

w e e k 18: *Jesus and his coming kingdom*

Scripture to Read: Luke 17:20-37

20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, 21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

22 And he said to the disciples, “The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, ‘Look, there!’ or ‘Look, here!’ Do not go out or follow them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. 25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— 30 so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. 32 Remember Lot’s wife.

33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. 34 I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.” 37 And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

Summary of the Text

Jesus says some surprising things about his kingdom—namely, that his kingdom is at the same time subversive yet unmistakable, worldwide, sudden, and inescapable.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. –Luke 17:33

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- What other biblical references can you think of that teach the inwardness and spiritual nature of the kingdom?
- What are some of the characteristics of the kingdom of Christ in this passage?
- Is the kingdom of God a future reality to be hoped for or a present reality to experience now? Could both be true? Explain.
- In what ways do we see the kingdom of God among us and within us right here and right now? In what ways do we rightly sense that a great consummation is coming?
- How is Jesus using Noah as an example? How is Jesus using Lot and his wife as an example? What is his point?
- If the “days of the Son of Man” [v.26] refer to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 rather than his Second Coming in glory, then what kind of warning is Jesus giving?
- In what ways is Jesus calling you to “lose your life” right now?
- How should we prepare and be ready for Christ’s return?

Thoughts worth thinking

John Piper on the mystery of the kingdom: “What is mysterious about the kingdom is that it has come partly but not fully. There are hints about this in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 53—the suffering servant). But by and large the Old Testament does not clearly separate the two comings of Christ. It sees one great day of the Lord coming when God would deal finally with sin and defeat his enemies and gather his people into a kingdom of peace and righteousness and joy and make the earth and the heavens new and glorious with the Messiah ruling forever and ever. But it didn’t make clear that this day of the Lord—the coming of the kingdom—would happen in two stages: first, with Jesus coming as a suffering servant to atone for sin, and second, with Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

“This is the mystery (the secret) of the kingdom—the arrival of the kingdom in a preliminary, small way in advance of the final consummation when all the enemies would be defeated and all sin and satanic power and sickness and suffering would be gone forever. The mystery, as George Ladd puts it, is ‘fulfillment without consummation.’ Fulfillment of the kingdom is here; but consummation of the kingdom is not. Many kingdom blessings can be experienced today; many are reserved for the consummation and the coming of Jesus.”

Kingdom confusion: “The confusion in the minds of the disciples [about the kingdom] is understandable. After all, the Old Testament has not really presented a picture of a kingdom in which the king would be present for only a short while. Jesus thus introduced a new dimension to the existing revelation. There will be a period of discipleship in which the Lord, in his human form, will be absent...The kingdom comes by the Holy Spirit taking the word about Christ into all the world, through the preaching of the disciples.” [Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to the Plan: the Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991), 208]

Left behind? “There has been a growth industry in writing books based on passages like this. ‘One will be taken, and the other left’; some have assumed that being ‘taken’ in this sense means being snatched up to heaven to be with God, leaving the others behind to survive in a frightening world from which all the true believers have been removed. That’s not what the passage means, though; it’s actually the other way round. The people who are ‘taken’ are the ones in danger; they are being taken away by hostile forces, taken away to their doom.” [Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2004), 208]

Tips for Parents with Young Children

Monday: Read Luke 17:20-21. Talk with your children about how the kingdom of God is in our midst: Jesus has come, he has died for

our sins and rose from the dead, he is changing people and making them into people who love God and keep his commandments, he hears us when we pray, etc.

Tuesday: Talk with your children about v.33. Help them understand what it means that Jesus calls us to “lose” our lives. We may have to give up things in order to worship God, teach others, care about others, and reach the world. Help your children see that this is a happy thing. We are glad to spend and be spent for God’s kingdom.

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Read the passage. Jesus is warning about a day not many years after Jesus went to heaven, when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and killed thousands of people. The Bible tells us that a day like that is coming, when the entire world as we know it will come to an end. That thought may be scary to children, but you can remind them that on that day everybody will know that God is much greater than Satan and that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings. God’s children do not need to be afraid, because Jesus has already been punished for their sins, and he is creating a new heavens and new earth for them.

Friday: Ask your children what they would like to do (e.g. read a story, pray, sing worship songs, play in the snow [God willing!], etc.) and then do that with them.

Saturday: Read a Bible story to your children, or have them read a story to you if they are old enough. Pray that Phillip and Grant will have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday. **Children’s choir is singing in the Morning Worship service. Singers need to be in the Mary Thornton Room at 10:40 am.**

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.