

Luke 13:10-21 "Kingdom Significance"

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- We're back in Luke chapter 13 this morning, and I want us to jump right in at verse 10 of Luke 13, where King Jesus begins a show and tell, as it were, about His kingdom.
- He wants us to see some really awesome, challenging, hopeful things about His kingdom. And I'll give you some review and context as we go.
- So verse 10, we're going to read the passage in pieces along the way this morning. First, Jesus shows. This is the kingdom on display. Now, He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for 18 years.
- She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, woman, you are freed from your disability. And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.
- [1 : 16] Here's Luke again calling us to Jesus, right? Calling our attention to focus on Him. He wants us to take in for just a minute the marvel of who Jesus is.
- Jesus is the one bringing God's kingdom to us in powerful ways. So here He is. He's in church one morning, and He's teaching. So He's the center of attention.
- All eyes are on Him, but His eyes are on a woman no one else seems to notice. He calls her up. He brings the overlooked woman up front with Him, and what happens?
- He heals her right there in front of everybody. He sets her free from a disability that she's had 18 years as a result of Satan's oppression.
- Now, it's not casting a demon out. This is not demonic possession. But Jesus makes it clear later that this is a quick and clear and powerful victory over Satan in the sight of everybody.
- [2 : 24] Here Jesus is in what will actually be the final synagogue appearance that He makes in the Gospel of Luke. And as He's there, He recalls what He said in His first time in the synagogue in Luke 4, that He comes to set captives free.
- This is what He's doing, right? This woman is freed, freed from her oppression. And as we've seen Jesus do over and over, He doesn't merely set her free, but He restores her in community.
- He brings her up, welcomes the outsider in, into His kingdom community. He touches her. He brings her visibly into a place of prominence to everybody's attention, right in front of those who'd stopped noticing her after 18 years.
- Jesus is showing us His kingdom and what it looks like. And it's so important for us to see this morning that it's King Jesus' power over Satan and the kingdom of evil that is what we are celebrating whenever the kingdom advances, right?
- He is the source of that growth, that victory, whenever it happens. But notice also that this powerful healing happens when?

[3 : 47] Amen. On the Sabbath day. Last week as we arrived at this passage, Ron so helpfully reminded us of a biblical perspective on the Sabbath as a gift to us.

God's gift to us that among other things we would celebrate God's redemption so that our hearts, our minds, our bodies could truly rest in Jesus and in our Father's good care for us.

So here particularly, Jesus is highlighting the value of kingdom activity on the Sabbath. When you engage in kingdom advancing activity with a heart for the King, you celebrate the Sabbath and the Lord of the Sabbath, the King Himself.

See, the Sabbath, we sometimes get confused. It's not so much for focusing on all the things you must avoid doing, but rather here for focusing on all the things you can enjoy doing to celebrate the King.

Of course, public worship must be a big part of that, but there are so many other things that demonstrate and remind us of our trust in the power of King Jesus, that it's about Him and not about a dependence on ourselves, like freeing someone from bondage, praying for those who are hurting, visiting those who are lonely, caring for those who are needy.

[5 : 18] You could go on and on. Have you thought intentionally about your Sundays in that light, not just the things I can't do? What are the ways I can enjoy celebrating rest and trust in Jesus?

What could a day that points you to deep rest in Jesus because you are sharing His power and joy in His kingdom with others, what could that look like?

Talk about that with your family or with your small group. Those are really fun, rich conversations. But back to this story, here's this miraculously healed woman now standing straight up front with Jesus.

And after 18 years, it seems just obvious that kingdom celebration is going to erupt now, right? This is the time. We're all going to rejoice in what's happened.

But our hearts are so bent towards ourselves, we often miss the kingdom when it's right in front of us. That's why I said even kingdom advancing activity with a heart for the king.

[6 : 28] Because our hearts are what's really at issue on the Sabbath and all the time. And even when we're doing kingdom advancing things, good things, we can get our hearts focused on ourselves and so miss the kingdom.

It's exactly what happens in this story. Verse 14. But the ruler of the synagogue, the guy who was in charge of the service, 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. 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?

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? 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.

Some of them realize here is a Sabbath opportunity to celebrate God's redemptive work if ever there was one right here delivered to us at our worship service this morning.

[7 : 49] But the pastor misses it. It's a reminder that I need your help. A member of his flock healed, set free after 18 years of bondage.

And what does he do? He rebukes her rather than rejoicing with her. Come get healed on another day. The Messiah King himself is in his synagogue and he's hung up on himself.

Stop for a second and ask ourselves, could we be like him? I mean the vision of Southwood is to advance the kingdom of God. It's all about him and his kingdom.

That's what we want to see happen, what we want to be a part of. I bet that was the desire of the synagogue ruler too. He might have liked that vision to see the kingdom of God advance.

And yet the kingdom advances right under his nose in great power and he misses it. Why? How do we miss the kingdom?

[9 : 00] Well, one way is by clinging to self-promoting religiosity. Ron mentioned this last week as a consistent issue that the religious leaders had with the Sabbath.

This ruler is obsessing over extra-biblical restrictions. Things that you couldn't do on the Sabbath. Not God's law as Jesus will point out. He's doing it in an effort to keep himself important and at the center of attention.

Self-promoting religiosity. He's missing out on the celebration, the joy of the kingdom because he's too focused on himself.

Can I imagine God seems to be really working in a church across town and great things are happening, but their theology is worse than mine.

So I'll just focus on that and critique rather than celebrate. Not that I've ever done anything like that. Not that your heart would ever be so focused on yourself that you wouldn't be able to rejoice with God working in another place.

[10 : 16] Listen, if our Sabbath keeping, if our theology of baptism, if our godly parenting is resulting in us feeling better than others, then it's causing us to miss the kingdom and the king.

If we think we're better than other people because of something we know, something we've done, something we believe, then we're actually missing the kingdom and the king like the synagogue ruler.

But notice as Jesus responds to him that others in the room have followed their leader and missed the kingdom. You hypocrites, Jesus says, and he continues to address them in the plural.

It's not just the one guy. There's a lot of people who are nodding their heads with him, right? They're supporting the blind leader rather than rejoicing with their healed sister. We miss the kingdom when we overlook the seemingly insignificant.

Only the important people can advance God's kingdom, we think. Only the wealthy, only the public speakers, only those with position and influence.

[11 : 35] It's this complex we can get after the national championship game when Tua stands in front of a microphone and says, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And we think, yes! There goes the kingdom advancing. That's good, but stop and think what we could be doing.

Now if I'm a young person, now to be a significant part of God's kingdom advancing, to be something people are really excited about and really see the kingdom moving forward, not only do I have to love Jesus deeply and share him passionately with others, that's not enough.

Now I have to be a quarterback who wins a national championship and does it on TV. No! No! That's not what it takes.

That's not required. We miss the kingdom advancing through the seemingly insignificant. And Jesus is going to bring us back to this. But one last way we can miss the kingdom that I see here, and that's by assuming that some brokenness is beyond help.

[12 : 45] Why had all these people not been noticing the woman that Jesus noticed? I don't know for sure, but perhaps after 18 years they gave up hope that she could be healed.

They'd just gotten used to the brokenness around them every day. It's easy to do, isn't it? Well, the kingdom of God is not working here, I guess.

You ever thought that? Jesus says she's a daughter of Abraham, which may be an indication of how he comes to set all of Israel free from their bondage and their hopelessness.

Do you give up on some people in your life? Do you get discouraged about the kingdom of God as a whole when you look around at our culture? No one, no one is beyond the reach of Jesus, of the king and his transformative power.

God's kingdom is still advancing. Sometimes it's easy to believe the narrative that the next generation of Americans are leaving the faith, caught up in secular intellectualism on college campuses.

[14 : 02] And then you realize how many UAH rocket scientists are sitting just in this section of this sanctuary almost every Sunday. We're so glad y'all are here. Then I talked to my sister at Washington University in St. Louis where she works on campus with some of the brightest students from around the world and says they're coming to know Jesus and worship him in larger numbers than they've ever had before and getting connected to the church there.

Chase Dawes represents this congregation on the campus of UC Berkeley in California. And he reports that the kingdom of God is advancing even there, even in California.

Among those students that we'd rather make fun of when we see them on the news and say that's what they're all like. No, the kingdom is advancing. But we know that true biblical Christianity also struggles in our country in many ways.

Sometimes we lose hope. We lose hope because we forget what we get to see next weekend. Y'all, please don't miss next weekend. It's going to be so exciting. Don't forget what God is doing around the world.

In the global south, in Peru and India and other places, the church of Jesus Christ is exploding. We're going to hear about that from people who are over there.

[15 : 25] Don't miss that. See, this is what Jesus wants to make sure that we don't miss. We're about seeing his kingdom advance. It's what we want all of our lives to be about. And so he wants us to know what it looks like so that we don't miss it.

He wants us to join in the celebration, the joy of the kingdom, not miss what's going on. He wants that for his disciples and the people at church on this morning where he heals this woman and rebukes the synagogue rulers.

So having shown them the kingdom but knowing they're still confused, he now tells them about it. He tells two short parables to help explain what's going on in his kingdom.

He's explaining it to them. He's explaining it to us. Verse 18. I don't know for sure if the woman's still standing there but it seems like maybe she is.

There's a therefore connecting these parables. It sounds like Jesus is continuing his teaching there up front. He said, therefore, what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?

[16 : 29] It's 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. And again he said, to what shall I compare the kingdom of God?

It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all leavened. Jesus stopped his sermon to heal the woman but I don't think he was through teaching.

He says, let me help you all out. I want you to understand what's going on here right in front of you. Let me tell you about my kingdom. It's so important that I don't want you to miss this.

Both these parables contrast small, humble beginnings with big, glorious growth. That's what they're teaching us.

First, that the kingdom will grow. That the power of Jesus that claims victory over Satan will transform people and places. It can't be stopped.

[17 : 30] The kingdom, like the tiny mustard seed, grows into a full tree. Probably a tree about 10 to 12 feet tall. But it's not just about the size of the tree, is it? But also its impact.

The birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. It's an Old Testament image of the nations benefiting from the flourishing of God's kingdom. And coming in to find refuge and rest in that kingdom.

Remember, Luke is telling us of good news, of great joy for all people. When this kingdom comes, it's going to bless the nations. They're going to be gathered in and find that joy and rest.

And similarly, the little bit of yeast works its way through dough and transforms mere dough into bread. The transformative power of Jesus produces growth and change where agents of his kingdom, little beacons of kingdom light and hope, infiltrate society.

And families, neighborhoods, workplaces, cities begin to look different and feel different. And they're never the same because the power of the king is incredible and unstoppable.

[18 : 48] And it shows up and works. And then notice especially what Jesus doesn't want us to miss about his kingdom. Yes, it will grow. And you can be hopeful and encouraged because of that.

But don't miss that this amazingly transformative power, this unstoppable kingdom advance, often comes through the apparently insignificant or overlooked.

When people in Jesus' day heard mustard seed, they thought small. And from the amount of mustard seed and yeast that I could hold between my fingers, Jesus says comes a big tree and bread to feed, a hundred more loaves of bread.

It's what's described in this parable. The kingdom you should be on the lookout for will not usually look impressive. You may be tempted to overlook it.

The numbers may not be initially impressive when you hear about it. It may come through people and in places that appear insignificant. But Jesus says my power shows up and makes the insignificant eternally significant.

[20 : 05] The king shows up and brings the neglected into the spotlight. Jesus brings his kingdom power to bear and your mundane and normal becomes supernatural.

Where do things feel small in your life? Where have you lost the joy of kingdom celebration?

Where have you concluded what you're doing or who you are is insignificant? Jesus wants to give you kingdom eyes to see, to believe his power is working in big, significant ways.

Because remember, it's about his power. That's the one at work when the kingdom advances. Maybe for you it's as you talk month after month with one single mom from Jobs for Life and you struggle to see the generations who will be impacted by the gospel through your small, inconsistent presence in her life.

Because the king's power is great. Maybe it's when you lead in a church or ministry that's smaller than what you're used to.

[21 : 21] In a smaller city than you're used to. And you think, am I really making a difference if the numbers are small, if there aren't as many people in the room?

And God's power is big and multiplies those for his kingdom. Maybe it's when you used to work in an important position for a big company and you felt like you had a purpose and now you're just stuck at home.

You're nap trapped a lot of days. Sometimes you smell like diapers. And God's power says, watch me do big things through small faithfulness.

Maybe it's a season of life where you can't get out and about much anymore and all you can do is pray. Maybe it's a morning with you and two kids in the nursery room.

Maybe it's a job every day, day after day, with no funding and no deep purpose and no sense that this project is ever gonna be used for anything. And Jesus is showing up this morning to tap you on the shoulder and whisper, mustard seed.

[22 : 36] Leaven. Trust me. Trust my power. When I show up with people others have overlooked or deemed insignificant, do you see how big things happen?

Will you trust me that as you bring me with you where I've placed you every day, I can handle how important you are and the things you do are? I've got that. One person at a time.

One day at a time. Francis Schaeffer said, there are no little people or little places. That's how the kingdom advances. One person, one day at a time and it's because the king's power is so great.

He's the one who heals. That's why in undeveloped Peruvian mountain regions and remote Indian villages without electricity, the king's power explodes and people are never the same.

That's why as we seek to advance God's kingdom, we expect to find ourselves in the midst of the least and the lost, the littlest, the lonely and the left out because that's where King Jesus shows up powerfully.

[23 : 48] That's who's standing with him at the front of the church. That's how he works. That's where his kingdom power comes to bear. He's always been like this in building his kingdom, hasn't he? I love how British pastor J.C. Ryle says it.

He writes this, Christianity is a religion which at first seems so feeble and helpless and powerless that it could not live. Its first founder was one who was poor in this world and he ended his life by dying the death of a malefactor on the cross.

Its first adherents were a little company whose number probably did not exceed a thousand when the Lord Jesus left this world. Its first preachers were a few fishermen and publicans who were most of them unlearned and ignorant men.

Its first starting point was a despised corner of the earth called Judea, a petty tributary province of the vast empire of Rome. Its first doctrine was imminently calculated to call forth the enmity of the natural heart.

Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. Its first movement brought down on its friends persecution from all quarters.

[25 : 00] Pharisees and Sadducees and Jews and Gentiles, ignorant idolaters and self-conceited philosophers all agreed in hating and opposing Christianity. It was a sect everywhere spoken against.

These are no empty assertions. They're simple historical facts which no one can deny. If ever there was a religion that was a little grain of seed at its beginning, that religion was the gospel.

But the progress of the gospel is great and steady and continuous. Great gospel progress from a little grain of a seed.

That's the story of Jesus, right? Bear with me just a couple minutes while I take that story back even further. The beauty of this and the way that God has always been building his kingdom, I'm not going to mention every place in the story where the insignificant becomes significant but consider these and be encouraged by some of these chapters in the story.

I think you're going to hear yourself in some of these. God starts building his kingdom, his people in many ways with Abraham. An old man passed his prime in a rocky marriage.

[26 : 20] There's a young woman named Leah in a chapter shortly after that who is rejected by everyone. She's neglected by her husband after he's tricked into marrying her because he wouldn't have otherwise.

And yet, God chose her. God chooses her to be in the line of the Messiah King, to be blessed by him when she was cursed by everyone else.

You may think of David as a mighty king but he was a young, scrawny, shepherd boy that even Samuel, when he comes, never thought God would have his eye on to be the king.

But God gets David's heart and the kingdom moves forward in power. There's an unnamed Jewish servant girl, captured, mistreated, torn from her family by an invading army and she becomes a servant to a Syrian general.

Easy for her to decide, forget it with this God. Who is he? Why would I trust him? But instead of turning from God, she brings the hope and healing of Yahweh to the nations by telling this Syrian general named Naaman where he can find a cure for his leprosy from Yahweh.

[27 : 41] And of course, you know the young single girl from Nazareth, nowhere town, who became pregnant, nearly found herself put aside by even the man who loved her, who simply says she will trust God and becomes the mother of the Son of God.

And it's ultimately that child, isn't it? Who himself is born in a stable in middle of nowhere, Bethlehem, and grows up as a son of a carpenter? It's that child through whom God does the most significant thing that has ever happened in the history of the world.

It's through him. God does that most significant thing through someone no one else would have seen as significant. Ryle is right. He was rejected by the world, hung on a cross to die, and in that moment, at his lowest seeming point of insignificance, he actually conquers and brings the power of his kingdom to its fullness.

In that very moment, it's that king, it's that Jesus who wants us to slow down this morning and come back to a woman bent over for 18 years, looked over by everyone else, and realized she's a daughter of Abraham.

She's yet another character in that great story that God started in many ways with insignificant nobody, Abraham. She's insignificant to many, but a perfect place for the power of Jesus to transform and demonstrate his kingdom.

[29 : 23] you're like her. Do you know what it feels like to be invisible to everyone else, but noticed and adored by Jesus?

Do you see how his power over sin and death and Satan brings hope into every hopeless situation that it's so great you could never give up that the kingdom might show up there?

can you believe that this powerful king goes with you into every moment of every day and every situation to transform your mundane place, to make it eternally significant because of his power, for the sake of his kingdom, even when you can't see it?

Can you believe he goes with you like that? This is our king. Let's pray. King Jesus, we worship you.

We thank you that you would love and dwell in and work through even very ordinary insignificant people like us who a lot of times fail, who sometimes even miss what you're doing in our lives, that you keep forgiving, you keep bearing with us and you keep bringing your power in great ways.

[31 : 01] Jesus, give us hope that we might live for your kingdom because we love you and because we trust your power to be at work. Show up in ways that we don't expect, even this week, and help us to trust you and see you as great.

We ask it in your name. Amen. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanothersermon.host).