

Proclaiming Gospel of Jesus: A Greater Message

One of the most important competencies in building a strong relationship is communication. The art of communication is just that – a great art that requires practice and skill. Practicing assertive communication and active listening is a fundamental to any healthy relationship. Couples that do not learn how to verbalize their feelings and wishes, and on the other hand practice really listening to their partner by staying focused with their eyes, heart and body have not learned the skill of hearing and understanding each other.

There is a similar problem going on with Jesus and most of us. We often fail to hear and do what Jesus is telling us to do in Mark 4 - the companion version of the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. Here Jesus warns us, “*Consider carefully what you hear...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you and even more.*” Mark 4: 24. Unfortunately, many have not really heard Jesus’ message. When asked what the gospel is – people respond with many different things like – “God is love”, “Jesus saves”, “For God so loved the world...”, or “Jesus is coming very soon.” These are all very good news, but the gospel that Jesus proclaimed and taught his disciples to share was – “The kingdom of heaven is here!” The good news of Jesus was the good news of the kingdom. If we are going to share Jesus’ gospel with others we too will need to understand his message of the kingdom and learn how to share it in a way that others can understand and embrace with their whole life.

Journey Together:

- 1). Who do you know that’s a good listener?
- 2). How can you tell when someone is really listening to you?
- 3). What is more difficult – confronting others or being confronted and why?

Road Map: Read Matthew 13

- 4). Matthew 13 is about the parables of the kingdom. Which of these parables are the easiest for you to understand and why?
- 5). The disciples seem surprised that Jesus has shifted his approach to telling stories. Why has he moved from the open proclamation of the kingdom to stories about the kingdom?

6). Jesus tells 7 parables illustrating the good news of the kingdom. What do we learn from:

- The Sower
- The Weeds
- The Mustard Seed
- The Yeast in The Bread
- The Hidden Treasure
- The Pearl of Great Price
- The Net

7). What were people expecting concerning the coming of Gods kingdom? How do these parables challenge their expectations? What can we learn from Jesus about telling others about the gospel of the kingdom?

8). How would Jesus message change if he were sharing it with people today? What words would he use and how would he revise his message? How would Jesus have us explain the good news of the kingdom now?

Discipleship challenge: Jesus is challenging us to proclaim *his* gospel. Practicing the fourth competency of discipleship under Rabbi Jesus - **A Greater Message** by telling someone what you have learned about the good news of the kingdom from this study.

10). How can this group pray for you right now?

My Journey:

- 1). How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week to do *Great Things* for Him?
- 2). How has God used you to explain the message of Jesus this week?
- 3). How can this group pray for you today?

Backstory:

It stands to reason that if discipleship under rabbi Jesus is bowing to a *greater king* because of a *greater life* from above that fosters a *greater mission* through a *greater message*.

How could there be a greater message than the gospel? Only if the good news is more than just good news about our personal salvation and includes good news about God's sovereign lordship over the world. When Jesus speaks about the gospel it's almost always the gospel of the kingdom. The good news includes the end of the reign of sin and the devil, but more importantly a world in which love reigns supreme.

In Matthew 13 Jesus changes his entire method of teaching and communicating the gospel in order to get his message across. He moves from the direct approach to telling parables – stories that relate the message of the kingdom that are simple and down to earth. The kingdom of God is like...

- a farmer spreading good seed on different kinds of soil.
- a field sowed with good seed, followed by an enemy who sowed weeds right behind him that will later be separated out in the judgment.
- A mustard seed – the tiniest of seeds that becomes the largest of shrubs.
- A hidden treasure that one stumbles upon, a special pearl of infinite value that one goes in search of.
- A net that catches all kinds of fish to be sorted by angels later in the judgment.

Jesus explains some very important things about the gospel of the kingdom. The good news is being spread like a farmer sowing seed. The message of the kingdom is falling on different kinds of people and they are responding in different ways from complete rejection to full acceptance. The parable of the weeds help explain why the kingdom of God for now exists right alongside the

present evil age. When people stumble across the kingdom and recognize it for what it is, they will trade all they have for it. When others are intentionally seeking for the most important thing and find the kingdom, they willingly pay the infinite price to have it. For now, the kingdom is a collection of all kinds of people who have been brought in like fish scooped up in a net. This will all be sorted out by angels at the end of time.

In these seven stories that Jesus tells, he illustrates the message of the kingdom. It's now. It's tangled up with the old age of sin. It's both here and still yet to come. It's gathering all kinds of people.

This is good news! The kingdom has already begun! It is a life giving message that not only changes us, but is remaking the world. Right now people are being gathered into God's kingdom. There is good news now for those who are ready to receive it. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus and he is extending that authority to those who believe in him and want to join him in his mission.

This is the fourth discipleship competency of Jesus – *a greater message* that is making all things new. Our challenge is to help people realize the larger picture of salvation that includes the transformation of all things and what we can expect concerning how the kingdom of God is currently manifested in the world while we await the consummation and final establishment on earth. In this week's lesson, we echo the prayer of Jesus, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!*" (Matthew 6) "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*" (Revelation 22).