

Parables of the Kingdom of God

Message 4 of 5 in the series: "Once Upon a Time: Parables that Jesus Told"

Kingdom of God = the place where God rules and reigns.

Parable = to throw alongside = a short story that explains spiritual truths by using everyday objects and relationships = an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus often used parables to explain the Kingdom of God (KOG) because everyone He spoke to, including His disciples, completely misunderstood what kind of kingdom Jesus came to establish and what it was going to look like.

A. The parable of the Farmer Sowing Seeds:

"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! **Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand...** Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. **The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!**"

Matthew 13:3b-9 & 18-23 (NLT)

Note: Citizenship in the KOG is available for all who believe Jesus is the Son of God and have surrendered their lives to Him. "He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. **But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.**" John 1:11-12 (NLT)

Note: Proof of citizenship is fruitfulness. "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more... Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. **Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.** For apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:1-2 & 5 (NLT)

Fruitfulness = life change through the power of the Holy Spirit. "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

Note: Most people don't want to be citizens of the KOG. "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. **But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.**"

Matthew 7:13-14 (NLT)

B. The parable of the Wheat and the Weeds:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' 'An enemy has done this!' the farmer exclaimed. 'Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked. 'No,' he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.' ...The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. **The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil.** The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. And the angels will

throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. **Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!**"
Matthew 13:24b-30 & 37-43 (NLT)

Note: The devil is tirelessly working to keep people out of the KOG. "Stay alert! **Watch out for your great enemy, the devil.** He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith." 1 Peter 5:8-9a (NLT)

Note: The devil has strategically planted many false teachers all over the world to lead people astray. "I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. **They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.**" 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NLT)

C. The parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast:

"He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.' He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.'" Matthew 13:31-33 (NIV)

Note: The KOG is already but not yet. Jesus is already reigning and ruling in the hearts of all those who have surrendered their lives to Him, but He has not yet returned as Almighty King in all His glory. He is giving sinful humanity more time to repent as the Good News is spread all around the world. "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, **he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.**" 2 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

D. The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, **he sold everything he owned and bought it!**" Matthew 13:44-46 (NLT)

Note: The KOG is worth infinitely more than anything this world has to offer. "Yes, **everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him." Philippians 3:8-9a (NLT)

E. The parable of the Fishing Net:

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. **This is how it will be at the end of the age.** The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:47-50 (NIV)

Note: There will be a Judgment Day. "And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books... And **anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.**" Revelation 20:11-12 & 15 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! "And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life."

1 John 5:11-12 (NLT)

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What misconceptions about the Kingdom of God did the disciples have? What misconceptions about the Kingdom of God do people still have today?
2. Read and discuss the parable of the Farmer Sowing Seed. (Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23) How does it make you feel to hear Jesus say that only one of the four soils was good soil? (Matthew 7:13-14) Why do you think fruitfulness matters so much to God? (John 15:1-5, Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Read and discuss the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds. (Matthew 13:24-30 & 37-43, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Timothy 4:1-4, James 4:7)
4. Read and discuss the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast. (Matthew 13:31-33) Why would it have been hard for the people listening to Jesus to believe that the Kingdom of God was at hand? Why is it possible to describe the Kingdom of God as already but not yet? (1 John 3:2, 2 Peter 3:9)
5. Read and discuss the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl. (Matthew 13:44-46, Philippians 3:8-9, Luke 12:13-21) Share with your group what a personal relationship with Jesus means to you.
6. Read and discuss the parable of the Fishing Net. (Matthew 13:47-50, Revelation 20:11-15, 1 John 5:11-13) Why do you think discussing Judgment Day makes people feel uncomfortable?