

Blessed Is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

Introduction

The Text

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

¹⁸ He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

²⁰ And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

²² He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴ "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸ In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Luke 13:10–35)

- A. Just to get straight into it: I'm going to take these 26 verses here and divide them under three headings: (1) We Resist; (2) We Miss; and (3) We Bless.

(1) We Resist (vv. 10-21)

“Therefore”

- A. This first point will largely be review of last week. I’m doing this here again simply because I think the remaining points all rely on this and, in many ways, flow out from it.
- B. Last week, we looked at [vv. 10-21](#) and those two parables there in [vv. 18-21](#) in particular. If you were here, you may recall, I based my entire sermon on the presence of a single word there in [v. 18](#): “therefore” — “He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?” And then He goes on to give the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven.
 - 1. But with that word “therefore” I saw that Luke was connecting the scene in the synagogue with these two parables. Jesus tells these parables in response to what just went down in that synagogue.
- C. And this led to the discussion concerning unmet expectations. Because I think that is the nub of the issue Jesus is dealing with here. The Jewish leaders, like this ruler of the synagogue, expected the Messiah to be quite different—to come in and bring them to a place of worldly power and prestige and authority and things.
 - 1. But Jesus has not measured up. There is this gap that has formed between their expectations of what the Messiah would be and do and what He is really here doing.
 - a. So Jesus speaks these parables into this widening gap in hopes of helping them (and us) understand how the kingdom of God really works, what the Messiah is really all about, and what we, therefore, should expect. His aim is to help us bridge the gap and truly receive and enter this kingdom of God.

Three Things

- A. There were three things I said these two parables brought out for us about the nature of the kingdom of God and I would like to review them with you here briefly.
- B. The first was this idea that the kingdom is organic—that, rather than arriving in some sort of cataclysmic way, it begins slowly and develops over time into its fullest expression.
 - 1. This is particularly seen in the image of the seed that slowly becomes a tree. But we gather the same from the idea of the leaven, where a pinch of it slowly, at times inconspicuously, permeates the whole lump of dough. People might look at Jesus and they might not think much of Him, but truly the kingdom is on the move.
- C. The second piece we brought out from these parables is that they show us the kingdom of God is fundamentally internal.
 - 1. That’s the idea especially with the leaven, where it is hidden inside the flour. The kingdom of God is first an invisible, internal thing. It moves first on the hearts of men and women and only then expresses itself externally.

D. The third idea, you may remember, is that the kingdom of God is shown here to be universal. In other words, it's going to spread beyond Palestine to encompass even the whole world.

1. The mustard seed becomes a tree “and the birds of the air made nests in its branches” (v. 19). The pinch of leaven permeates the 50 pounds of flour there producing bread for upwards of 100 people. These are striking images of the kingdom's vast expansion. It will not just be for the Jew but for all the nations.

The Fork in the Road

A. Now, this, according to Jesus is what we are to expect. This is His attempt to help us bridge the gap between what we think the kingdom of God should be like and what it truly is like.

1. And what we find in these moments (and you may find it even in your own life right now) is that, when once we see this, we've come to a fork in the road.
 - a. When faced with what the kingdom of God is really like we can either admit that our expectations were wrong, open ourselves up to God, let Him correct and realign us, let Him deal with any sin that's gotten us off, let Him rearrange any of our plans and misplaced desires and hopes;
 - b. or we can double-down on our interpretation of things, resist His attempts to help, demand that things go as we expected and want them to go, reject the clear words of God, grow increasingly out of touch with reality as God defines it, and ultimately end up missing His kingdom as it goes on by without us.

B. The ruler in the synagogue back in our text has come to this fork in the road. Jesus is telling Him what the kingdom of God is really like. It's slow-going and a bit unimpressive at first. It's internal, He's after my heart. And it's not just for the Jew, it's for the world. “That's not what I expected. That's not what I want.”

1. For this ruler in the synagogue to get on board with Jesus, it would mean he'd have to admit he's been wrong. He'd have to see himself as a sinner in need of help. He'd have to let go of his plans for worldly power, prestige, and authority. And he will not do it! “You're not my Messiah!”
 - a. So he's going to miss it. The kingdom of God, like a train, has pulled into the station, but he would not get on board. The doors closed and the train went right on by . . . without him!

(2) We Miss (vv. 22-30)

Along All Three Lines

A. And this leads us to vv. 22-30, and my second point: We Miss. Hopefully, now you'll see why I spent time reviewing some of the main ideas from last week's sermon. As we come to these next verses, I was quite surprised to see the same basic ideas simply fleshed out and taken further.

1. In fact, what we see here, I think, is that, as people in Israel push back on what Jesus is revealing of the kingdom, they will miss it along all three of those lines brought out in the two parables. Let me show you what I mean.

(1) Organic (vv. 22-23)

- A. First we see that they miss the organic nature of it. That I think is what's brought out there in this man's question in v. 23: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"
- B. Now, there are a few reasons why this man might have had this question on his mind. But, in light of the context in this gospel, and how Luke tells this story immediately after the two parables here, I'm inclined to think that this man is asking the question in view of how unimpressive Jesus' whole Messianic campaign really is up to this point.
 1. I think, therefore, His question is something along the lines of: "Is this it? Is this the number of people who are going to buy into this? You have some fishermen, some tax collectors, some social outcasts. Where are the religious elite, the upper echelon, the powerful? Will those who are saved be few?"
 - a. In other words, he sees the seed, but he hasn't yet caught on that this is growing into a tree. It seems so small and somewhat hopeless.
- C. And I do wonder how many of you would feel similarly about the way God is working, or not, in your own life right now. You're looking for numbers, for metrics, for some indication of significant advancement—whether in your growth of character or in your ministry—and you get discouraged. And you wonder if, perhaps, anything meaningful is happening at all.
 1. But if we humble ourselves, if we release our ideas of things to Him, He will show us how, even in the mundane and seemingly insignificant stuff, His kingdom is on the move.

(2) Internal (vv. 24-27)

- A. Now, for this man, Jesus doesn't not address his concern with numbers directly. Instead, He focuses in on what a man must in fact do, or be, to be one those who are saved. And with this we shift towards the idea that the kingdom of God is fundamentally internal.
 1. Let's read these haunting verses once more and I'll show you what I mean: " ²⁴ Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'" (vv. 24-27).
- B. Now, why do I say that here we see those in Israel missing the internal nature of the kingdom? Well, did you catch it?

1. These people are standing outside the closed door knocking. They think that a great mistake has been made. Surely they are on the guest list. They have followed the law of God down to its most minute detail. They are of the line of Abraham. The covenants, the promises, are theirs . . . aren't they? Externally, they have everything we would think a person might need to get into heaven.
- C. Ah, but they are lacking one thing, and it is the most fundamental thing of all. Namely, a relationship—a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus the Christ.
1. Two times Jesus says it, in v. 25 and in v. 26: “I do not know where you come from.” Oh, what horrifying words are these?! I hope none in this room ever hear such a thing from the mouth of Jesus. But you see it now, don't you?
 - a. “I don't care if you have the external stuff—the conformity to the law, the religious ritual, the Jewish ethnicity, I don't care that you ate and drank in My presence or listened as I taught in the streets, all I care about is where your heart is in relation to all that, in relation to Me. Did you do receive Me?! Or was it all just a religious game to get people to think better of you or maybe just for you to feel a bit better about yourself.”
 - i. No! The kingdom of God is fundamentally internal. It is the transformation of heart that happens because of vital relationship with Jesus Christ.
- D. And again we have to ask ourselves where we are with this? Are we missing this? Are we just playing the external religious game, or have we truly met with Jesus and been changed by His grace and love? Have we put ourselves in His hands, admitted our need for forgiveness and redirection. Do we know Him? Or, perhaps better put, does He know us?

(3) Universal (vv. 28-30)

- A. Now, as we come to vv. 28-30 of our text, we see that they miss the universal nature of this kingdom as well: ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”
- B. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. These are the patriarchs in Israel. To each one of them, God reiterated His covenant and promise—that the nation that came from them would be blessed by Him so that they might ultimately mediate that blessing to the nations, to all the families of the earth. That's where the kingdom of God has always been going. From Israel . . . to the nations.
1. But somewhere along the way, so many in Israel lost sight of it. They got the us vs. them mentality. Israel against the Gentiles rather than Israel for the Gentiles. And, because of this, their chairs are pulled from the table, even as the Gentiles, from the east and west and the north and the south, are all coming in.

How Does This Happen?

- A. Now, there is another question I feel we must pause and ask at this point. (And though this is perhaps a parenthesis, it may very well be the most important part of this sermon.) If you've noticed, Jesus is here speaking of people that think they are in the kingdom of God. And yet they aren't.
1. And what I want to know in particular is: How does such a thing happen? How do you get a person who knocks on the door to heaven, as it were, fully assured that they belong there, when in reality Jesus doesn't know them? How do you get people who think they belong around the table, and yet Jesus has pulled their chair?
- B. While I certainly cannot attempt a full answer on this point, I will at least speak to one way I think this sort of thing happens. It's happening back there in that scene in the synagogue. I mentioned it last week, I suppose, but I didn't get to develop it then.
1. You see, this man is confronted with the realities of the kingdom in Jesus, and because it's not what he expected, there's that fork in the road. "Do I humble myself and open up to Jesus' explanation of the kingdom, or do I double-down on my interpretation of things and keep demanding what I want?"
 - a. Well, of course we know what he does, but here's what I want you to see. When this man rejects Jesus and His ministry, he does not say to himself: "Well I guess I'm rejecting God and His kingdom as well. But, oh well, I don't care."
 - i. No. He's not that honest. It's more subtle and sinister than that. He twists Scripture, the very words of God, to support His rejection of the Son of God. He refers to the Sabbath as a day of rest and says, "Ah, clearly Jesus did work in healing that woman. You see, surely He must not be the Messiah. He has such little regard for God's law." Do you see?
 - (1) This man twists the Scriptures to support His own desires. And in so doing he continues to convince himself that he is on God's team even when truly he just removed himself from it! That's the subtlety of it. That's the irony of it. That's how you end up knocking on the door, sure that you belong, when truly you have no place with God at all.
- C. Take note, brothers and sisters, we are so very prone to do the same thing. We twist the facts to support what we want. Surely, you have seen this?
1. I see it every day with my son. It's actually quite cute at this stage, but someday soon it won't be so cute. So his favorite thing to do is press the Roomba—there's this button on it and it turns on and starts robot-ing it's way around the house. He loves to watch it go. We let him press it every day after his nap. But he's asking to press it pretty much all day long. And here's what he'll do. He'll come up and ask: "Daddy, press-a the Roomba? Press-a the Roomba, Daddy?" And, now catch this, if I'm not careful in how I respond, he'll take it and twist it to what he wants. He'll grab a hold of the word or two he wants to hear and neglect

the rest. “Daddy, press-a the Roomba?” “Oh, buddy, I’m not sure this is the right time. I think . . .” “Sure?! Sure!” And he’s off. He’s thinking he’s cool with me. Daddy said, “Sure” right? Yeah, I said: “I’m not sure it’s the right time.” But he heard what he wanted and off he went.

D. And we do the same thing with the Scriptures. When the word of God confronts us, when there’s a gap between what we expected or wanted and what God is really doing, we tend to still double-down and twist things to support our agenda.

1. We cherry-pick a few verses here or there that support our cause and we’re off reassuring ourselves that God is on our side.

E. Sadly, the whole history of Christianity is riddled with this sort of thing.

1. I mentioned last week briefly the Crusades. These guys are imagining that Jesus is with them as they are taking back the Holy Land and converting by the sword and things. There’s a thirst for power, and with a few verses in their back pocket they rush headlong into campaigns that will forever be a blemish on the bride of Christ and bring dishonor to His name.
2. But we see the same thing with slavery. Oh we love the story of William Wilberforce and how his biblical convictions and things led him to champion the cause of the abolitionist movement in Great Britain. But there were many others using the Bible for precisely the opposite ends. “Well, the Bible mentions slavery. So surely God is fine with this.”
3. And, of course, we could talk about how the Bible has been used by men to support their oppression of women. You put [Eph 5:22](#) in the hands of a carnal man, and all manner of evil can be justified in the name of the Lord: “[Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.](#)” And they conveniently overlook that verse that immediately follows (which I mentioned just last week): “[Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her](#)” (v. 25). You tell me, which call sounds more demanding: To submit to the husband or to sacrifice (to die) for the wife? Which one goes lower? And yet men use [v. 22](#) to get the upper hand. It’s embarrassing. It’s a frightening thing.

How Do We Prevent It?

A. Now, I suppose, the next question we must ask on this is: How do we prevent it? That’s, perhaps, an even tougher question. But I do think it begins with surrender—laying down our desires. I suppose it comes back to what we’ve been saying about being willing to own up to our sins and release our plans.

1. Our desires are powerful engines for deception. When we want something bad enough we will twist and distort reality to get it. That’s the place to war.
- B. This is actually the one thing the disciples had going for them. They didn’t have all the knowledge or perfect ethics. For goodness sake, we read them stumbling through the entirety of the gospel. We wonder why Jesus would ever put up with such fools.

1. But here's what they did have: surrender, an openness to the teaching and correction and re-shaping of Christ. At the end of the day, though they might push back on this or that point, they were willing to be clay in His hand. They left everything to follow Him.
- C. Do you have that? Are you there right now? This is why Jesus will say such radical things like: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Everything has to be laid down on the table or this thing can't even begin.
1. If we start there, and we open ourselves to Jesus and His word like that, well then I think we are making some steps towards avoiding this troubling thing we see here.
- D. So the image, then, would be, are you taking God and His word in your hand like clay and trying to manipulate Him to be and say what you want? Or are you putting yourself into His hands and willing to let Him have His way with you? That's the essential question.
1. We see how far these leaders in Israel are willing to go to get what they want. They will not just take Jesus up in their hands to try to manipulate Him, they will take Him up in their hands to kill Him. At that's what we see now as we turn to vv. 31-35.

(3) We Bless (vv. 31-35)

Journeying toward Jerusalem

- A. In v. 31 some Pharisees come and inform Him that Herod wants to kill Him. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to talk about His death. And as He does so, something profound begins to surface.
1. Yes it is true. People will so resist and reject Him that they will go so far as to murder Him. But, we get the sense that Jesus is no helpless victim here. What I mean is: We get the sense that these men, as wicked and numerous as they are, are not ultimately taking His life from Him . . . He is laying it down of His own accord . . . for them.
- B. This was hinted at back up in v. 22. I wonder if you caught it: He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.
1. This is Luke's way of reminding us of what was set in motion back in Luke 9 where Jesus first discloses to His disciples that He is going to be killed by the leaders in Jerusalem and rise again on the third day. And Luke writes this in v. 51: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."
- C. So here Jesus is still with His face set towards Jerusalem, journeying toward Jerusalem. Even as He's warning Israel about the very real possibility of being cast out from the kingdom of God, He Himself is willingly heading towards the cross where He will be cast out for us.
- D. I mean, think of it! All the frightening judgment that this text has been describing. Is this not precisely the sort of thing Jesus experiences on the cross on our behalf?

1. As He hung nailed there, the door to the kingdom of God is being slammed in His face. It's His kingdom, He's the King, and yet He is being cast out from it, suffering in what we deserve in our place.
2. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That's the Son knocking and knocking, saying in effect: "I ate and drank in your presence God, I listened and obeyed all that you've taught. Father, open to Me!" But, His Father doesn't open. Instead, if there were a word He would receive from God in those moments it would be something like this: "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, you worker of evil." "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).
3. The Son's chair is pulled from the table. The door is slammed in His face. And He is cast into outer darkness. The weeping and the gnashing. He takes them. He experiences them. And He undergoes all of this so that we who have resisted and pushed against Him for so long might now, through Him, find our way back in.

A House Forsaken and a Glimmer of Hope

- A. But we have to humble ourselves, repent, and receive Him. And, sadly, it does seem that many in Israel at this point will reject Him. As Jesus says in v. 35a: "Behold, your house is forsaken."
- B. But . . . amazing, surprisingly, our text ends with a glimmer of hope for Israel (and us really). Did you catch it? We've talked about how we resist the Lord, how we run the risk of missing His kingdom entirely.
 1. But I wonder if you saw that in the last verse of our text, Jesus talks about a day when Israel will, in fact, receive Him, praise Him, bless Him. Read back up in v. 34: "³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' (vv. 34-35).
- C. He's quoting there from [Psa 118:26](#). It's a blessing that was spoken over pilgrims upon their entrance into the holy land. The context in particular is of worshipers coming into the temple, probably at a time of religious festival, and the gates are opening to them.
 1. In light of other texts like [Luke 21:24](#) and [Rom 11:11-32](#), I'm inclined to think Jesus is referring to sometime near or at His second coming, when ethnic Israel will turn and bless Jesus as their Messiah and Savior.
 - a. Just think of it! They kill Him. And He takes that murder and makes it the means of their salvation, their homecoming.
- D. And He does the same for us. I don't know where you are this morning. I don't know whether you've been taking God up in your hands and trying to manipulate Him or whether you've put yourself in His hands and are letting Him shape and change you. But I do know this: The narrow door to this kingdom, the gates, have been opened in Christ. And God is calling you home. Perhaps today is the day you will finally say: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"