that if someone in an area like this genuinely seeks God, God knows that. He will send a missionary to come and preach. But the reality stands that we don't go out spreading Gospel seeds, the kingdom will not come!

Another observation that we see in Jesus' parable is that at the same time that the Gospel seed is going out and causing new life in people, the enemy goes out with weed seeds and he sows them. These seeds may be something like selfishness or bitterness or pride or anger. When these seeds are planted in some people's hearts, they become like weeds useless, a nuisance, destructive.

The key to understanding this parable is in verse 28, "a servant asked 'didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?'"

"an Enemy did this," he replied

And then “ Then servant asked him, “ Do you want us to go and pull them up?”

The owner said “no...because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.”

Now there is a lot in those verse and we may not touch on every detail. But when we put it within Jesus’ overall sermon in Matthew 13, the point is clear. Jesus is basically answering the question, “How does the Kingdom come on earth?”

And hear he says “the weeds are meant to grow up alongside the wheat.”

God’s plan for the coming of the kingdom doesn’t involve a separate distinct people that live isolated from the world. It is not like in the Old Testament when God called the nation of Israel to be His people and live distinct lives, separate from the world and serve as a light to the nations reflecting the blessings of being God’s covenant people!

No, that was the old way. The old path. In the Gospel age, the church age, the wheat are meant to grow up beside the weeds.

Christians are meant to live life alongside of the people of the world. It is through this that the kingdom would come!

There are 3 implications if this that I would like us to consider this AM:

- 1) Our lives are mission’s opportunities:

- a. The weeds are meant to grow up beside the wheat. That means that as we go out into the world, we are meant to rub shoulders with the lost!
- b. We are meant to see weeds at work, at school, in sports, at the grocery store, in everyday life!
- c. The older I get the more I see the value in just being an everyday Christian who goes to work, lives a quiet life and builds relationships with people that they leverage for Kingdom growth!
- d. If you are a business person or a pilot or landscaper or a teacher, you are surrounded by people every day. Many of those people don't know Jesus.
- e. Your calling is to befriend them, to get to know them, to build a relationship with them so that when the time comes, you might share with them about the Love that God has for them!
- f. That doesn't mean every conversation you have is about Jesus. It means that you intentionally share when the door is open to share!
- g. Gary Ginter is the CEO of VAST Power Systems. He is a believer and he actively uses his position to build relationship with unbelievers and to share with them about the love of Christ!

- h. He said that from a Christian perspective, success in business is not determined by your financial success, it's determined by the impact you have on people.
- i. These are his words, "Kingdom Professionals do not define success in terms of money, job, or status. They do not seek to maximize their income or their security or their status, or to advance their careers. Instead they seek to maximize their impact on the people and places to which God has called them. They measure success by their contribution to what God is up to in their neck of His woods. They see themselves as successful to the extent they are doing what God has called them to do, in the place to which He had led them, in such a manner that their giftedness can be well utilized. Nothing less will suffice; not the shallowness of status, not the ephemeral illusions of wealth, not the corrosive effects of power. What matters to the Kingdom Professionals is that there is congruence between their daily lives and the further in-breaking of God's Kingdom where they live and work."
- j. I want to challenge you to see you life, your career, your leisure time, and your

hobbies as opportunities to rub shoulders with people who don't know Jesus and gently and patiently share with them about Christ.

- k. **Transition:** As we move and narrow this focus down to think about the ministries of our church, its important that we think in terms of creating opportunities for our church members to rub shoulders with and build relationships with people who don't know Jesus.

2) And really, that was the thinking behind the building we have across the street, The Bridge Community Center.

- a. The Bridge is exactly what it says in the name. It is a bridge between our church and the community we live in!
- b. We have a lot of opportunities for you to do that now:
 - i. We have an open time for walking, for fitness classes, for pickle ball, and for men's midday basketball. These are opportunities for Church Members to come, meet people from the community, build relationships and share with them about the love of Christ.

- ii. We are in the middle of Upward Volleyball. We have a huge Upward Basketball league.
- iii. We have knit and corchete
- iv. Parkinson's support Group
- v. Job Seekers
- vi. Kedron bags
- vii. We have a Japanesse ESL ministry.
- viii. Real Estate Groups use our facility. PTC Select Travel Basketball uses our facility. Konos Christian School uses our facility.
- ix. All of this has the purpose of wheat growing up beside and living right next to the wheat!
- x. But you know one of the things that Pastor Joey has asked me to do is to consider how we can have an even larger influence here in our community.
- xi.

