

JESUS OF NAZARETH
KINGDOM OF GOD PART 2: THE PRICELESS KINGDOM
MATTHEW 13:44-50
6-21-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light. We will continue to light the candle until we meet again.

Reflect

Ken Wytsma: The kingdom of God is an upside-down kingdom. It beckons us to gamble all, to trust radically, to come and die so that we might live--to give our lives away. Giving life away is a paradox. It's losing so we can win. It's giving so we can receive. It's risking for security. It's faith. The kingdom of God means living that tension."

Welcome

Happy Father's Day! We meet as sons and daughters of the King in the presence of our heavenly and forever Father. We meet as disciples of Jesus Christ, recognizing our call and capacity to love our Triune God and to love one another as He has loved us. We meet not in our own strength but in the joyful knowing of God's Spirit within us, in our worship today and in our daily lives when we depart from this place. Let us be still for a moment as we draw our attention and focus on God... Take just a few moments to remind yourself of why we gather together today in person or apart... Listen, God speaks even through the background noise of the world around us...

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance today.

Call to Worship: Hebrews 12:28

Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

Gratitude – Reverence - Awe. Take a moment to reflect where you are at right now with those three responses to God this morning.

Candle Lighting – Light the candle as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine your light!

Psalm of Praise: Psalm 149:1-4

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.

Song: O Worship The King -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wgDPdTy5Tg>

O worship the King all glorious above

And gratefully sing His power and His love



*Our Shield and Defender the Ancient of Days
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise
O tell of His might O sing of His grace
Whose robe is the light whose canopy space
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm
Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite
It breathes in the air it shines in the light
It streams from the hills it descends to the plain
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain
Frail children of dust and feeble as frail
In you do we trust nor find you to fail
Your mercies how tender how firm to the end
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend*

Law: Exodus 20:1–6

And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

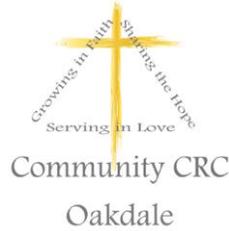
Jealousy in its purest form is the desire to hold onto something precious. It is an expression of love. Lovers are jealous when their partner is giving their special, deep love to another person that rightfully belongs to them. Jealousy is the profoundly deep feeling of hurt when another receives the love that is due you. God is jealous toward you (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24; 1 Corinthians 10:22; 2 Corinthians 11:2), his bride (Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9) when you give your love to another (anything other than God – money, power, praise, clothes, food, sex, drugs, alcohol, children, comfort, security, health, wealth etc.). God rightfully deserves your love and giving it to another is a blatant act of callousness and disregard to his glory and majesty and honor. God’s jealousy therefore is a beautiful display of his love for you and his desire for you to share in the intimacy of his eternal and perfect love.

Prayer for Mercy and Peace

Heavenly Father, far too often we look to “other gods” before you. We look to money, other people, political systems, comfort, security, possessions, health and looks before you. This is sin. Forgive us for belittling you; for putting you behind lesser things; for demoting you to the bench; for ignoring you; for not listening to you; for delighting in creation and not the Creator.

Remind us that idols give false promises, empty promises, shallow promises and dead-end promises. Remind us that our focus, our energy, our passions, our desires are to be grounded in you, in Jesus Christ, in your Holy Spirit. Open our eyes, unstop our ears, loosen our tongues that we might behold your beauty, majesty, power, love.

Thank you that despite our failures, we have a High Priest who pleads for me and on whose hand my



name is written. Thank you that you see me through Jesus Christ, spotless and righteous because of his spotlessness and righteousness. May we sing as ones in whom our life is hid with Christ; with courage and boldness and passion and delight. To the glory of Jesus and for our joy, Amen.

Song: Before The Throne Of God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ6sCc>

*Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great High Priest whose name is love, who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands, my name is written on His heart.
I know that while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within;
upward I look and see Him there, who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
Behold Him there, the risen Lamb, my perfect, spotless Righteousness!
The great unchangeable I AM, the King of glory and of grace!
One with Himself, I cannot die, my soul is purchased by His blood!
My life is hid with Christ on high;
With Christ my Savior and my God
One with Himself, I cannot die. My soul is purchased by His blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my Savior and my God.
With Christ my Savior and my God*

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration – A Prayer

Lead in truth, O Christ, the young people of the church. Let them not be attracted by new idols, such as consumerism, well-being at any cost, moral permissiveness, violent protest, but let them live your message with joy, which is the message of the sermon on the mount, the message of love for God and for one's neighbor, the message of moral commitment to the genuine transformation of society.

Come Holy Spirit of Youth, fill the hearts of young people with the hope and love of Jesus Christ; enliven our church with the creativity, energy, and joy of youth; guide us together as we strive to offer God's mercy to those who feel abandoned or outcast.

Installation of Elders & Deacons

Elders: Curtis Herbert, Michael Verkaik, Willie Bylsma

Deacons: Nancy Wilkins, Arnold Van Leeuwen, Karen Schemper

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-43

We are in a series within a series; The Kingdom of God and Jesus of Nazareth respectively. As such, we



are getting a picture of the Kingly Jesus for whom we are to live lives of radical obedience to him. It is his kingdom and we are citizens only by grace, by gift. And it is a magnificent kingdom as we learned last week. Although it is partially hidden by the clouds of sin, one day it will shine in all its brilliance and so will we in it. Yet, this partially hidden and somewhat unimpressive kingdom today is a “first order” priority for our lives. Jesus says to “seek first the kingdom of God.” What do you seek? How do you seek it? What do you love? Do you love what you think you love? These are the questions we will focus on this morning.

Please read Matthew 13:24-43.

Gospel Message: Kingdom of God Part 2: The Costly Kingdom

What do you consider valuable? What would you give up in order to get or keep it? A few weeks ago, a pair of Michael Jordan’s “Air Jordan 1” basketball shoes sold at an auction for....560 thousand dollars!! Ten bidders from six different countries on four different continents fiercely bid over this apparently valuable commodity. Why was it so valuable to them? Michael Jordan wore them during his inaugural season in 1985. They were also signed by him. So what? Well, many consider Michael Jordan to be the best all around basketball player ever (even better than LeBron James or Kobe Bryant). That’s what made them valuable – the person who wore them. If you and I wore them in a summer league, they would be worth less than what we paid for them! But not when someone famous and gifted wore them! Interestingly, this is the most anyone has ever paid for a pair of sneakers, surpassing the previous record of 437 thousand for another Nike shoe, the “Moon Shoe.” This shoe was made specifically in 1972 for the Olympic trials and only 12 pair were made. Why were they so valuable? Two reasons (1) they were rare (only twelve made) and (2) their purpose (the Olympic trials). So, these two pairs of shoes that together sold for more than a million dollars were valuable because of a person and purpose.

Just as these two pairs of shoes were valuable to the two people who invested in them because of the person and purpose they are associated with, so too the kingdom of heaven is valuable because of the person and purpose that it is associated with – the reign and rule (the purpose) of Jesus Christ (the person). The parables of the treasure and the pearl illustrate this point: the kingdom of God is valuable beyond anything we might own and the cost of investment is always infinitely less than the value of the return (or, the return is infinitely more valuable than the cost of investment).

Now, I normally don’t like to talk of discipleship in business terms as it can skew thinking towards consumerism and works righteousness which are antithetical to being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus and his kingdom are not products to consume or buy nor can we earn our salvation. Salvation cannot be bought or earned. It is a gift. It is grace. It is received freely by faith. The point of these parables is about the value of salvation and life in the kingdom. It is about the cost of living solely for Christ and his kingdom as his disciples. It is about letting go of everything for Christ. It is about turning from every idol that we might be holding onto. It is about being “all in” for Jesus and his kingdom. It is believing and living in such a way that it is evident that Jesus and the kingdom of God are your be all and end all.

Okay. Let’s take a closer look at the two parables of the treasure and pearl (I’ll only briefly touch on the parable of the fish and net since we covered this parable’s main point last week – final judgment and the separating of evil from the kingdom of God forever). Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a field in which a person stumbles upon a great treasure or a merchant who is searching and finds a

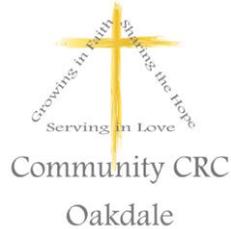


pearl of great price. They both realize this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and in a state of great joy, sell everything they have and buy the field and the pearl from the previous owners (I'm pretty sure that owner of the field wasn't very happy when they found out what was in the field). They sell their home, their furniture, their tools, their appliances, their cars, their sports equipment, their clothes – everything! All this they readily give up. All this they let go. All this becomes a distant second in value to them. All this is expendable. Think about this practically and personally for a moment. Think of selling everything you own. What would you do that for? Why would you do that?

The man and the merchant can sell everything they have for only one sane reason (lots of insane reasons); that what he was getting was more than what he was giving up. He had to believe that with the treasure he could replace everything he had and more with newer and better versions. He had to believe this was a significant upgrade or why do it? Why give up everything and get less or nothing in return? Why sell the 450-horsepower Ford F-150 Raptor 4x4 and spend all that money on a 152 HP Nissan Frontier? Why sell the farm and spend all that money on a 600 square foot apartment? Why sell the yacht and pay that price for a canoe? Indeed, you would not if you are sane. You would only do this if you believed there was going to be a significant return on your investment. Whether it is the treasure or the pearl, the message is the same: the kingdom of heaven is worth investing everything in! What does this mean for us today?

Well, to start. If we are investing in the kingdom, it's an "all in" investment. This means that while marriage is great, it is not the be all, end all; while children are great they are not the be all, end all; while riches are great, they are not the be all, end all; while houses are great, they are not the be all, end all; while popular status is great, it is not the be all, end all; while pleasures are great, they are not the be all, end all; while health is great, it is not the be all, end all; while comfort is great, it is not the be all, end all; while security is great, it is not the be all, end all, while parents are great, they are not the be all, end all. In fact, all these things are secondary. That is, they are engaged through the that which is primary. What I mean by that is the way we see, understand and relate to our spouse, to children, to riches, to our houses, to status, to pleasures, to health, to comfort, to security, to parents and all other things is through the lens of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. To do marriage well is to do marriage from a kingdom of heaven perspective. To do parenting well is to do it from a kingdom of heaven perspective. To engage with the pleasures of this world is to do it from a kingdom perspective. In other words, it is submitting everything to Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule; it is turning everything over to him to be made new and appropriately relegated to significant but secondary status. So, how do we work at doing this? Good question!

First, we need a vision as big as Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule. We need to Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule as supremely valuable. We need to enlarge and strengthen our desires to match Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule desires. Often times we think our desires are too strong and too big because we can't control them or keep them reigned in. But this is not a problem of them being too strong, but too weak; too focused on the wrong thing. C.S. Lewis says, **"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."** Our problem is that we are ignorant to Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule and "far too easily pleased." We settle for lesser things. We settle for the



apartment when we can have a mansion. We settle for mud pies in the slums rather than sand castles on the beach! In order to enlarge and strengthen our experience of Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule we need to live lives of faith in Jesus; we need to get excited about his purposes, will and desires; we need to have hope in his promises for the future. Pray for passion. Pray for a larger vision. Read God's story, the divine drama that gives this vision. Go to church regularly to worship and learn and be inspired!

Second, we need to pay the cost. As the man and merchant did, we are to go all in for Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule. There is no part time Christianity. Christianity is not a hobby or like being a fan of the Giants. It is a fulltime, all-in participative relationship and journey! Fans are fickle. Fairweather fans are like the rocky ground people in the parable of the four soils. When things are going well, they are in. But when things become tough and difficult, they are out. Other fans might go to games or watch them on TV but end up being on their phone standing in line for food. Distracted fans are like the thorny soil in which the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke it and prevent it from producing fruit. In the end, fans don't participate in the actual game. They watch and leave. Players on the other hand dedicate their lives to playing. They are all in. They sacrifice time and desires for the joy of playing ball. They invest a lot to get even more in return.

Being a disciple of Jesus costs time. That is, we pay the cost of time by seeking first the kingdom of heaven in all that we do. Time is made for praying, reading, worshipping, training and being an active participant in the reign and rule of Jesus in his kingdom now. You choose to sacrifice good, but lesser things to make this happen. That does not necessarily mean eliminating them but reprioritizing them and doing them subservient to Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule. We pay the cost of the comfortableness of the status quo. The kingdom of heaven is not complacent. The reign and rule of Jesus Christ is active and dynamic, seeking to shape and influence people, cultures and customs. It does not get stuck into a particular human made culture or custom as if that particular human made culture or custom is the be all, end all. It continually seeks justice and righteousness and reconciliation and love. It costs money. We chose to steward the resources God has entrusted us with for Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule, all of it! That does not mean that we give everything to the Church! It does mean that our utilization of all are resources are channeled through the kingdom of heaven lens and done in way that honors our King, cheerfully, generously and joyfully.

Third, we need to enjoy the cost! The joy and delight (love) of serving Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule is powerful – and it is expulsive! No one sins out of duty. We sin because we believe it is more pleasant or less painful than the way of Jesus or the truth of Jesus. We cannot simply turn off the desire to sin or (in most cases) simply muster enough willpower to stop lusting, envying, being lazy, greedy or gluttonous. Our desires, as we have seen from CS Lewis are often too weak and small because they target weak and small things. A question: How do you remove air from a glass jar? One of two ways. You can try sucking it all out but that will lead to the shattering of the glass jar. Removing the air without replacing it with something doesn't work in the end. We are like this. Thomas Chalmers, a puritan pastor and theologian, says that our hearts have a "grasping tendency" in which they must have something to lay a hold of – and which, "if wrestled away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system." Instead of creating a devastating void, you can remove the air by filling the jar with water! Chalmers goes on the say, "Seldom do any of our habits or flaws disappear by a process of



extinction through reasoning or by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be destroyed may be dispossessed...The only way to dispossess [the heart] of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one.” Wow! That is a powerful statement.... the expulsive power of a greater affection! Let that sink in! The expulsive power of joyful obedience to Jesus Christ and his reign and rule. The expulsive power of loving Jesus and his reign and rule. See, the idolatrous desire for pleasure can easily be dispossessed by a greater desire and pleasure for wealth and the idolatrous desire for wealth can be dispossessed by a greater desire and pleasure of ideology and for power. **Stronger affections dispossess weaker affections.**

The expulsive power of divine love can dispossess the heart of its weak and small affections by enlarging and strengthening them in Christ and for Christ. As we seek Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule, our love will grow, our faith will grow, our hope will grow. We will become more Christlike! We will come to see and understand and fight against sinful desires as inferior, lesser, weaker, smaller; actions that reduce and ruin and minimize our flourishing in Christ as new creations. James K. Smith says that we are what we love. What are you? What do you love? Do you love what you think you love? When we set our hearts and minds on Jesus Christ, going all-in, then we will begin to disentangle our minds and our hearts so that our imaginations can be set free to be captured by and reflective of Jesus Christ and his kingdom reign and rule. Gospel roots will sink deep into our being and we will not fall away when tough times come or become choked by the thorny things of this world. Instead, the more we walk with Jesus, the more we will trust and love Jesus. It is the cumulative experiential knowledge of Jesus’ love that transforms us in our love for him and other. We love because God loves us first (1 John 4:19).

The value and worth of the kingdom are priceless because at the heart of the kingdom of heaven is Jesus of Nazareth and he is supreme. Listen to how the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:10-19 pulls all this together in Christ:

Live in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Jesus of Nazareth is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And Jesus of Nazareth is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in Jesus of Nazareth all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Jesus is to be “preeminent” or supreme is everything. Why? Because he is God. He is perfection. He is perfected humanity. He is holy. He is Savior and he is Lord and he is King. We are to walk in a manner worthy of Jesus of Nazareth through whom God the Father has transferred us from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son because in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Thus, the purpose of the kingdom of heaven is to display the supremacy of Christ and the glory of



God and for the flourishing of creation that was made by him, through him and for him. This is what makes the kingdom of heaven valuable – Jesus and his reign and rule in which we flourish in love as beloved children of the kingdom.

So, three things: (1) develop a bigger vision of Jesus of Nazareth (increasing in the knowledge of God); (2) invest everything for Jesus and his reign and rule (bearing fruit in every good work, strengthened in power for all endurance and patience) and (3) fill your soul with the love of Jesus (fully pleasing to Jesus, joy and thanks). This is going all in for Jesus and it is costly but it is eternally worth it. The investment of going all in for Jesus returns an eternal and invaluable result that cannot be measured or priced.

A closing thought: the kingdom of God is so valuable that it cost God himself. The sacrificial and substitutionary life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth for us and for the world has purchased and made possible our entrance into his kingdom. A kingdom where there is no darkness, pain, suffering, injustice, racism, envy, lust, gluttony, death, violence, disease, drought, ruin, decay. A kingdom of flourishing, love, kindness, joy, delight, laughter, creativity, construction, development, growth, justice, righteousness, equality, pleasure, light, abundance, newness and life – forever! This is amazing grace! This is amazing love! And it is worth giving everything we have!

Prayer: **Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

What things must you let go or reprioritize to be all in for Jesus and his kingdom reign and rule?

Communion Meditation

A powerful way to enlarge our vision and experience of Jesus is through the dynamic practice of the Lord's Supper. We believe that communion is not a static, looking back memorial only but a present and active means of grace through the real but spiritual presence and participation of Jesus Christ via the Holy Spirit. God's grace received in faith nourishes. It grows our understanding, vision and experience of the love of God. It strengthens faith, expands hope and nourishes love. Grace changes everything because grace grounds us in the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."



Remember and believe the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Our closing song speaks to being consumed and filled with the love and justice of Jesus as we seek to give him control of our lives and praise him for who he is and what he has done and what he promises to do in the future (an all in life). May we know sin as a weakened and smallish desire that is not worth our time or effort. May we continually be changed from the inside out as Jesus' disciples.

Song: From The Inside Out -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9azOSb_bONA

*A thousand times I've failed, still Your mercy remains.
And should I stumble again, I'm caught in Your grace.
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades.
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame
Your will above all else, my purpose remains,
The art of losing myself in bringing You praise.
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades.
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame
My heart and my soul, Lord I give You control.
Consume me from the inside out, Lord, let justice and praise,
Become my embrace; to love you from the inside out.
Your will above all else, my purpose remains.
The art of losing myself in bringing You praise.
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades.
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame
My heart and my soul, Lord I give You control.
Consume me from the inside out, Lord, let justice and praise,
Become my embrace; to love you from the inside out.
Everlasting, Your light will shine when all else fades.
Never ending, Your glory goes beyond all fame
And the cry of my heart is to bring You praise;
From the inside out Lord my soul cries out.*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

May we continually be changed from the inside out to better image Christ to the world. May we seek to follow and obey and love Jesus of Nazareth with our heart, mind and strength and allow this greater affection to expel the lesser affections that distract us from our purpose and our joy. May we not be half-hearted creatures but full-hearted disciple of Jesus. May Jesus Christ and his kingdom be or be all and end all.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!