

Be A Child Of The Kingdom Of God

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[0 : 00] God, it's a wonderfully warm morning and we are gathered together on this Lord's Day to sit under the hearing of your word, that your word might effect in our hearts and in our lives and in our world the purposes of your kingdom. Our God, give us ears to hear. Amen.

Amen. That passage which we're looking at this morning is taken from Matthew chapter 13 verses 24 to 30 and you'll find it in your pew Bible beginning on page 13 of the New Testament section of your pew Bible and there was read for you in the lesson this morning by Peggy Friesen which was by way of introducing you to her as she is our new children's ministry director here in the parish. Peggy read to us verses 24 to 30. Now there's a sequel to that in the same section, chapter 13 of Matthew and it's when Jesus and the disciples were in the house together, the disciples who pretended they understood when he said it the first time so that nobody would know, that's what we do with most sermons, they asked him privately in the, mind you most sermons don't have the clarity that this one had either, I might remind you too. But what Jesus did was to explain the parable to them.

So if you look in verses 36 to 43, you'll see what happened after it and I'd like to read that section to you if you will follow it. Then he left the crowd and went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.

He answered, he who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom.

[2 : 28] The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age. The reapers are angels.

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The son of man will send his angels. They will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers and throw them into the furnace of fire.

Their men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, the parables are quite unlike the apocalypse. We don't have any monsters coming up out of the deep to try and figure out who they are and what they mean and why they mean somebody else, not us.

And the epistles are written sometimes with a logic and a mathematical precision that is quite overwhelming. But when you come to the parables of Jesus, you have a quite different situation in front of you.

[3 : 45] Most of us read with the hope of grasping and understanding. We want to be able to totally understand what we've read. And we can't do it.

I mean, by and large, we can't do it. We can work very hard at it. But with the parables particularly, it's extremely difficult. Because you suddenly become aware that you're not reading the parables. The parables are reading you. And you are being taken and taught by the Holy Spirit to try and understand the significance of the kingdom of heaven.

So I want you to recognize that I can't help you with this passage very much, but I can sort of bring you up against it. And God the Holy Spirit can perhaps help you to understand it in the circumstances of your life.

It's wonderful to me because the parables are because they are wiser than the wisest of men, more knowledgeable than the most knowledgeable men or women.

[4 : 54] They are amazing statements of God's presence and activity in our world. And most of the parables in this 13th chapter of Matthew are concerned the kingdom of heaven.

Now there are other kingdoms which become very important to us. The Gay Games started this weekend in Vancouver.

About which I will say no more. Hussein invaded Kuwait. He was obviously looking for a kingdom. As I trust all of us are this morning. But the kingdom he was looking for is made of oil and money as far as I can tell. A British MP was murdered in his own home by the IRA.

They're looking for a kingdom too. And it's a bloody business they have in the way they look for their kingdom. And all of us, I think, have this awareness that we want to see a kingdom come.

[6 : 11] In our own land of Canada, we are torn at the moment, aren't we, by so much division as this group are looking for their kingdom and this group are looking for their kingdom. And we want to maintain our kingdom.

And all this is happening. And we're afraid of invading kingdoms that don't invade us with guns and airplanes along our coastline.

But invade us in the quiet, surreptitious way of coming in through the bank and the business community and take over our country. And we become very paranoid about that because we're afraid that our kingdom might fail and theirs might succeed.

What we're talking about here is the kingdom of heaven, which is a very different king. A very different kingdom. And it's trying to get that reality confronted because all the kingdoms of this world will pass and be forgotten.

They account for nothing. They amount to nothing. But the kingdom of our God and of his Christ is an eternal kingdom. And you are called and we are called to be members of that kingdom.

[7 : 25] And so in order to help you understand the reality of that kingdom, Jesus puts before us a number of parables so that we may become conscious of the kingdom in our midst.

So Jesus is careful about this, too, because he says, what I read to you at the beginning. He says he's speaking in parables so that seeing you will not see and hearing you will not hear and understanding you will not understand and you won't turn and be healed.

You will go on looking for your own kingdom, the kingdom that you define, the kingdom that you want, the kingdom that has you at the center or your goals at the center of it.

You'll go on with that. You won't be deterred from that into looking for something in which you don't count for a great deal apart from the grace of God at work in your life.

So it's for people who understand the kingdom. Jim Packer wrote an excellent article in one of the recent editions of Christianity Today in which he said that the hope of heaven should really be big in all our hearts.

[8 : 38] Well, for most of us, it's a distant prospect that has very little to do with our daily lives. And Jim says it's got to have everything to do with our daily lives because we are to live our daily lives in the hope of heaven.

And the tragedies that move in upon us and the sorrows and the afflictions and the anxieties that come in on us day by day, unless we are sustained by a hope of heaven, we're going to be completely overwhelmed by them.

We're going to be unable to cope with them. And so it's very important that we are able to hear from Jesus himself what the meaning of the kingdom is.

Well, let me go on. The parable is a parable of violent but imperceptible contrasts. What I mean is the contrasts are very real, but our perception of them is very limited.

So you get the wheat and the tares, and you can't tell them apart. But one is poisonous and the other gives life.

[9 : 51] But it's very hard to tell them apart. There is the Son of Man, and there is the Evil One. And the hearts of people are much more inclined to worship the Evil One and His signs and wonders than they are to worship the Son of Man.

It's hard for us to distinguish. We think there is our hope in that man and in his ideal and in his vision and in his accomplishment, in his wealth and in his power, in his leadership ability.

That's the man. But it isn't the man if it isn't the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. And there's the contrast between the children of the kingdom and the children of the evil one.

And, you know, you can look at a bunch of them and say, whose kids are these? And it's pretty hard to tell the difference between them. Because the children of the evil one are often so accomplished and so capable, and they shine among their fellows.

And people look at them in wonder. And they don't know that at heart they are the children of the evil one. Well, the children of the kingdom so often don't look too attractive.

[11 : 04] Then there's the contrast between the angels and the servants. The servants don't know what their master wants. And the angels don't know anything else.

And so the servants say, let's move in and clean this mess up. And the angels wait because they're told to wait. And then there is present patience versus future judgment.

Many of us want to bring God's judgment down on this world right now. And we'll just sort out who's with it and who's against it right now.

And we know enough about our fellow man to say, that way with you and that way with you. That's what the servants want to do. Right now to bring judgment upon our world.

Well, the master says, no, not now. You can't tell the difference. Very sobering, isn't it? Then there's the difference between the gnashing of teeth at the harvest and shining as the sun.

[12 : 19] You know, that some people are going to end up gnashing their teeth because they were looking for the wrong kingdom and they had it all figured out.

And they can look at their lives and see, it adds up to zero, to nothing. And there is gnashing of teeth. And then there are those who, to their great surprise, are as the shining of the sun.

There's a wonderful contrast between these two. The gnashing of teeth talks about being burned in eternal fire.

And the other talks about the shining of the sun. One's all heat and one's all light. And so you either end up all hot or all light. That's the contrast.

One burns up with frustration. And one finds light and life. So the contrasts are terrific. But our ability to perceive them are not very good.

[13 : 19] And the reason that that's true is because the kingdom of which Christ speaks is a hidden kingdom. And do you know why it's a hidden kingdom? You see, in the news this week, I've already summarized some of the things that hit the headlines.

But there is no news of the kingdom of God, is there? One of the lovely things about going on, being a world tourist and going to Kenya, as we did in April, is that everywhere we went, in small, perhaps imperceptible, and humanly insignificant ways, we saw the evidence of the kingdom.

There it was. You know, they thought we were interested primarily in glitz and glamour and music and romance and all those things that go with seacoast living on the equator.

But the lovely thing was, at the hotel we stayed at, when on Good Friday night, as I've told you, the choir from the local church came and sang the Easter hymns.

So that in the presence of all that 20th century decadence came the triumphant hymns of Easter.

And suddenly you felt the touch of the kingdom. And when we travel, no matter where we go, and no matter how important and self-important we are, there is always the reality of this hidden kingdom breaking through.

[14 : 43] And you see, what it says is that the children of the kingdom, in that section I read, are planted in the world.

So that when you go down into magistrate's court, you'll probably find someone there representing the kingdom. And when you go on to Ward 4D at Shaughnessy Hospital, you'll find the kingdom is represented there.

And when you go down to the stock exchange or the business community, you'll find, if you look carefully, the evidence of the kingdom. All those things are part of the very great excitement of our world.

That the presence of the kingdom is there because the children of the kingdom are planted in the field which is the world. And that's where they're meant to grow. As somebody described it, resident aliens.

They live there, but they don't belong there. And you know how uptight we get about resident aliens. And we shouldn't, but that's just part of the parable.

[15 : 53] Planted in the world in which we live are the children of the kingdom. Now the sobering part of this, for which we all need to pay close attention, is that the children of the evil one are planted in the church.

So if they would please put up their hands and we'll sort this out. That's the reality.

You know, I would say on the whole, the devil makes a lot better use of the church than the Lord does. And it's such a deceptive place.

And that's what Jesus says it's going to be like. Is that the children of the kingdom are planted in the world and the children of the evil one are planted in the church.

And that's the way it's going to be. And for those of us who decide some Monday morning we're going to sort this situation out once and for all, that's not our opportunity.

[17:04] You just don't know how to do it. And the master won't trust you to do it. And so you've got to look with great respect at everybody and say that may be a child of the kingdom and you don't know it.

And you've got to be very circumspect as well and say that person may be a child of the evil one and you don't know it. And so you are driven to the master to be given patience to wait.

The end result of this is, and with this I will conclude, that passage that I read to you this morning from which Jesus quotes, in which Jesus quotes Isaiah.

And he says, You shall indeed hear but never understand. You shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull. Their ears are heavy of hearing. Their eyes they have closed.

Lest they should perceive with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. The fact is that we don't take over the kingdom.

[18:19] The kingdom takes over us. The kingdom of the kingdom takes over the kingdom, and the things they should perceive with■.