

The Value of the Kingdom of Heaven



Read: Matthew 13:44-53 (parallels in Mark 4 and Luke 13)

Lesson:

The crowd and the disciples had just taught that the kingdom they were anticipating would not be what they expected. The huge let down moment, when reality does not meet our expectation, can be devastating. No matter how long we have wanted something, like driving, we have not been waiting as long as Israel for their kingdom promised by the Lord. They anticipated a grand, powerful entrance of an eternal kingdom but Jesus told them it would be a gentle, unassuming start with a powerful wrap up. They anticipated that all Jews would be children of the kingdom, but Jesus told them repeatedly (and will again in these ending parables) that not all who are in that kingdom are citizens. Learning what you thought you knew was not accurate can be a huge let down.

The Lord will still accomplish his promise to Israel and there is no reason to be disappointed in what he gives. Knowing how much better his plan for the kingdom of heaven was, compared to their idea of what it should be, Jesus gives the disciples three parables to reignite their anticipation of the coming kingdom. First he compares this kingdom to a hidden _____ (verse 44). Here the man finds the treasure on accident, but recognizes its value and is willing to abandon everything to rightly obtain it. This is describing those who hear and receive the gospel, but do not have any prior knowledge of what it might be. Today this would be like someone with no religious background hearing and accepting the gospel. The comparison is not to sell everything we own so we may purchase eternal life. It is the comparison of values.

In the second of this set of parables, Jesus compares the kingdom to a pearl of _____ (verse 45). Here the man is looking for pearls, but finds the best one by chance. The man knew how to evaluate pearls, but he was not looking for any one in particular. This is describing those who hear and receive the gospel after they have been taught or studied a religious tradition/s. Today this would be like someone who is raised in a religious tradition hearing and accepting the gospel. They have some idea of what value religion holds, but no understanding of the overwhelming value of a relationship with God until it is shown to them.

Both of these parables are careful to point out that the thing of value is stumbled upon and not sought out. The kingdom of heaven is not something that one can journey to find. But when presented with the true kingdom, the “good soil” will understand the value of what has been found. The person discovering the treasure/pearl is not told how valuable it is, he esteems its value to be above everything he owns. In both parables Jesus is telling the disciples that when someone hears the word and understands it they leave everything else behind to follow Christ.

For a third time, maybe it is being emphasized, Jesus tells a parable dividing those who are children of the kingdom and those who will be cast away. The parable of the net address the _____ (verse 49) of the age when all will be gathered and sorted. The end of those who have not received the word is torment. Notice, as with the parable of the weeds, the focus is on those being gathered and burned. The intent is to cause self-evaluation. We who hear these parables, are we going to be part of the tormented group? There is only one way to be part of the righteous. This separation is eternal and happens at the end. There is still time to hear the word and receive it with gladness.

Now, after telling seven parables and explaining three of them, Jesus says “Do you _____” (verse 51). And they simply respond “_____” (verse 51). So Jesus admonishes them to teach others with their new understanding. The true plan for the kingdom of heaven should not be a disappointment to the disciples, it should spur them on to tell others what they have now learned. We are to search into the Word to discover more truth. One joy of the Christian life is the privilege of learning God’s truth and from God’s word. Its value is greater than anything it can rightly be compared to.

Discussion Questions:

Why would Jesus ask after their understanding before giving the last parable?

Who are these kingdom of heaven parables only for?

Application Questions:

Should believers be excited for what God has revealed he will do?

Can believers learn what God has revealed and not share it with other people?

Do believers have a responsibility to share what they know and learn from the Bible?