

## The Kingdom of Heaven is Like?

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*A group of guys took a trip of a lifetime to France. While there they decided to attend Mass in a small town, even though none of them understood French. They managed to stand, kneel, and sit when the rest of the congregation did, so it wouldn't be obvious they were tourists. At one point, the priest spoke and the man sitting next to them stood up, so they got up too. The entire congregation broke into hearty laughter.*

*After the service they approached the priest, who spoke English, and asked him what had been so funny. The priest said he had announced a birth in the parish and asked the father to stand up.*

There is no doubt that these men were listening, but they did not have the capacity to hear.

Jesus said: *“Anyone with ears should listen and understand.”*

### **Pray**

Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of Heaven” and “kingdom of God” over 50 times in his Gospel. This phrase was used to grab the Jewish readers attention because they were looking so earnestly for the kingdom.

But not only for them because there are serious messages for us also.

For example,

- Matthew talks about how the people who want to be part of the kingdom need to start by repenting (turning away from the king of this world) and turn to the King of creation.
- He talks about the attitude you need to have to be part of the kingdom,
- And he talks about the benefits of being part of the kingdom like no longer having to worry about anything because your king is the creator who ultimately is in control of all creation.
- He talks about how if you want to be part of the kingdom you need to **seek it first** above all other things. It should be our #1 priority.
- And those in the kingdom do the Father's will and work.

Then we get to chapters 11 and 12 and an interesting transitions takes place. Matthew begins to give us example of how people are reacting to the message of the kingdom coming from Jesus the Messiah.

The reaction comes from everyone and are all a bit different because the message is both “good” news and “bad” news – it's a message of salvation or judgment. It all depends on the condition of your heart.

1. 11:1-19 John the Baptist send his disciples to question Jesus and see if he is the one. John was expecting Jesus a different type of Messiah. Jesus' response is from messianic passages from Isaiah.

2. 11:20-24 Jesus condemns the reaction of the cities he has been preaching and doing miracles in for months. They have rejected him and only want to see a show.
3. 11:25-30 The wise and learned have rejected Jesus while the weak and poor have embraced Him.
4. 12:1-14 The religious establishment – the Pharisees and teachers of the Law have rejected Jesus while plotting to kill him because he is not the type of messiah they want.
5. 12:15-21 The Pharisees push their rejection by attempting to cast doubt on where his supernatural abilities come from.
6. 12:38 And after all this the Pharisees demand that Jesus show them a miraculous sign.
7. 12:46-50 Even his mother and brother are caught up in the doubt as they come to Him to try to talk to him.

So, here's an interesting transition, Jesus now reacts to the reaction of the people. Because of their reaction Jesus now begins to speak in parables beginning with the parable of the soils.

The disciples question Jesus as to why he is now speaking in parables and Jesus response is basically that the people are not interested in the message. They just hear blabb blabb blabb.

**13:16** *“But blessed are your eyes because they see, and blessed are your ears because they hear.”* This is all about the desire of our hearts.

Jesus is calling us out in these parables and challenging us to see if we are listening. It's all about your desire to **listen and understand** what Jesus is saying.

**Read:** Matthew 13:24-30

Three question in this parable asked by the servants of the farmer.

1. Didn't you sow good seed in the field?
2. Where did the weeds come from?
3. Do you want us to go and pull them up?

**Read:** Matthew 13:36-43

Jesus is the farmer, we are his servants and seeds, the weeds are evil sown by the enemy of God.

Simple right?

Not quite.

Jesus, acting on behalf of God, created the world and planted two good seeds in fertile soil. Adam and Eve in the garden.

Jesus says that “while everyone was sleeping the enemy came and sowed weeds”. Adam and Eve were focused on their own interests (i.e. sleeping) and the serpent came and created doubt in their minds.

Leap forward thousands of years and Jesus comes bring news of a new kingdom to replace the old corrupted one.

The Jewish people were expecting a Messiah that would remove the old kingdom and replace it with a new Godly one, but this is not what God had in mind. Thus, all the negative responses to Jesus when he didn't perform like they expected.

The servants ask a logical and key question: *“Do you want us to go and pull them up?”*

The farmer tells them “no, you may root up the wheat with them.”

**Google a picture of “darnel” and wheat.**

The word for “weeds” is an illusion to a plant called darnel. This plant is in the same family as wheat but produces a useless and toxic seed.

They look alike growing and also early on in the head formation.

So, the farmer says no because the servants don't have the capacity to distinguish between the good plant and the bad one. Only the harvesters have that ability and that is at harvest.

Jesus did not come to replace the old kingdom. He came to slowly introduce the new kingdom. As it overlaps the old it begins a transformation process that allows people become fully committed to the true King of the Kingdom.

But that means we have to live among the weeds. Absolutely and there's a purpose in that.

Jesus states in the parable that it is not our job to pull up the weeds because we do not have the capacity to distinguish between the wheat and the weeds. Imagine if we began to pull up weeds – do you see the disaster that would happen. And it has happened many time in human history where Christians took it into their own hand and began to pull up weeds harming the good and the evil in the process.

We were never given that job!

Our job is to let the wheat grow and God will take care of the weeds.

If we listen and understand what Christ is saying, then we understand we are the seeds and the servants. It's our responsibility to grow as the wheat and spread the message of the kingdom doing the will of the King.

Our mission is to live in communities that are forgiving, generous, and sharing the good news all the while living among the weeds. It is not our job to root out the weeds – that is God's job.

- So, what about the weeds, the evil?
  - Paul tells us in Romans 13:1-2 that God has established institutions to keep evil at bay. They are the governments of the world and some do better than others at this job.

We as Jesus followers are to be about growing the wheat and not trying to be the **weed police**.

It's not easy to grow among the weeds but that struggle cause us to rely on Jesus and God more and more as we do the work of the King of the Kingdom.

So, that parable gives us hope and assurance as we work to grow the wheat that there is a plan for evil and it will be dwelt with one way or another.

Lastly, good and evil are a lot more complex and intertwined in this world than we would think. For example, look at our own lives. We are a mixture of good and evil.

- How do we deal with that?

Focus on growing your wheat and God will slowly begin to deal with the weeds in your life.

Don't loose hope, we have an awesome God who know how to encourage you to grow. But, we must stay focused and not be "Weed Police"

We grow through studying His Word and committing ourselves to communication to Him in prayer. God will take care of the rest.

Jesus states at the end of the explanation "*he who has ears, let him hear.*"

I hope we want to hear our Lord! I hope you will focus on growing and flourishing! **Amen**