

“Breakthrough!” in 2022

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 09.18.2022

Parables of the Kingdom – Luke 13:18-21

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven started small but grows and ultimately affects everything. Our spiritual lives follow that same pattern in that we begin with simple faith in Christ that grows into a mature faith. Though we cannot always see how it is working, we can continue to invite God’s work to permeate our lives. Jesus told these parables to set our expectation for what the Kingdom of heaven is all about. When our expectations are set right, our hearts will be at ease with God and with others. Let’s get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you from this week’s sermon?
2. What would happen if you never worked to keep up with your particular field?
3. What about your spiritual life? Would you say your faith has grown from the time you first started following Jesus? How so? What things did you practice to grow?

Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 13:18-19

Christ now started toward Jerusalem because the time had come when He would soon die. On the way Christ taught the disciples many things. He gave the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast hidden in the bread dough. The mustard seed is a very small seed but it produces a very large plant. The mustard seed shows the great growth of the church although it started from a very small beginning. The parable of the yeast shows that the yeast spreads throughout the entire lump of dough. In the same way the church has grown and spread throughout the entire world. In addition, the leaven has also been a symbol of sin showing that although the church is growing it is also infiltrated by corruption.

1. Why do you think Jesus chose the smallest seed to illustrate His point? How would the smallness of the seed have related to the expectations first century Jews who first heard this parable had about the Messiah?
2. What does the contrast between the seed and tree teach us about the power of God’s kingdom?

Jesus did not arrive with fanfare and an army; rather, He came to earth as a carpenter’s son leading a dozen uneducated, politically inexperienced men. One might wonder how the kingdom of heaven would come about through such humble circumstances and instruments. Yet Jesus reminded His hearers that the beginning does not always determine the final outcome. To illustrate, Jesus emphasized the mature state of the mustard tree. A mature mustard tree typically stands 4 feet tall but can exceed 10 feet, overshadowing the other items in the garden. This growth did not happen overnight, but it would happen in time. Jesus was declaring that His kingdom would tower over all the rest, in time. Others say that This parable accurately describes what the kingdom community became in the decades and centuries after the Christianization of the Roman Empire. In those centuries the church grew abnormally large in influence and dominion, and was a nest for much corruption. “Birds lodging in the branches most probably refers to elements of corruption which take refuge in the very shadow of Christianity.”

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3. What was the man’s responsibility in the growth of the seed?
4. How does it encourage you to look past the “size” of your present faith and toward the final mature product God is working toward in your life?

Daniel’s description of the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 4:12,21) and Ezekiel’s description of the kingdom of Judah (Ez. 17:23) also include this same imagery. Those who are outsiders to the garden find refuge in the tree. The full influence of the maturing tree is not yet seen; Christianity continues to spread with the final consummation seen in the return of Christ.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 13:20-21.

1. What does the imagery of leaven, or yeast, teach you about God’s work in the world? In your life?
2. What was the woman’s responsibility in the process Jesus described?
3. What is your responsibility in the spreading of the kingdom of God in the world? In your community? In your life?

Yeast, like the mustard seed, starts off very small. But, also like the seed, yeast grows. While the seed grows into a tree that benefits all those around it, the yeast infiltrates all of the surrounding dough. Just as yeast transforms the dough it is added to, so the power of Jesus transforms the lives of His followers.

4. What everyday object would you use to describe the kingdom of God’s influence today?
5. What evidence of the kingdom of God do you see in your life and in the world around you?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 13:47-50.

1. What does it mean that the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea, collecting every kind of fish?
2. What did Jesus mean by the phrase “when it was full”?
3. What is your initial reaction to God’s promise of judgment in verses 48-50?

This parable is similar to the parable of the weeds (Matt. 13:36-43), except this one focuses on judgment, while the weeds parable focuses on the need for the wicked to remain for a time. Further, the difference in emphasis can be seen in the fact that the action that differentiates the fish from each other is not attributed to the Evil One. Nevertheless, the point is that Jesus draws those who choose to remain faithless and those who become faithful. The two coexist until the judgment, when Jesus and His angels sort everything out. Those who believe hell does not exist or that a loving God would not let anyone endure such a thing are deceived about His righteousness, sinful humanity, and the necessity of Jesus’ sacrifice.

4. What are some misconceptions people have about how God will determine righteousness and evil? How would you explain what it means to be found “righteous” to an unbeliever?
5. For what reasons should this parable compel us to witness? How does this parable encourage you in the times when you feel overwhelmed by hypocrisy and evil in the world?

Verses like Romans 3:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and 1 John 3:7 give greater understanding about what and who God considers righteous. If we are to be counted among the righteous at the end of the age, it is only because of Jesus. That others will not be counted among the righteous and will be cast into hell ought to compel us to proclaim the gospel at every opportunity.

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Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

What might prevent a person from seeing the kingdom of God permeating his or her life?

1. What can you do to hold out hope when the kingdom of God seems small or indecipherable?
2. As a group, how are we doing at allowing the kingdom of God to permeate us? How can we do better?
3. Who will you tell this week about the truths of the Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven?

PRAYER - Thank God that He is always at work in us and around us, even when we can't see it or aren't paying attention. Ask Him to give you ears to hear what He is teaching you through the events and circumstances of life and to help you look forward to His completed work in the world and in you.

"What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? "It 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."

Luke 13:18-19