

An Order of Worship for the Home

September 6, 2020

Metaphors for the Kingdom from Matthew 13, week 5



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.

Note: This week's message includes both the gospel reading from Matthew 13, and the Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 49. They are not presented separately, but inserted as part of the teaching.

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 32:1-7

¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*

⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.

⁷ You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

Selah

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.

Message

Now is the Time for Gathering

How does God's presence in our world actually work? Well, it's *kinda like this...*

That's how Jesus begins story-after-story in Matthew 13. He teaches both the crowds and his disciples about the reign of God. We've heard a number of these stories already, and we have two left to cover between this week and next. Over and over we've heard that the kingdom of heaven is *kinda like this...*

Listen as Jesus teaches us again.

⁴⁷ "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸ 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. ⁴⁹ This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50)

This story sounds a lot like the parable of the Weeds in the Field. If you followed that message a few weeks back, the ending of this story will sound familiar. The explanation of that story and the explanation offered by Jesus here are not only similar, they are identical.

The words Jesus uses are the same. Yet, the meaning of the two stories may not be the same. The two overlap in certain respects, but they also differ in important ways.

The story of the weeds addressed questions which arise because it's hard to distinguish good from evil, even within the church. The followers of Jesus we would call church seem to be a mixed bag. That story offered hope while we live within this flawed community.

The story of the net includes the same sorting and exercise of God's justice, but the events prior are different. If you look at what happens prior to the sorting in

these parables, the Parable of the Weeds was about waiting with hope. The Parable of the Net, however, is not about waiting. It's about activity. The parable we're reading today is about doing something. The story about this net cast into the lake sounds less like a comforting story of hope and more like a revealing story of purpose.

As you think about that, listen to our Old Testament lesson from Isaiah. Listen for the purpose here, because God's goals have not changed. His purpose is constant.

*Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the Lord called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.
2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.
3 He said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
4 But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing at all.
Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand,
and my reward is with my God."

5 And now the Lord says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord
and my God has been my strength—
6 he says:
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."
(Isaiah 49:1-6)*

Did you hear God's purpose? It was his call to Israel. It also became the mission of Jesus. In reality, it is still his call to his people. What's more, this is still the mission of Jesus.

*“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the
earth.” (Isaiah 49:1-6)*

Our parable has this same mission in mind.

*Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was
let down into the lake and **caught all kinds of fish.**
(Matthew 13:47)*

What is the net? This is the word of God. The net is the gospel. This is the message of salvation for this world. It is the message of hope carried by God’s people, the church...you!

Notice, the net is not choosing which fish to collect. The net does not look at prerequisites. The net is not interested in family trees, income levels, education, race, language, or dress. The net doesn’t even measure moral behavior. The net puts an emphasis on gathering. The net collects. The net has a singular focus on gathering more and more and more.

Gathering more is still the mission of Jesus. It always has been. He proclaimed it in John’s gospel in response to his Father’s affirmation.

*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all
people to myself. (John 12:32)*

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He is the gospel message and the love of God in human form. He is the net, and he gathers all. As he was lifted on the cross the net was cast out into the world.

Jesus went to his death in order to be a bridge between us and God. God is no longer separated from us due to our sin. Jesus took that sin on himself, and carried it to the cross, so that we could be gathered to him. His death is for you, and his death is for all.

As you come to his cross, you find a place in his death. Beyond that, you receive new life in his resurrection. In this new life you bear the message of the cross. You become part of the kingdom. You represent the reign of the King in this world. And what is his kingdom like? It’s *kinda like this* net... which gathers all people to Jesus!

You've been gathered by the gospel-net of Jesus. Now you take part as he casts that net into our world and continues to gather more and more to himself.

What about the rest of the parable? Well, in our reading (from the English Standard Version) the word "then" shows up midway through verse 48. It may seem small, but it is significant. If you check other translations, you'll notice a similar time shift.

The story breaks into two halves. First, there is the gathering work of the net, then there is a sorting. Jesus tells us plainly that the sorting will be done by his angels. That's a future event, and it is not our job.

We take part in the first half of the story. We live in the time of the net. Right now is not the time for sorting.

Now is the time for gathering.

This parable is told to the disciples, not to the crowds. In other words, this story is told to believers. Plus, this story is part of a set. Last week we looked at the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl. Those stories pointed to our great value in the eyes of Jesus. They were about identity. The Net is about purpose. The Treasure and the Pearl reveal your identity as the priceless treasure of your God. The Net reveals your purpose in God's movement called the kingdom of heaven.

Now is the time for gathering.

You've been gathered to Jesus by his grace. The cross has captured your heart. Now, you take part in gathering others. You spread the gospel like a net and watch Jesus to capture more hearts.

How do you do this? How do you take part in spreading the net of the gospel?

- You might share this message. That's one of the few things which has become easier since coronavirus changed our lives. Whether you watch online or receive this message by mail, you can share a link or share the printout. That's one simple way to spread the net of the gospel.
- You might spend time listening. Whether you pick up the phone or wander across the yard (with a mask on, of course) you could try asking a friend these questions: What are you thankful for? What's challenging for you right now? How can I pray for you? Simple questions like these will take

you further in mission than swapping comments about politics or the weather ever could.

- You might invite a friend to Alpha or The Marriage Course. I've invited friends to our current Alpha who have said "no, thank you," yet even the invitation spreads the net. Alpha and The Marriage Course are conversations where we are sharing the gospel, and this gospel wants to gather more and more and more people.

Now is the time for gathering.

Keep in mind, what is the purpose of the net?

Gather more...because there is grace for you and your friends.

Gather more...because Jesus died for you and your neighbors.

Gather more...because God's love is for you and your family.

Gathering is the purpose of the net. Gathering is the mission of Jesus. Gathering is your purpose and mission too, as Jesus has brought you into his life and placed the Holy Spirit in you.

The kingdom of heaven isn't concerned with ruling anyone out. The kingdom of heaven is all about gathering in. It's kinda like this...

Now is the time for gathering.

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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