July 30, 2023 WEAVING THE FUTURE

The gospel reading for this Sunday is St. Matthew 13:31 - 33, 44 - 52, we see five parables nestled together in quick succession in this reading: mustard seeds, leaven, a field full of treasure, a merchant going after fine Pearl of great value and casting a net to catch fish. All these parables speak of the nature of the kingdom of heaven. But in each parable, we see a critical reversal that shifts the perspective from an old view to new thoughts.

When the kingdom of God is compared to a mustard seed, certainly there is a reversal of what size the kingdom should be, but further Jesus speaks of birds that can nest when the bush grows large. The kingdom of heaven is like the mustard seed, and it grows into a tree. The kingdom of heaven starts from the smallest beginnings, but no man knows where it will end. This parable of the mustard seed tells us that the kingdom of heaven begins very small but in the end many nations will be gathered within it.

Jesus speaks of another parable coming into the homes of ordinary people, he comes into the kitchen. In the time of Jesus bread was baked at home. Three measures of meal for a large family. Leaven was a little piece of dough kept over from a previous baking, which had fermented. The point in this parable is the transforming power of leaven. Leaven changed the character of a whole baking. The introduction of leaven causes a transformation in the dough and the coming of the kingdom causes a transformation in life.

In the four Gospels, we find that while Jesus mentions the church three times, He mentions the kingdom over 80 times. The church and the kingdom are connected, but there’s a difference between the two. And it’s important for us to understand how the church and the kingdom are related. The relationship, simply stated, is this: The Kingdom refers to God’s rule and reign; and the church exists to demonstrate what life is like lived under that rule and reign.

Once a scholar said, “Too many believers practice “churchianity” rather than Christianity”. While Christ calls us to be committed to His church, the reason for this is so that we might become a kingdom people, not just a church people!

Church people – can’t see past church-bound categories for ministry (i.e., usher, greeter, children’s worker, inviter-of-lost-friends, etc.). Church people: See the Gospel in terms of good news about the afterlife (you know you’re going to heaven after you die). Church people understand discipleship as growing in personal knowledge of God’s Word.

Kingdom people – have Kingdom vision to think/dream/act/serve in the neighborhood, workplace, and community. Kingdom people – see the Gospel in terms of good news about Kingdom life (it’s about life with God, both now and forever). Kingdom people – understand discipleship as growing in personal knowledge of God through His Word.

Today we have mostly apostate churches ... made up of people who have turned away from the fundamentals of the faith. Constant diligence must be given to keep the church true to the Word of God and its teachings. Just as God’s Word predicts, people in these last days turn away their ears from the truth and are turned to fables. Did you know that whatever you want to believe, there’s a group in town that will accommodate you?

The historical development of the church of God would be one of humble beginnings. However, this parable contains more than this important truth. Hidden within it is a warning about the perversion of the church's method of growth and of satanic attacks upon it. This parable is an analogy, and as with all analogies, the symbolism is not exact but similar.

Therefore, the symbolism of the Kingdom of God being linked to a mustard seed is not identical, yet it explains a particular aspect of the process that the church goes through in preparing for God's Kingdom. If you like to learn more about the Kingdom of God, please join us in our worship on Sundays at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

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