

What Matters Most

Matthew 13:44-52

Introduction

Imagine, if you will, a pyramid with five levels. On the first level list the five things most important to you. They can be people or things. Now, which one of those would you give up first, if you had to give up one? List the remaining four on the next level. Take away the one of those you would give up first and list the remaining three on the next level. Do this two more times and the one thing you have at the top is the most important thing in your life. It's **WHAT MATTERS MOST**. This is the one thing you would sacrifice all else to keep. That's what these first two parables are about today. What's the most important thing? Jesus says it's the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, or the KINGDOM OF GOD.

Kingdom Defined

The first thing we must do is understand just what the **kingdom** is. The Greek word here is *basileia*, which means "sovereignty", "rule", and "authority". The KINGDOM OF GOD is not a kingdom defined by geographical or political boundaries. The KINGDOM OF GOD is wherever God reigns supreme.

The Kingdom of God vs. the Kingdom of Satan

Maybe the best way to understand this is to see it alongside the kingdom of Satan. We talk about how Satan is the prince of this world, meaning that God has given him limited authority over it. This would make the world his kingdom. But there are people throughout the world who do not bow to his authority. They bow to the authority of God. These pockets of resistance to the devil are where the KINGDOM OF GOD exists. When Jesus forgives our sins and becomes our Lord, He saves us from the kingdom of the devil and places us in His kingdom.

Three Kingdoms

The Kingdom of Power

You may remember from Confirmation classes that when we talk about the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "*Thy kingdom come*", we talk about three kingdoms. The first is the **Kingdom of Power**. This is all of creation. Since God created it all and He is Supreme, He is ultimately in control and rules over all creation. Even when it seems like the devil's in control or things happen by chance, God is behind it all. He can assert His will because He is God.

The Kingdom of Grace

Next is the **Kingdom of Grace**. When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of the devil, He said, "*But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*" (**Luke 11:20**). Jesus brings us to the point of willingly accepting God's rule when He forgives our sins and *creates in us a clean heart* (**Psalm 51:10**).

The Kingdom of Glory

When Christ returns at the end of the age, He will establish His **Kingdom of Glory**. Christians who have died are there already. This is the inheritance Peter talks about in the first chapter of his first epistle, *An inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by*

God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1Peter 1:4).

The Now and the Not Yet

We don't pray for the **Kingdom of Power** to come—it's already here. The last two "kingdoms" are what we pray for in the **Lord's Prayer**. Sometimes, we refer to this as the "now and not yet" of the KINGDOM OF GOD. It exists today as a mustard seed, by the grace of Jesus. But one day, as the mustard plant dominates the garden, the kingdom will fill the earth in glory and power and will last **forever**.

Entrance to the Kingdom—Means of Grace

It's that **eternal** aspect that makes the kingdom of God matter the most. Being united with God for eternity is what the **Kingdom of Glory** is all about. The only way to enter the kingdom is by the **Word** through **faith**. and saving faith is life-changing faith. How can the KINGDOM OF GOD become the most important thing to us? Through the **MEANS OF GRACE**. When the Spirit applies the **written Word** or **visible Word** to our life, He causes us to give up all else to get **WHAT MATTERS MOST**, KINGDOM OF GOD.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
