KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material – from Jill Gorven

Matthew 21:33–22:14

Week of Sunday 14th July 2024

Fruitfulness for the Father and Singing with the Son

Leader Preparation

Read Matthew 21:33–22:14, and pages 23–26 of the leader notes.

These two parables echo the call to true repentance and its resulting faithfulness found in the parable of the two sons from last week. However, the parables this week emphasize Matthew's persistent call to obedient fruitfulness as a sign of true discipleship. They also highlight Jesus as our necessary cornerstone and fulfilment.

The suggested discussion focusses on one parable at a time.

Group Time:

This week's passage has two vivid scenes. One focuses on work and its fruit and the other on a wedding celebration. Ask your group to choose one of these areas to share some thoughts. What is important to you about your work, and what do you most want to achieve out of what you do? How do you feel about attending weddings… excited, anxious or perhaps a little indifferent?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 21:33–46

Fruitfulness: Then and Now

When Jesus' original audience "the chief priests and the elders of the people" (Matt 21:23) realised Jesus was speaking about them, who would they have understood the various parable characters to be: the master of the house; the tenants; the master's servants; the master's son?

Discuss in what way Jesus' original audience were blind about the vineyard God had given them (Isaiah 7:5) and about the cornerstone of "the house of Israel" (Psalm 118). Discuss the possible reasons for them being spiritually blind (v38).

How does living after Christ's death and resurrection affect the understanding of this parable? How does the parable relate to our circumstances? Consider that Jesus says the wicked tenants will be replaced by a people who will produce fruit (v43), that is, His disciples.

What are the implications of Michael Eaton's comment that "the Kingdom of God will stay with those who produce its fruits"?

Matthew often speaks about the necessity for fruitfulness. Read through the examples below to explore the characteristics of fruitfulness in God's Kingdom. (All the quotes are from the ESV.)

- Matthew 3:7-8— *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance."*
- Matthew 3:10— *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*
- Matthew 7:16-20— *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*
- Matthew 12:33— *Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit*.
- Matthew 13:23— *As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty*.
- Matthew 21:19— *And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.*

READ Matthew 22:1–14

The King's Wedding Feast: Attendance and Attire

This parable speaks of God's invitation to salvation. Yet in verses 5 and 6 we read about two ways the invited guests refuse the invitation. Discuss how these responses may look in our world and even our own lives.

There is a twist to the end of this parable. The focus shifts to those who have now accepted the invitation. Yet the end of the parable indicates that being invited and accepting is not sufficient to ensure a place at the banquet. What does the missing wedding garment represent? Consider both the emphases on the cornerstone and fruitfulness in the previous psalm.

Let's take time to stop and imagine ourselves at the wedding feast talked about by our Lord. Perhaps play the Storyteller game going around in a circle each adding detail to the scene. Instead of starting "Once upon a time…" perhaps start "As promised by our Lord, at the end of this age…". Or just sit quietly and listen to a song. Perhaps Bart Millard's "I can only imagine"
https://open.spotify.com/artist/5bsUrymSBBldt6HMUcjfTT?si=gZZ44kjwSr6iDbVRvtRRsg

Time to pray with ACTS

Adoration: Time to express our love for the King of all kings and the Master of all houses

Confession: Time to confess where Jesus is not our cornerstone, where we neglect the work He has given us to do, especially failing to tend to His people, where we tend more to our own concerns than His, where we are perhaps even hostile to His messengers, and when we fail to be obediently transformed by His love.

Thanksgiving: Time to thank God for all He has given us: a place in His house, a way to work with Him to tend to His people, and His invitation to be together with Him and all His people when we will see Him face to face.

Supplication: Time to ask for help in being obedient to all He has called us to. Ask that He will help you to tend to His vineyard/ His house/ His church and that He will increase your desire to feast with Him and His people.

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12–13
