

# Kingdom Growth

## Luke 13:10-21

**INTRODUCTION:** Your Bible was written by 40 different human authors over a period of 2000 years. It was written in three different languages and on three different continents. Four hundred silent years separated the 39 books of the Old Testament from the 27 of the New Testament. Yet, from Genesis to Revelation, they tell one unfolding story from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

If I had to summarize the Bible in 140 characters or less, I would say that It is a story about a **King and His Kingdom**.

There aren't many true Kingdoms functioning in our world today. Most countries have moved to other forms of government, so we have to use our imagination to understand the significance of a kingdom.

However, it is important that we learn to think in terms of a kingdom because kingdom theology was central to Jesus' teaching and to the theme of the Bible.

- In the Beginning, God created Adam from the Dust of the Ground and breathed into him the breath of life. Then, from Adam, God created Woman to serve as his helper. God gave them **DOMINION** over everything that moves on the Earth. Adam was a King, and his Domain was the inhabitants of Earth. He ruled with his Queen at his side, Eve.

But then, the two of them made a tragic mistake: they entered into league with that ancient serpent Satan; they believed his word over the word of their Creator, thus subjecting their dominion to Satan.

God promised that the day would come when everything that went wrong in Eden would be made right by the **SEED** of the woman, and a son would be born who would ultimately crush the head of Satan and, in the process, be greatly bruised.

From that point forward, you might imagine that with every son born, they had to wonder, is this the **SEED**?

- Able looked promising... but he was killed by Cain.
- Then Noah - It really looked like it could be Noah! He built the Ark, and he trusted God... but then, did you see what he did when he got off the Ark? I'll tell you this - it isn't in your kid's storybook bible.
- Then Father Abraham - the father of the faithful! But did you hear how he lied about his wife and shared her with another man?

- Then came Moses—indeed, this must be the Lord’s anointed Seed! But he murdered a man.
- Then came David - the man after God’s own heart, the Giant-killer! But he who slew Goliath was slain by his own lust when he saw the wife of Uriah bathing.

The Entire OT anticipates the coming King through shadows and types, prophets and priests. The message is consistent... the King is Coming—the Anointed One—the Christ.

**THEN 400 years of Silence from Heaven from Malachi to Matthew. From the Old Testament to the New. The silence was broken by the shuffling of Angel's wings on a hillside in Nazareth.**

The Angel Gabriel visits a teenage girl named Mary. Why this celestial visit to a young lady? Don’t you remember how the story began? It was the **SEED** of the **WOMAN** who would defeat the serpent. What do you suppose the Angel will seek to Mary about?

## 1. The Angel Gabriel

**Luke 1:30–33 (ESV) Gabriel appears to Mary...**

<sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”**

So there it is - the King is coming... He will have a Kingdom.

*Then arises the first PROPHET in 400 years... he was called John the Baptist.*

**2. John the Baptist** - Someone asked me once, “Do you really think John was a Baptist? I said, “I’ve never heard him called John the Episcopalian - have you?”

What do you suppose will be the essence of John’s message?

**Matthew 3:1–2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. <sup>2</sup> “Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand.”

*Then comes the Promised Seed...*

## 3. Jesus of Nazareth

What is the Message of the Son of God?

He begins his preaching ministry in **Matthew 4:17 (ESV)** Matthew summarizes his teachings with verse 17...

<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

#### **Mark 1:14–15 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

#### **Luke 4:42–44 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, <sup>43</sup> but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” <sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

*Jesus conquers death, hell, and the grave... how might his message change?*

### **4. Jesus After the Resurrection -**

#### **Acts 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

He commissions the Apostles to take the Gospel into the whole world...What do they preach?

### **5. The Apostles -**

#### **Acts 8:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

#### **Acts 19:6–8 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all. <sup>8</sup> And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

*Are you seeing a common theme yet? Then there is this genre of literature that gives us a glimpse into the future - that Grand Eschaton. What will the message of new Heaven and New Earth be?*

### **6. The Eschaton -** The word means climax to history.

#### **Revelation 11:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

***MAKE NO MISTAKE; THE BIBLE IS ABOUT a KING and a KINGDOM.***

This is the central message of scripture; this was the central message of Jesus' teaching, and it should be the central message of our teaching as well.

**CONTEXT:** Now, with that in mind, you will see Jesus frequently trying to help us understand the nature of His Kingdom. In what way will the King establish His rule and authority?

The primary text I want to unpack is down in verses **18-20**, but the flow of the context in let's begin in verse 10.

**TEXT: Luke 13:10–21 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

So Jesus is essentially a guest preacher in a Synagogue near Jerusalem. This ministry is very similar to the one He had back in Galilee, but now He is in Pharisee territory.

<sup>11</sup> And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.

This woman was bent over, and Luke, the Physician, surmises that her ailment was not primarily physical in nature but rather spiritual. An evil spirit had her in this bondage and had done so for 18 years.

<sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her over...

Parenthetically, notice - Jesus is teaching; he sees this crippled woman; Jesus could have walked over to the woman and healed her, but He did not. He called her to come to Him. Imagine that scene... this poor woman bent over, walking with a cane... halting and stumbling... making her way over to the Rabbi. Why did Jesus not go to her? Could Jesus heal her from afar? There is something about you deciding to arise and heed the summons of the King.

That is significant. In about 20 minutes, we will have an invitation. During that time, I will call some of you to get up and come forward to make a decision for Christ. Why do we do that? Why did Christ do that? Simply because it requires a step of faith on your part...as it did for this lady. She had to trust the summons of the Savior.

12b. and said to her, "**Woman, you are freed from your disability.**" <sup>13</sup> And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

18 years of misery, gone with a touch. I can only imagine her celebration and the astonishment of the crowd.

14 But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

In other words, don't worry us with these triflings. Save the little things for the weekday. This dear woman had been infirmed for 18 years, I don't suppose it was a little thing for her.

15 Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? <sup>16</sup> And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" <sup>17</sup> As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

NOW, that is the context of the parables He is about to give. You have to interpret the parables within the context of that event.

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? <sup>19</sup> It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." <sup>20</sup> And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? <sup>21</sup> It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

What do those parables have to do with this woman Jesus just healed? He is saying - it is through people like her, insignificant, unimportant, that the Kingdom will come.

**Insignificant Beginnings, Inevitable Growth, and an Influential End... those three movements have marked Kingdom expansion for the last 2000 years.**

Jesus came into this world through the womb of a teenage girl who lived in the hick town of Nazareth, a town from which nothing of significance had ever arisen. He was born in a stable in the little town of Bethlehem. He grew up in a carpenter's shop. What a strange way to change the world. But it is, nevertheless, God's way.

He didn't take the Kingdom by force, like a grain of seed, He died and was planted... then on the third day, He came forth from the grave more alive than ever.

When Jesus decided to take what began in Israel to the entire planet, there wasn't some great boardroom discussion with the world's religious elites. No, His plan was 12 ordinary guys that no one had ever heard of. They were to take the Gospel into all the world.

From 120 followers secretly gathered in an upper room, 3,000 were added to their number on the day of Pentecost.

### **Acts 6:7 (ESV)**

7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

By **Acts 8** the Gospel leaves the vicinity of Jerusalem and goes into Samaria. **Acts 8:5**  
5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

Later in **Acts 8**, Phillip witnesses an Ethiopian, and the Gospel is taken into Africa.

By **Acts 9** Saul of Tarsus is converted and becomes the greatest missionary in Church History.

By **Acts 11**, Churches are being planted throughout the Roman Empire. North

- 174 AD First Christian Churches in Austria
- 280 AD First Rural Churches Emerge in Northern Italy – For the first time Christianity is not strictly urban.
- 350 AD, 31.7 Million, roughly 53% of the Roman Empire, claimed Christ.
- 432 AD, **Patrick** heads to Ireland to start churches.
- 596 AD **Augustine** and a team of missionaries said, go to what is now England to reintroduce the Gospel. The missionaries were sent to Canterbury, and within the first 2 years, there were 2000 converts.
- 635 AD, Christian Missionaries took the Gospel to China, and the Chinese Church was born.
- 740 AD A group of Irish Christians take the Gospel to Iceland.
- 900 AD A believers take the Gospel to Norway
- By 1200 AD, the bible is available in **22 different languages**
- 1498 the first Christians are reported in Kenya
- 1554 AD 1500 converts to Christianity are found in Thailand
- In the 1560's French **Huguenots** began to sail down the St. John River looking for a place to settle and establish a church. The Anglicans followed, and other Protestant churches began to be established in the Florida territory.
- One of the Huguenot leaders, **Jean Rebault**, stepped foot on this Island in 1562, naming it (The Isle of May).
- 1859 the **First Baptist Church** was planted in the city of Fernandina Beach

From an obscure beginning in the sands of the Middle East, the Christian faith has grown to be represented on every continent and in every country. Kings, Presidents, and Dictators must wrestle with the claims and the person of Christ.

We gather here today over 6,400 miles from Jerusalem, over 2000 years after Jesus Christ was nailed to a Roman Cross outside the walls of the city. Yet every song we sing

is about Jesus; our prayers are offered in His Name, and we give our attention and study to His words.

That strange plan to reach the world seems to have worked.

## **NOW - the way the Kingdom has grown and will continue to grow is by following the PATTERN Christ has given...**

A tiny insignificant seed, falls to the ground and dies, then it is raised and grows ridiculously large.

We live in a time in which the influence of the true Church seems to be fading at least in our Nation. What are we to do? We are to go back to the pattern that Jesus gave us in this passage.

### **1. We Need Ordinary People who are willing to Die**

#### **1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Occasionally, God will use a man or woman with Superior Beauty or Intellect, people like Queen Ester or Saul of Tarsus. But most often it is the common man or woman he selects. At times, he takes them like the bread the lad shared with him... he took it, blessed it, and broke it... before He multiplied it.

- **MOSES:** Moses was totally unusable in the plush palaces of Egypt; it was only when he was humbled in the desert of Midian, parched by the sun... his speech slurred from his conversations with sheep... that he was a great rod in the hand of the Almighty. He had to be cast down before being taken up in power.
- **JOSEPH:** Did little as the favored son of his father, as he donned that multicolored tunic. He had to journey through the pit and the prison before he was useful in the Palace.

God must make you small before he can make you great! He must break you before He blesses you.

That great Evangelist **Bill Stafford** *“I used to have an inferiority complex until I realized I was inferior.” When he learned to glory in his inferiority, he found the secret to greatness.*

**I wonder if we have any ordinary people who want to be used mightily by an extraordinary God.**

Little is much when God is in it!  
 Labor not for wealth or fame  
 There's a crown, and you can win it  
 If you go in Jesus' name

*If the Kingdom is to Grow, we need ordinary people willing to die...*

## **2. We Need Ordinary People who are willing to Grow**

Nothing Grows until you Grow. The greatest thing you can do to grow the Kingdom is to focus on growing yourself... when you grow, everything else follows.

Are you willing to do what it takes to grow? Are you happy to see the Church grow?

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard about a Church in Memphis, TN, that reached a certain size, then decided they liked it at that size; everyone knew each other's name, everyone could find a parking spot, and everyone could sit where they wanted. So they voted to accept no new members. They might as well have put a sign up that said, Church full, go to Hell.

What about your small group? Are you reaching out to new people? Or have you taken a silent poll and subtly made the same decision as the church in Memphis?

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard about a lady who approached Bill Stafford and said, “I don’t like all these people in my Church... I don’t know all of them!” Stafford said mam, “Let me see your hands... I don’t see any scars.”

**ILLUSTRATION:** Churches that take their eyes off of their mission are dangerous places to be. I was telling someone this week about a bluetick beagle I used to own named Barney. He was the most useless animal on God’s green Earth. All he did was fight with the other dogs and howl at the moon... nothing good came from Barney... until he was on the trail of a rabbit. Then Barney miraculously transformed into a Rabbit Hunting Machine. At that point, every cell of his body, every strand of his DNA, was laser-focused on one goal.

It has occurred to me that Christians can be a lot like old Barney. If they are determined to reach new souls for the Kingdom, they are amazing people. But once they get their eye off the goal, they begin to bite one another and howl at the moon.



*We need ordinary people willing to die...*  
*We need ordinary people willing to grow...*

### **3. We Need Ordinary People who are willing to Bless**

Notice that when the tree was fully grown, birds of the air came to nest in the branches.

In Hebrew literature, BIRDS typically refer to the Gentile People groups. Jesus says these birds are going to be coming to the tree looking for shade and safety, but they aren't adding anything to the tree. This is not a reciprocal relationship. The tree gives the bird benefits.

If we are going to keep the Kingdom moving forward, we must be willing to bless others with no strings attached.

We live in a transactional culture. We always ask, what will it cost me? If I pay the asking price, what will I get in return?

I think that is why James said, "The essence of genuine religion is caring for orphans and widows in their distress." Why? Because they CAN'T pay you back.

#### **QUESTION -**

What are you doing in life for which you get zero credit?

What are you doing in life that doesn't go onto social media?

Years ago, a wise Pastor told me that you have to find something that you do for the Lord that no one knows about. For him, it was nursing homes. For me, it became a prison ministry back in Alabama. Every Tuesday, I would drive down to Limestone Correctional Facility and teach the inmates.

If you wish to move the Kingdom forward, you have to be ok with the birds of the air taking up space in the branches.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** Remember, at one time, you were that bird looking for shelter. You were like a sheep without a Shepherd. But Jesus came for you, died for you, saved you, rescued you, blessed you, now... if the Kingdom is to Advance... go and do likewise.