

Like a Mustard Seed

“Consider the mustard seed, a seed so tiny it can fall to the ground and lie unnoticed by several human beings and birds alike. Given time, though, the seed may sprout into a bush that overtakes every other plant in the garden, a bush so large and verdant that birds come and nest in its branches. God’s kingdom is like that. It begins so small that people scorn it and give it no chance for success. Against all odds God’s Kingdom will grow and spread throughout the world, bringing shade to the sick, the poor, the imprisoned, the unloved.”

Phillip Yancey – *The Jesus I Never Knew*

This week we begin a six-week series exploring what has been called the most important of all the themes Jesus ever spoke about – the Kingdom of God. This theme is integral to the vitality of our faith. Each day this week we will look at something Christ said about his Kingdom. May God open our hearts to learn the deeper truths of life in Christ’s Kingdom.

Monday – Incredible Opportunity

“Men and women on planet Earth have been given an incredible opportunity. Through the gift of prayer, these men and women have been invited to appropriate unseen kingdom realities and bring them to bear on earth situations. Bob Beltz – Transforming Your Prayer Life

1. Please read Matthew 6:9-13. What does Jesus say about the Kingdom of God in his model prayer?
2. How do the other parts of this prayer help you to understand what it means for God’s kingdom to come?

Making it Personal: Choose a situation in your life that concerns you. Ask God to bring his kingdom realities to bear on that situation. As you are able, pray specifically and expectantly.

Tuesday – Against all Odds

“What term shall we use to express the manifold aspects of God’s gracious dealings with the world as well as the unity of the biblical vision concerning God’s future? The Bible itself provides us with a comprehensive term for this purpose: gospel of the kingdom.” Isaac C. Rottenberg - The Promise and the Presence

1. Please read Matthew 13:31-32. What contrast is Jesus drawing in this parable about the Kingdom?
2. What truth about the Kingdom does Jesus seem to be making?
3. Against all odds, the Kingdom of God begins small and grows amazingly. How small did the Kingdom start (consider the state of Jesus’ followers shortly after his death)?

Making it Personal: Go out into a garden if you are able. Look at the plants. Consider their humble beginnings. Knowing their ability to grow well beyond their beginnings, what hope does this bring to you?

Wednesday – The Pearl of Great Price

“The sacrifice - deny yourself, take up your cross - turns out to be a shrewd investment, its outcome not remorse but joy beyond all telling.” Phillip Yancey (speaking about the Parable of the Treasure)

1. Please read Matthew 13:44-46. What do we learn about the Kingdom from these two short parables?
2. What action was required in order to secure the treasure/pearl? How does that action translate into our lives?

Making it Personal: Pray in response to what you have read and considered today. Talk to your heavenly Father about the value of his Kingdom and your participation in it. Ask him for the grace you will need to give all for the sake of his Kingdom.

Thursday – The Pearl of Great Price

“I will place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.”

David Livingstone

1. Please read Matthew 13:24-30. What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom in this parable?
2. How does this parable help us to understand the way things are at present as it relates to the Kingdom and the world we live in?
3. What does Jesus promise about the future?

Prayer Focus: Pray, asking God to give you (and his Church) the encouragement we need to see us through to the future hope we have in Christ.

Friday – Near

“Clearly the Kingdom of God operates by a set of rules different from any early kingdom’s. God’s Kingdom has no geographical boundaries, no capital city, no parliament building, no royal trappings you can see. Its followers live right among their enemies, not separated from them by a border, fence, or wall.” Phillip Yancey

1. Please read Matthew 3:2; 4:17. How similar were the messages preached by John the Baptist and Jesus?
2. What do you suppose they meant by the statement that the Kingdom was “near”? Is it still near? If so, how near?

Text Insight – Dallas Willard in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, says that the Kingdom of God is, “the God-drenched reality all around us, in which we can interact even though humanity may be unaware of it.”

3. Why is repentance necessary for involvement in the Kingdom?

Making it Personal: Using Dallas Willard’s definition of the Kingdom, in what practical ways can you interact with the Kingdom today? To begin to understand this, imagine what is involved in interacting with a person.

For the Weekend: Read Matthew 13:1-23. Consider the reasons why Jesus used parables to teach his followers about the Kingdom.