

Sunday 11/25/18 – Jeff Lyle | AM and PM Notes

“Presenting the Kingdom to the Crowd” Luke 14:25-35 Sunday AM

Jesus was not interested in sparking a rally, initiating a movement, or marketing a product. The mission of Jesus was to establish an everlasting Kingdom. At the center of this Kingdom, Jesus presented Himself as the lone option before whose throne all must bow. Though His mission included teaching, miracles, and displays of power over the forces of hell, the core component of what He constantly proclaimed was an invitation for people to renounce all the lesser kingdoms in order to enter His everlasting Kingdom by faith. His crowds often grew due to the life-giving messages He preached and the mind-blowing miracles He performed. Interestingly, it seemed that Jesus reserved His most intense sermons for the largest crowds. He was seeking out those who would commit themselves in radical allegiance to Him in order to establish God’s Kingdom on earth. This message from the King contains the clearest demands of the Gospel upon those who are contemplating a commitment of their lives to King Jesus. He leaves no room for half-hearted followers. The Kingdom invitation clearly requires an all-or-nothing response from everyone who hears it.

I. King Jesus’ Radical Expectation (25-27)

A. Jesus was unfazed by the crowd size (25) - “Now great crowds accompanied Him, and He turned and said to them...”

It is no surprise that Jesus constantly attracted large crowds during His earthly ministry. So many people in those crowds came to sincerely learn and experience the power and presence of Messiah. Many came out of mere curiosity. Others who were skeptical attended these gatherings in order to inspect, criticize or even trap Jesus in something He spoke or did that did not align itself with the religious traditions of the day. While many people might have shifted their approach to ministry after noticing the visible growth of the daily crowds, Jesus never strayed from the Father’s assignment. He knew what was in the hearts of the people. He never became enamored with the crowd-size. He did not change His messaging in order to keep them coming back. In fact, as the numbers grew throughout Jesus’ ministry, He often seemed to intentionally thin out the crowds by releasing some of His most intense preaching. This scene clearly was one of those moments.

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B. Jesus confronts our loyalties (26) - "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother {earliest love} and wife and children {dearest love} and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life {strongest love}, he cannot be My disciple."

Jesus dethrones the idolatry of the family. Perhaps no greater challenge might have impacted those ancient Hebrews as Jesus told them that they were forbidden to allow their love for their family members to rise above their commitments to follow Him as Lord. We cannot make these dogmatic statements from the King mean anything other than the plain meaning He had when He originally spoke them. In the Kingdom, Jesus communicates His radical expectation that our allegiance to Him cannot be rivaled by even the earliest and dearest loves that we experience in our lives. Jesus is to remain enthroned in our hearts above our parents, spouses, children and siblings. Many who might be able to say Amen to these requirements would need to go deeper and consider if they are willing to renounce their strongest love, the love of self, in order to live as a committed disciple of the Master. Jesus told one of the largest crowds who came to hear Him that they must understand that He was not to be added to the existing framework of their current lives. He must be enthroned above all of it as the Lord of all. Anyone who was not willing to follow Him in this manner was denied discipleship. Jesus was not then, and is not now, looking for a fan-base. The King requires His followers to be willing to turn loose of everything in order to follow Him on the pathway He assigns for their lives. All lesser loyalties must be fully surrendered to Him.

C. Jesus calls us to die to ourselves (27) - "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Modern Christians think of the cross of Jesus in a radically different way than His audience would have on that day. Crosses were offensive, torturous instruments of execution. In Jesus' day, crosses did not represent salvation. They did not symbolize atonement. Crosses were the means by which cruel and oppressive Romans punished criminals. These crosses were associated with shame, humiliation and death. So, when Jesus called all of those people in the swelling crowd to recognize that following Him included a requirement to carry their own cross, they would have been deeply impacted in ways that the modern Christian is not. The call to follow Jesus involves an on-going commitment to endure loss. Ultimately, Jesus calls us to die to self, to the world, to the countless other paths that are offered us in this life. A cross-bearing person has no rights.

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A cross-bearing person has no resistance. A cross-bearing person has no secondary agenda. In order to follow the Son of God, we must intentionally commit to a process of dying to all things other than the relentless pursuit of the King who bore His cross before assigning us our own. Jesus completely removes the possibility of being His disciple without the reality of carrying your own cross. This will mean different things to different people but the one common non-negotiable is that we renounce our independence and intentionally enter into a life of dying to all lesser loyalties. This radical requirement for us is almost entirely ignored by modern day communications of Christianity. The call to follow Jesus is a call to a lifelong process of dying to self. Jesus own lips proclaimed that those who will not enter into this cross-bearing life have no possibility of belonging to Him as His followers.

II. The Kingdom's Radical Calculations (28-32)

A. Something to consider (28a, 31a) - “For which of you, desiring to build a tower...Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war...”

B. Something to calculate (28b, 31b) - “...does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?...will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?”

In verses 28-31, Jesus gives two illustrations that serve to call everyone in the crowd to consider what it was that He was offering them. He is showing them their need to consider what He is requiring. He tells them to intentionally think through their potential commitment to Him ahead of time. Within His two illustrations, we learn that following Jesus Christ involves both building and battling. In spite of modern-day teaching that seeks to remove the reality of any striving, all toiling, and intentional labor or sacrifice, it remains true that there is a radical cost associated with being a Christian. Jesus asks us if we are committed enough to finish what we begin to build. Are we able to continue the fight against the flesh, the world and the devil? Anyone can make a spontaneous decision to follow Jesus - but how are we going to finish? Jesus calls us all to count the cost ahead of time. He places a spotlight on the reality that it is possible for people to commit strongly to Him at the beginning, only to burn out or sell

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out when the demand and the warfare become too intense for them. One reason that He requires us to carry our cross is because, if we will always remember that we have died in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4), we will not succumb to the temptation to resurrect ourselves back to the very things to which we are crucified. Jesus wants everyone in the crowd to truly consider if they can finish what they initially commit to.

C. Something to confront (29-32) - “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish...’”

1. The potential for us burning out (29-30) - “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”

2. The possibility of us selling out (31c-32) - “And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.”

Look what Jesus tells the crowd: it is clear that many who began with Him will not finish with Him. The falling away from Jesus will be a major characteristic of many who profess Christ at the end of the age (**2 Thessalonians 3:3; Matthew 24:10**). In our own Christian experiences, we have seen more people than we are able to number fall away from their commitments to Jesus. Some of the reasons for this were addressed by Jesus in His parable of the sower in **Matthew 13:20-22**. A lack of legitimate spiritual rooting in Christ, the difficulties and demands of this present life and the deceitfulness of wealth can all serve to distract and derail people who previously confessed with their mouths that Jesus is Lord. In the end, these lives invite mockery and skepticism to the cause of Christ. Is it any wonder that Jesus calls us all to take the time to truly evaluate whether or not we are willing to intentionally live our entire lives for Him and with Him? The King’s call is an all-or-nothing summons.

III. Every Believer's Radical Prioritization (33-35)

A. Who Jesus addresses (33a) - “So therefore, any one of you...” **In front of the large crowd, Jesus released the highest demand**

Jesus makes no distinction among the many types of people who were in the crowd that day. He wants everyone to know that what He has preached applies to every single person who was under the sound of His voice. Unfortunately, much modern church messaging divides Christianity into categories, one of which has never been a Kingdom reality. Modern messaging declares that there are people who are truly saved and have entered the Kingdom of God through faith in Christ. These people are sold-out, committed followers of Jesus who live at an intensely committed level. These people will have incredible reward in the eternal Kingdom. The second group, which neither Jesus nor His apostles ever established, is a group that modern Christianity describes as being comprised of people who have received Jesus by faith and are forgiven of their sins...but they do not live committedly to Him. These people presumably have a valid expectation of eternal life because they have professed Jesus as Lord. Yet, in spite of what Jesus requires of all His followers, these people can live for themselves and what this present world offers. They show little to no commitments, sacrifices, zeal or devotion to the King. Presumably, these people will enter in glory, but they will have no rewards because they chose not to live for the King, avoided carrying their crosses and wasted their lives. This second group of Christians is never validated by Jesus. In fact, what He teaches in this chapter completely denies the possibility of this imaginary second group of Christians existing.

B. What Jesus requires (33b) - “...who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

We must let the words of the King stand in the manner with which He originally spoke them. He prohibited the possibility of any of us from considering ourselves to be His followers if we do not live a life of renouncing our ownership of our possessions. When Jesus uses the word translated into our English word *renounce*, He was calling us to *apostatize* our possessions. We are to renounce the gospel of our materialistic culture, we are to blaspheme the gods of this age, and we are to commit heresy against the false beliefs of the self-promoting spirit of this age. As far as the unregenerate world is

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concerned, Christians are to be viewed as wholly incompatible with the beliefs, pursuits and priorities of the culture around them. We are called to renounce all of it and dethrone it in our hearts as long as we follow Jesus.

C. What Jesus cautions (34-35) - “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Knowing that what He has preached to the large crowd that day would be difficult for them to receive, Jesus releases that Kingdom blessing that empowers us to hear with spiritual ears. The flesh cannot comprehend nor receive this calling from the King. Religion will never result in this kind of commitment that Jesus requires. We must hear with the ears of faith and respond with a fully surrendered heart. We are not our own. We are not our own. *We are not our own.* Only those whose understanding has been quickened by the Holy Spirit can receive this summons. Jesus also mentions here, of all things, salt. In Jesus’ day, salt that had lost its flavor was eventually poured out on the slick stones of the streets of the cities to provide traction when the paths were wet. Salt was meant to add flavor to food, but that salinity would weaken over time and eventually the salt completely lost its flavor. At that point, it was good for nothing but to be thrown away to be trampled under the feet of those who walked on the streets. Jesus warns us that many people’s commitments to Him will find that same destiny. These people start out in robust, flavorful commitments to Jesus. Over time, their intensity is diluted though various factors. Eventually, what began as robust and committed ends up being worth nothing. It was never real. A radical King requires radical commitment from those whom He has redeemed. Nothing less should be considered a valid representation of Christianity. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

5PM Notes Below

“Kingdom Weeds” Matthew 13:24-30 Sunday PM 11/25/18

One of the challenges for us to live with a primary awareness of being citizens of God’s Kingdom is the troubling reminder that there is so much of the kingdom of this world bombarding our senses every single day. We can become more convinced of the evil, pain, division, injustice and vices of the temporary earthly realm than we are the righteousness, love, power and triumph of the coming Kingdom. Both realities exist in this present age. If God’s Kingdom is eternal and supreme, why do we sometimes discern less evidence of His kingdom than we do of the lesser kingdoms of the world, the flesh and the devil? When will God rid the cosmos of evil people and their evil deeds? Even in the visible Church there exists so much that seems incompatible with the Kingdom of God - when will dead religion, hypocrisy and counterfeit believers be dealt with? Jesus spoke to all of these things 2,000 years ago as He preached on the Mount of Olives. He tells us how and when all that does not belong in God’s paradise will be forever removed. Until then, we must learn to discern the difference between the wheat and the weeds in the Kingdom.

I. Jesus Reveals a Troubling Reality (24-26)

A. Pure planting (24) - “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.”

B. Problematic planting (25b) - “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds ...”

C. Precise planting (25c) - “...among the wheat and went away.”

D. Poisonous planting (26) - “So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.”

Jesus here shares another parable with those whose hearts are hungry to understand the mysteries concerning the Kingdom of God. He compares the kingdom of God to a landowner’s field. Into the soil of that field, the wise landowner has made sure that good seed is planted. Yet, there is a rival

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landowner who wants the crops of the good landowner to fail. He does not desire that good man to reap a bountiful harvest. While the good landowner's employees were asleep, the enemy snuck into the field and intentionally placed bad seed among the good seed. He has contaminated the field with his intentional sabotage. As the growing season moved forward, the good seed became visible wheat. Sadly, alongside the wheat there also arose the weeds (likely bearded darnel) alongside the wheat. These two growing forms of produce existed side by side within the same field which was owned by the good man.

II. Jesus Details A Confusing Consequence (27-30)

A. The doubt of the servants (27) - “And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’”

B. The declaration to the servants (28a) - “He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this....’”

C. The desire of the servants (28b) – “Then do you want us to go and gather them?”

D. The denying of the servants (29) - “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.”

E. The duty of the servants (30) - “Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

As the parable continues, a conversation between the good landowner and his employees is revealed. There came the time when the employees discerned that, alongside the healthy wheat, some unprofitable weeds had grown. Their immediate question was whether or not the good landowner had made a mistake. They were confused because they knew that their employer was a wise man who would never sabotage his own field. Yet, there was clear evidence that bad seed had also been planted. The landowner immediately discerned that his enemy had snuck in and intentionally planted bad seed that produced plants that initially looked like the

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healthy wheat. Now that time had passed, the experienced employees were able to see that the field contained quite a bit of bad seed that had produced counterfeit crops. Their immediate desire was to go and intentionally uproot every one of those plants which came from the enemy's seed. The wise landowner forbids them from doing so because he knew that some level of harm would likely happen to the authentic, healthy crops which he had planted. He instructed his employees to allow both the good and the bad to exist alongside one another until the end of the harvest season. At that point, the entire field would be harvested and good plants that he seeded would be separated from the weeds that the enemy seeded. Those who were employed as reapers would be tasked with burning all of the counterfeit plants that the enemy had placed in the field.

III. Jesus Imparts an Instructive Prophecy (36-43)

Matthew 13:36 - "Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."

A. We must acknowledge what is clear (36-38a) - "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom."

At the request of His disciples, Jesus explains this parable. He identifies Himself as the good landowner. The field in the parable pictures the entire planet. The good seed planted represents all of the elect of God who have entered into the Kingdom. The good seed in this parable is not the word of God as in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23. In this parable, Jesus uses the seed to represent saved people living in the world.

B. We must own what is difficult (38b-39a) - "...the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil..."

Now, Jesus reveals that the weeds represent human beings that belong to Satan, the evil one. Jesus prophesied from the beginning that there would be counterfeits, impostors and hypocrites that live alongside the true children of the Kingdom. These are unsaved people who, for a time, may be indistinguishable from true Christians. They belong to the enemy and are dispersed all throughout the field of this world. Clearly, Jesus is preparing His disciples and all other believers to expect this reality to continue to exist. The people of God

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and the people who belong to the enemy will occupy the planet side by side. Because of this, it is also reasonable to expect that some of these “bad seeds” will end up in the visible church, right next to those who are genuinely converted. For a time, each group will appear the same as the other.

C. We must proclaim what is coming (39b-42) - “The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This is a very intense teaching from the King. Jesus prophesies that, at the determined end of the present age, God’s reapers, the appointed angels, will be sent to the planet to gather all of the people who were not born of the good seed of God. Jesus describes these people as sinful law-breakers who will be sent to the fiery furnace of judgment. Just as the reapers in the parable were instructed to allow the true wheat and false weeds to grow up together until the end of the harvest, God allows believers and unbelievers to occupy His planet until the appointed time. Equally, as the employees in the parable were not to spend their time trying to pick out all the weeds from the field, the true Church is not to devote its resources to uproot every potential unbeliever from the landscape of the planet. This parable does not allow for Christians to adopt as their mission an eradication of unbelievers. We combat bad seed with the cultivation of the good seed of the Gospel. God reserves for Himself the process of the full and final extermination of unbelievers from existence. He will not fail to accomplish this task. The time in between now and then is an opportunity of grace for people to repent and believe. The day of this offer will come to an end, and that is when God will bring in the final harvest, separating the good from the evil.

D. We must wait for Kingdom-climax (43) - “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

Perhaps the key word in this verse is the word THEN. The full revelation of the Kingdom and its true citizens will then, and only then, be made known. We, the righteous ones of God, will then

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reflect an undiluted glory. There will be no shadow or dimness in the eternal state of the Kingdom of God. It will be clear that all the evil that was once allowed to emerge alongside the righteous has then, and only then, been exterminated. Until then, Jesus informs everyone with ears to hear that we should not be surprised at the presence of evil. This reality does not undermine the purpose of God. The presence of evil and injustice, along with those who perpetrate these things, will be eradicated. Hypocrisy in the church, heresy in the pulpits and bad religious seed will be allowed by God to be present until the end of the age. Rest assured, however, that Jesus has promised that the final harvest will reveal what was planted by Him and what was planted by the enemy. Until then, we patiently abide in faith and obedience.