

August 6, 2017

“As Citizens of the Kingdom”  
Matthew 13:44-52

FCF: Losing our bearings

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Jesus has made us citizens of His kingdom.  
(magnet) We must keep this before us, especially when that's hard to see.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

*The Odyssey* is Homer's tale of Odysseus' journey home after the Trojan War. Among the hazards he and his crew faced were the Sirens - two monsters pretending to be beautiful women, trying to lure sailors with their sweet songs so as to kill them. The solution? Odysseus had his crew put beeswax in their ears and tie him firmly to the ship's mast with orders, no matter what he said, to speed past the Sirens with all haste. They did and disaster was averted.

The image of the Sirens is one that endures today. So many possibilities come to mind. So many things can pull upon us - attractive messages or ideas, tempting possibilities or paths. There is a real danger of losing our bearings. And that holds for the follower of Christ as well.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Matthew 13:44-52](#)**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Jesus' message was “the gospel of the kingdom” - the good news of the rule and reign of God asserting itself on the earth. Meaning that how things are now are not how they are meant to be. And when we pay heed to these parables, we see this is not how things will forever be. In fact, when we go back and read Genesis, we see that this is not how things have always been.

Here in Matthew 13, Jesus tells a series of parables to explain and illustrate this. He has spoken of soils, weeds, seed, and leaven - mostly to the crowds. Now He speaks in a series of parables to the disciples to summarize and mobilize. Why? The pull of the Sirens. At times, the gospel can be hard for us to hear or see. Other messages drown it out or obscure it from view.

Jesus has made us citizens of His kingdom. We must keep this before us, especially when that's hard to see. What is it we need to keep before us? What is it we can lose sight of? Three things. The need to assess the kingdom, await the kingdom, and announce the kingdom.

**I. ASSESS THE KINGDOM**

First, we need to assess the kingdom ([READ Matthew 13:44-46](#)). This complementary parable pair is meant to be taken together in how they illustrate the great value of the kingdom.

*A) Background*

## 1. Hidden treasure

First, some background. With the hidden treasure, we need to understand that what we think of as banks did not exist in the ancient world. So treasure was often hidden, even buried in a field.

## 2. Pearl of great value

On the pearl of great value, divers sought for pearls in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Some such pearls would be valued the equivalent of millions of dollars today.

*B) Significance*

1. The difference

So what is the significance of the imagery? First, think of the differences. The worker stumbled upon the treasure. The merchant was seeking for it. And that's the way it is with the kingdom.

2. The similarity

But however one discovers it, whether by stumbling or by seeking, note what each man sees and sells. The value of the kingdom is so great that it's worth sacrificing everything to attain it.

And that's the lesson of this parable pair. We need to assess the value of the kingdom.

*Application:*

To rightly see it is to sacrifice everything for it. And to see this is no sacrifice at all. To sell all we have for this treasure is to be sold out for Jesus and His kingdom. It is to let His directives be our direction. To sell all we have to buy it means that we are all in with all we are.

Jesus has made us citizens of His kingdom. This means we must assess the kingdom.

**II. AWAIT THE KINGDOM**

But also await the kingdom. For not everyone will see things as they really are. (**READ Matthew 13:47-50**) We need to await the kingdom and know the reality of the coming judgment.

*A) Background*

1. The dragnet

Some background. First, there were different nets used in fishing. The dragnet was a large net with floats attached to one end and then sinkers to the other. As it was pulled, fish were caught.

2. The sorting

Which leads to the sorting. For Jews, the fish needed to be separated according to kinds. That is, fish without scales and fins were considered to be bad or unclean and had to be thrown away.

*B) Significance*

1. Parallel to an earlier parable

What is the significance of the imagery? It's worth noting there is a parallel to a parable earlier in this chapter, that of the wheat and the weeds. Both grow beside each other until the harvest.

2. The end of the age

We see something similar here as Jesus shifts from the world of farming to fishing. Here He speaks of the "end of the age" and the reality of a coming judgment that awaits all mankind.

Which is the lesson of the parable of the net. The kingdom has come. But not in full. The future has invaded the present. It has arrived. But the sorting and separation still awaits.

*Application:*

Which speaks to the cries of the martyrs, the victims of injustice and persecution across this world and throughout the ages. They shout, "How long?" And the answer comes from the Lord Himself, "A little longer. So hold on." In that sense, this future sorting is very good news.

Jesus has made us citizens of His kingdom. This means we must await the kingdom.

### III. ANNOUNCE THE KINGDOM

We are to assess the kingdom, await the kingdom, and then announce the kingdom. That is, we must not keep it to ourselves (**READ Matthew 13:51-52**). This is the necessity of witness.

#### A) *Background*

1. The master of a house

Again, some background. The owner of the house is assumed to be a wealthy man and, in that culture, would certainly have served as a hospitable host to his guests, no matter what that took.

2. The treasures of the house

And so he goes inside, opens a strongbox, and gladly pays out old and new coins to his guests.

#### B) *Significance*

1. The role of a scribe

And the significance of these images? Part of the role of a Jewish scribe was to be a teacher to the people, taking them to the Scriptures. Jesus is now saying, “You are to serve in this way.”

2. Old and new

“You have a treasure greater than any scribe has ever known.” His message and ministry are the fulfillment of everything that came before. So there is old and new, an ancient freshness to it.

This is the lesson of the parable of the master - the necessity of witness to Jesus.

#### *Application:*

Which brings me to this. Do we know what we have? Do we know what’s been given? Not just one more message, one more competitor in the great marketplace of ideas. But the treasure of treasures. As Francis Schaeffer said, “true Truth.” The gospel is not just more advice as to what to do. It is the best of news as to what’s been done. That, my friends, is the treasure.

Jesus has made us citizens of His kingdom. This means we must announce the kingdom.

### CONCLUSION:

That said, there are times when this is hard to see this - like flying conditions when bad weather brings low visibility. I can’t speak to this personally, but I’ve read of it (**READ quote**):

In the aftermath of the death of John Kennedy Jr. in 1999, amateur pilot Stephen Hedges wrote about the difficulty of flying a plane by instruments alone — a necessary skill if you want to fly at night or in fog. Without this skill, it is easy for a pilot to fall into an uncontrolled bank and crash.

During one instrument lesson, Hedges noted, “I flew the headings and turns as instructed, but even with ten hours of instrument flying in my logbook, I was amazed at how quickly the plane slid into a banking turn if I diverted my attention for just a few moments. The first time it happened, a pang of panic shot through me, a momentary fear that made it even more difficult to comprehend what the plane was doing.”

But when he heard his instructor next to him calmly say, “Watch your bank,” Hedges quickly leveled the plane.

With this series of parables, that’s very much what Jesus is saying to us. “Watch your bank.”

As citizens of the kingdom, we have embraced a new loyalty and allegiance. And that, at times, can be a struggle. The pull and pressure can be so strong. Like with Odysseus and the Sirens. And so we must strive all the more, by God’s great grace, to keep these things before us.

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