

Week 11 – Parables of the Present Kingdom – Part I (Review)

Day 1: The Present Kingdom

Read Matthew 13:24-43, Mark 4:26-32, Luke 13:18-21

1. What did you learn from the teaching last night (if you didn't hear the message, listen to it online at trinitygrace.org)?

2. Each parable, in their own way, is Jesus' defense of his proclamation of the reality of the present kingdom; that the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, especially in the prophets, had begun with Jesus' words and actions. In general, what were Jesus' audience's expectations of the kingdom of God?

3. In general, how was Jesus trying to change those expectations through these parables? What was he saying about the reality of the present kingdom?

Day 2: The Growing Seed

Read Mark 4:26-29

“Jesus' ministry has inaugurated a sequence of action leading to the fullness of God's kingdom just as surely as sowing sets in play a spontaneous process leading to harvest.”

Klyne Snodgrass on the parable of the Growing Seed
Stories With Intent

1. The question Jesus is answering is, “Why do things appear as they do if the kingdom is indeed present?” With this parable, what is Jesus' answer?

Note: It is tempting to try to identify who the man represents in this parable, however this leads to multiple difficulties. It is probably best to not make an allegorical connection to the man and view this parable with the understanding that he stands for no one.

2. The existence of the present kingdom is the focus of this parable. However, there are a couple of secondary points that contain implications. One of these implications comes from the fact that the man does not know how the seed grows. What does this imply? What causes it to grow? What is Jesus teaching with this?
3. What is the implication of the harvest at the end?

Day 3: The Wheat and the Weeds

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 26-43

1. The notes for this week describe two interpretive views of the subject of this parable: one is the church and the other the world. How are these two views similar? How are they different and how significant are their differences?
2. Through this parable, what is the reason Jesus gives for which evil is still in the world even though the kingdom is present?
3. There is current heightened controversy about the orthodox teaching and belief in hell. How does the interpretation of the parable, which was given only to the disciples and brings greater emphasis on final judgement, support the orthodox view that hell does in fact exist and those not of the kingdom will suffer there?

Day 4: The Mustard Seed and The Leaven

Read Matthew 13:31-33, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-21

1. How do these parables show that the kingdom's beginning is small and seems insignificant and unimpressive, but in the end, in its full revelation, it will grow very large and penetrate the whole world?
2. How is the full revelation of the kingdom of God, the end that we all long for, still, in some sense, present in the beginning in Jesus Christ? What things did Jesus say and do in his ministry that revealed aspects of the future, consummated kingdom?

Day 5: The “Already” and the “Not Yet”

Read John 5:19-29

1. Often overlooked in these parables are Jesus' eschatological (i.e. end-times) views. Jesus expects two stages of the kingdom, the current stage of sowing and growth with some unknown length of time until the final stage of harvest, where the end-time appearance of the kingdom comes in fullness and judgement. What in these parables reveal this understanding?
2. How does this two-stage view coincide with an “already” and “not yet” understanding?
3. Think about this timeline: when Christ told these parables there were just a couple hundred believers (if that); when the gospels were written shortly after, the church had already grown to thousands; and now there are millions and millions of believers. First, think of the encouragement the Gospel authors had when writing down these parables, knowing that the growth of the kingdom was already true for their cities. And now, even more so, think of the encouragement we have in the explosion of the growth of the kingdom. Write down any thoughts you might have about this.