

An Order of Worship for the Home

August 9, 2020

Metaphors for the Kingdom from Matthew 13, week 1



This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: The kingdom is where the King reigns.
Reader 2: He reigns in our hearts. The kingdom of heaven is here!
Reader 1: We gather in the name of the King who is...
Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...
Together: Amen.

Psalm 18:1-6

¹ I love you, O Lord, my strength.
² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
³ I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

⁴ The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
⁵ the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.

⁶ In my distress I called upon the Lord;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Christian Confessing: I have treasured the wrong things, and I have sought to build my own kingdom. I am sorry for this. God, you alone are my King. I humble myself before your rule, and I ask that you would allow me to serve in your kingdom. Forgive me for the sake of your Son, Jesus, and his suffering and death.

Christian Responding: Your King has heard your confession. You are loved and forgiven! He welcomes you home as his child. The faith on which your confession is founded is a gift from your God, and in this faith you are saved. As Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." (Matthew 13:16)

Together: Amen.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Isaiah 6:8-13

Please read from a Bible of your own.

Message and Gospel Reading

Kinda Like... (Matthew 13:1-23)

We're about to jump into a story which comes halfway through Matthew's gospel. It's helpful to know the setting. This reading starts with "That same day..." This tells us some other things must have already taken place. In fact, several noteworthy events have occurred in the preceding chapters.

Prior to this day, we read this ominous statement in response to Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath: "But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him." (Matthew 12:14)

A little later – on the day in which our reading picks up – another group of Pharisees (or the same group? We're really not sure.) accuse Jesus of allegiance with Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Then, only hours later, some scribes and Pharisees challenge Jesus to provide a sign which might convince them of his heavenly authority.

Between these encounters, Jesus has been teaching. He's been healing. He's also cast out some demons. The work of God is definitely moving forward in Jesus. Still, this work is being resisted. The kingdom of God is advancing through Christ, but some are oblivious to the kingdom's movement. Why is that?

Matthew's gospel reminds us that people are watching this face-off between Jesus and the religious leaders. Matthew makes a distinction throughout his gospel between *the disciples* and *the crowds*. When Matthew mentions the disciples, he's inviting us to picture those who have committed themselves to Jesus. The disciples include the 12, plus all those who believe Jesus is the Christ.

The crowds come to listen. The crowds come for healing. But the crowds are uncertain. The crowds are testing the waters. The crowds are debating whether they will follow Jesus, or side with the religious leaders. In Matthew 13, Jesus takes a new approach with the crowds.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds

fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:1-9)

My 6 year old daughter loves to do puzzles. We have lots of puzzles at our house. (In fact, we have several given to us by friends at Calvary!) Some puzzles she does all on her own, but she also loves to get out a more difficult puzzle and work at it with mom or dad.

If you think about it, constructing a picture piece-by-piece is a little silly. I mean, if you want to enjoy a puzzle picture you can just look at the box cover. You don't need to do the puzzle just to see what's there. Yet, if you've done a puzzle you know that in the process of putting pieces together you take time to notice much more detail in the picture. You appreciate it differently. In fact, the challenge of the puzzle makes us engage with pictures we might otherwise ignore. Parables might be a little like puzzles.

We read the parable Jesus shared with the crowd. Now, listen to the conversation Jesus has with his disciples.

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”¹¹ And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

*““You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”*

*¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’*

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matthew 13:10-17)

Let me back up a bit. “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven...” That’s the gift of faith. The disciples have it. They know Jesus has come from God; they recognize the kingdom is moving in this world. To them, it has been given. That’s a good thing!

But, there are others. There’s the crowd. There are people in a different place in understanding. They’re in a horribly bad place. They don’t have faith, and “from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” This isn’t a condemnation from Jesus, this is Jesus pointing out the desperate situation – “seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”

They’ve seen Jesus. They’ve met him. They’ve witnessed miracles. They’ve heard Jesus speak. But, they still don’t believe, or trust, or follow him. They’re still riding the fence. Worse yet, some are outright opposed to him.

Jesus has approached the crowds directly. He’s gone to them to heal. He’s preached to them about God’s love. He’s called them to repentance. What’s the saying? You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. Most of us would wipe our hands of the situation and walk away. Yet, that’s not what Jesus does. He’s not willing to turn away from the crowd. He will do anything he can to break through their resistance. You and I know that, in the end, Jesus will not wipe his hands of the situation. Instead, he’ll offer his hands to the nails of crucifixion. He will give his life for the sake of his disciples... and for the sake of the crowd.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son... (John 3:16)

That includes the crowd.

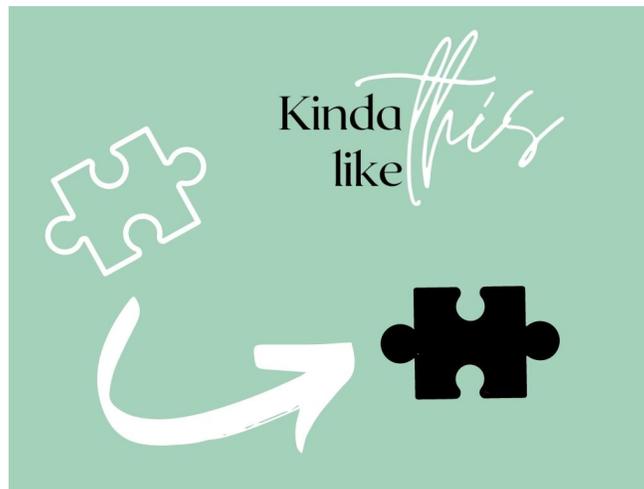
God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And while the crowds were still resisting, Christ died for them, too.

Jesus knows he will give his life for these people who do not believe him...yet. And he’s willing to try anything he can to turn their hearts, so that his death for them will not be in vain.

What does he do? He creates a puzzle. He's tried being direct. Now, he chooses an indirect approach. He gives them a riddle in story form. He invites those listening to not only be present while he speaks, but to engage with what he's saying.

If I can put my own visual parable to this, we might say that the kingdom of heaven is working kinda like this:



Now that you know the context, and now that you've thought about why Jesus chooses to speak in parables, listen to him solve the puzzle.

“Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (Matthew 13:18-23)

You (reading this) are among those who hear and understand. Rejoice in that!

But, don't be glad that you're good soil – as if it's something in yourself which has made the difference. Be glad that you have an abundantly generous Savior. He irresponsibly (by the world's logic) tosses seed on all. He liberally offers grace to everyone – disciples and crowd!

What's more, he will do all he can to find a way to form relationship. He will change his approach time and again in hopes of breaking through to those who do not hear. He will even hide his message in a puzzle if that's what it takes for you and I, and our friends, and our family, and our neighbors to engage with the truth of his love.

He who has ears, let him hear.
Amen

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.
Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.
Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.
Reader 2: Receive our offerings.
Together: Receive us as your own.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing (Matthew 28:19-20)

Reader 1: The kingdom of God moves forward, and you move with it.
Reader 2: So make disciples, baptize, and teach.
Reader 1: Do this in the name of the King – the Father, Son and Spirit.

Reader 2: And know that the King goes with you. Always!
Together: Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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