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The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 12:45-13:23

Ryan Habbena

Sovereign Lord, we confess You are the Lord of Heaven and earth. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the only God, the true and living God. And Lord we thank You that You have made us Your children. Father help us realize all the marvelous glories and grace that You have poured out on us in Your beloved Son. Lord forgive us for the times where we grumble and the times where we do not offer You the thanksgiving that You and You alone deserve. Lord we thank You so much for Your word. We thank You for giving us this precious gift, that guides us, that tells us of our state. And Lord we thank You that you have promised to finish what You have started in us. Lord we love you and we thank You and we ask You that You would cause us to walk in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and that we would bring honor and glory in Your Son and store up great treasure in Heaven, that any crowns we get that we could throw at His nailed scarred feet and give Him the glory alone. In His name we pray, Amen.

From the beginning humans have cultivated and sown seed on this earth. And one the Lord's provisions for sustentative of mankind was the perpetual reproduction and planting of seeds for food. Now with the fall of our first parents (Adam and Eve) the ground was cursed. And now with great toil and much less success, we plant, we cultivate, and we harvest. Now all of these realities which are commonly shared by all who dwell on this planet are used by the Creator of all things, Jesus, to teach us about the dynamics of the Kingdom of God in what is commonly known as the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9).

Now we have progressing through the Book of Matthew and we have come upon the point where Jesus is now going to begin speaking in parables. So by means of introducing this somewhat transitional section here, first I want us to step back and remember the historical settings and expectations that help us inform us regarding this parable given to us by Jesus. Then we will proceed to the end of Matthew 12 and the beginning of Matthew 13 and explore

and understand this is initial parable, regarding the parables of the Kingdom given by our Master. And after that, after we understand that, Lord willing, we will progress and hear and by His grace bring into practice the principles that arise from this passage.

But of first importance we really need to understand the context here. Now Matthew's Gospel is about the arrival of the Messiah, the King. And from the out-set, we see that Jesus is the King. Matthew 1:1 proclaims Him as the "seed of David": The seed of David being the One who would inherit the throne promised His father David. So we see many points throughout the Book of Matthew where this is being stressed by the inspired author, the arrival of the King. But the arrival of the King is met with an unexpected response. From His arrival in Bethlehem, we read that He is being persecuted and rather than being welcomed, the leadership in Jerusalem, Herod at that time, sought to take the life of the King (ref Matthew 2).

So we see there are unexpected responses and dynamics regarding the Kingdom. And in Matthew 4 we read about Jesus announcing that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". And let's read a passage from Matthew 4 here, Matthew 4:12-17, "Now when He heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:12-17 ESV)

Now if you go back to the original text in Isaiah which we have explored here over the last several months, this proclamation given by Isaiah, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali which is Galilee which is where Jesus ministered, this light is going to shine, and that is in the context of the coming of the Davidic King, in Isaiah ( ref Isaiah 9). Thus Jesus rises and proclaims in this region, shining the light of the Good News, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand" (Matthew 4:17). Now it is very important for us to understand what is going to come to pass, that there were certain expectations regarding the Kingdom of God at this time. If someone came forth and declared "repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand", there was a certain expectation and understanding that people would of brought and read into that.

At that time, the expectations of the Jews was that the Messiah was going to come and He was going to conquer Rome and all Israel would be saved then enter into the Kingdom. Now that was the expectation, to be sure that expectation has a Biblical precedence, the King of Kings will indeed do this. The Kingdom is coming in a way that is unexpected at this time. Instead of the Messiah to conquer the nations and save all Israel, a very significant problem needed to be dealt with and that was the problem of sin, universal sin. And thus Jesus is now going to begin speaking in parables regarding the reality of this Kingdom. And starting now and throughout Matthew 13, we are going to be exploring many parables regarding that speak of what the Kingdom of God is like and we will see that these certainly fulfill the Scriptures but they clash with the expectation at that time that the Messiah was going to come and conquer.

So let's begin, and we are going to begin with the end of Matthew 12 as I think this relates well to the parable (Parable of the Sower) follows better than that to which that proceeds it, so I think it fits better with the section that follows as we know the numbering system and the references are not inspired, they were put in awhile later. Let us read, Matthew 12:46-50, "While He was still speaking to the people, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. But He replied to the man who told Him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward his disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:46-50 ESV)

So Jesus was speaking to the people, and at this point He is still in the region of Galilee, and He was speaking, and the context here indicates He was speaking in a house, and His mother and His brothers stood outside asking to speak to Him (ref Matthew 12:46). And through other portions of Scripture we know that at this time Jesus' family were not on board with what was going on. In fact we read in other portions of the Gospels that His mother and His and His brothers saw that He was out of His mind (ref Mark 3:21 John 7:3-5). And the thing is at this point Jesus' with His mother and brothers outside which would have been His immediate family, remembering that this is, especially in Israel, the family was the most tight nit of all communities. But the Messiah has His own family. And thus He points to His disciples (ref Matthew 12:49). Now the disciples were the ones that were following Him, that were submitting to His teaching. And thus He says "whoever does the will of my Father in Heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). So thus Jesus is speaking here of the family of God.

The household of God of which Jesus of Nazareth is the Head and thus there is already here a clash, there is something greater going on here, something that transcends just immediate family relationships, and Jesus says “whoever does the will of my Father I Heaven”.

Now what is the will of the Father? We know that through a careful reading of the Gospels that Jesus continually stresses that the will of the Father is to believe in the One whom He sent. That is the Father’s clearly revealed will. Believe in the One whom He sent. Believe His Word. Now the truth is we are all part of a particular family, the family of the human race. Every single one of us has descended from our common parents, Adam and Eve and actually every single one is also descended from Noah, and we all share the characteristics of fallen humanity. And the Scriptures make it very clear that all, Jew and Gentile, are born in trespasses and in sin. This is the reality of all those who are constituents of the kingdom of this world. But God had a plan that was in operation from the foundation of the world and that was to send His Son and to build His own household. And the means that which He would do this is by through grace by faith (ref Ephesians 2:7-10). Grace is God’s unmerited favor. And God pours out this unmerited favor through faith.

Now faith is just not something general as our culture so commonly wants to announce that “whatever you believe is OK as long as you are sincere”. That is how our culture views things. The fact is we need to become well acquainted with what our Creator declares. And the Creator has declared that there is one way and that is to do the will of my Father. To do the will of His Father is to believe in the One from whom the Father sent, and that is Jesus of Nazareth. And we read in the Scriptures that the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1). The true and living God, Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), thus becoming true man, true God, and true man.

And as we will see here He came not to conquer, not yet the nations, He came to save. He came to give His life as a ransom. And of His own will, following His Father’s plan, He laid down His own life, no one took it from Him, but He went to the Cross of Calvary, dying a death on the Cross but death could not hold Him. Three days later He was raised from the dead forever more. And He sent forth His messengers. His initial messengers went forth from Jerusalem and Samaria and to the ends of the earth proclaiming the message of the Gospel, repent and believe. To repent means to turn from your sin and believe in this Jesus the One

whom God has placed His seal upon and as given us assurance that He returning again to judge the living and the dead by raising Him from the dead. So if you have not believed, the call reaches you to repent and believe in the Son (Jesus). This is doing the will of the Father who is in Heaven and in doing so you become a member of the eternal household of God. You are part of the family of the King that brothers and sisters is Good News.

Now as we continue in this text we see Jesus now coming out of the house, this is probably in Capernaum. "That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about Him, and he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And He told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 13:1-9 ESV).

Ok so Jesus comes out of the house, remember that His family were wanting to talk to Him, He comes out of the house and sits beside the sea and He gets crowded so He gets into a boat and that is where He announces these parables to those sitting on the shore (ref Matthew 13:1-2). Now we will define what a parable is in a bit, but I want to look at some of the background of this parable. Now this parable in itself is going to be explained by Jesus, it is going to be interpreted by Jesus in a few verses, so we will get to that in a minute. And by the way when Jesus gives an interpretation of a parable, that's the right one! Ok? I have read people give an interpretation of this parable and not knowing that Jesus interpreted it later and gave a totally different interpretation of the parable than Jesus gave. So a good real foundational rule of hermeneutics is when Jesus gives the interpretation, its right one, Ok? So we will hear the right interpretation of the parable in a moment.

But let's just look at some of the dynamics here, first we see this cultivation, a sower went out to sow, sowing seeds and some just fell along the path. So along the path, and there would have been no soil there so the birds and ate up the seed (ref Matthew 13:3-4). The second ground here is rocky (ref Matthew 13:5-6). Now this isn't like a bunch of rocks like you would

see in landscaping, this is really a hard bedrock that has just a very-very thin layer of soil on the top and as anybody schooled in agriculture will tell you that this is not prime conditions to grow things. In fact exactly what is described here is what happens because there is a very thin layer of soil there, the seed may begin to spring up pretty quickly but there is no room for roots. So thus it springs up quickly but because there is no room for roots because the soil is not good for growth, the sun rose and their scorched and no growth occurs. Thirdly we have these ones that grew up along-side of the thorns (ref Matthew 13:7). And these thorns that caused the other growth to die and not bring forth fruit. And finally you have the good soil (ref Matthew 13:8). And this good soil and mind this, this is the only one that brings forth fruit, and that is extremely important because the other three had the same seed. It's not a different type of seed. It's the same seed being sown here on four different types of ground. The path, the rocky grounds, the thorns, and the good soil and only one of them actually brings forth fruit. So we will see what the Lord is declaring here in a moment, but first the disciples come and ask Jesus an important question.

Mathew 13:10-13, "Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And He answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (Matthew 13:10-13 ESV) Now we are going to read in a moment here the prophesy that Jesus is fulfilling by doing this, but first let's look at what a parable is.

The modern view of a parable is, the parable is a nice little story to help the unschooled or the little ones understand a story better. Now the truth of the matter is the purpose of the parable is the exact opposite in this context. Jesus speaks in parables not to make things easier to understand, He speaks in parables to hide things, that's why He says this, this is why He is speaking to them in parables, because seeing they do not believe and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand (ref Matthew 13:13). So these parables and again a parable is a very a loose term in the Scriptures that specifically means a story or an analogy that usually contributes to a made point. And these parables are stories that hide, they hide things and what are they hiding? They are hiding the reality of what the Kingdom is like and notice Jesus

says to them “to you know it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven (ref Matthew 13:11). What does He mean by that, secrets of the Kingdom? Remember the context. There was this great expectation that the Kingdom was going to come in power initially. But the secret is something that has been hidden and what has been hidden by God up to this point but it was planned before the foundation of the world, was that the Kingdom going to come first in Jesus’ coming to offer His life as a symbol of sacrifice, ascend, and then gather His constituency from every tribe, nation, and tongue. So the Kingdom is a reality now and by the way these things are going to be points that over and over again Jesus is going to be stressing. Telling them what the nature of the Kingdom is really like.

And we’ll see how that even this parable teaches us something about the Kingdom. So we also brothers and sisters have been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom if we pay attention to what Jesus is saying here and learn because Jesus gives us insight into these secrets, and again these secrets are going to unfold as we go through the parable. Because remember the parable is something that comes forth and is hid from the eyes of those that don’t have insight. However if we carefully read Matthew (Book of Matthew), we will receive insight by the illumination by the Holy Spirit. So we will continue to stress some of these things as we proceed, but before we get there, let’s look at Matthew 13:14-17. And this Jesus speaks that He is fulfilling even though things are happening that are not expected, He is indeed fulfilling prophesy.

“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matthew 13:14-17 ESV)

So first we see this is rooted in Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10). This is speaking as the time of judgment comes, they’re going to hear the word of God but they are not going to perceive what really is going on. This is a judgment of reprobation. The time for judgment has come and thus the Lord is hiding the realities of His Kingdom from the eyes of the Jewish leadership and the people,

many of the people within Israel because their heart has grown dull (ref Matthew 13:15). But there is a contrast here, listen “blessed are your eyes and your ears” (ref Matthew 13:16) why? Because these disciples were sitting at the feet of Israel’s Messiah, sitting at the feet of the true Master and Teacher, they were hearing the words of wisdom from the Word incarnate, and they were with their very eyes they were looking upon God in human flesh, “blessed be your eyes, blessed be your ears”.

Now we brothers and sisters, we have not seen our King yet and even our Lord Himself said “blessed are those who have not seen but yet believed” (ref John 20:29) However we indeed still hear. These words have been inspired and preserved. So indeed we are going to see, we are going to hear and understand His words by His grace and His instruction. And now we progress now to read about the explanation of the parable. Matthew 13:18-23.

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 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 13:18-23 ESV)

So Jesus says “hear then the parable of the sower” (Matthew 13:18) and notice “hear”, they have already heard the parable. So “hear” is an intensified hearing, in a sense hear and understand, get insight, hear this and pay attention. Just like the priestly proclamation “hear oh Israel the Lord thy God is one God” (ref Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Mark 12:29). It is to hear that but also understand its significance and its weight in the same way. “Hear this parable of the sower”. Now in the other synoptic we clearly see that the sower here is Jesus, the sower is the Son of Man. So it is the Son of Man going out and sowing His own seed and the seed is the word of the Kingdom. So the first one we see, one hears the word of the Kingdom, the word of



the person and work of Jesus. And this word of the Kingdom also has, it really has to do with submitting to Christ and His teaching.

We see the first one is, “the evil one comes and snatches it away” (ref Matthew 13:19). So the one sown on the path is one that didn’t even sink into the soil and the evil one comes and snatches it away. That is one thing that happens when the word of the Kingdom is preached. Secondly there is one that receives it, is joyful, but then tribulation and persecution comes and they fall away (ref Matthew 13:20-21). So in the first one, obviously when the seed isn’t sown and eaten the birds of the air there is no fruit. The second one, it propped up immediately, it sprang forth, and so this is one who hears the word and is joyous and receives it. But genuine faith is proved such through trial and testing and thus we see this dynamic here. It looks like they’re going to grow but no eventually fruit comes and when tribulation and persecution come they fall away.

The third category, the one where it springs up and starts to grow and then the thorns come, we see that the cares of this world and its riches choke it out, cause it to perish, and again there is no fruit (ref Matthew 13:22). And then finally we see Jesus declare finding good soil (ref Matthew 13:23). And that’s one thing we need to pay attention to. The seed doesn’t change, the message never changes, there is one message, and that is the Word of the Kingdom, the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. The difference in all of these instances is the soil. And it is only the good soil and it wasn’t that the Lord was trying to find good soil because as we know from the Scriptures that all of us, in and of ourselves, have hearts of hardened ground. It is the Lord that tills the soil of our heart by the power of the Holy Spirit and makes it receptive to the Word. So the Lord tills the ground of the heart and the seed finds good soil, it springs forth and bears fruit.

Now in the flow here, only the fourth and final one, the one that comes on good soil is the one that bears fruit and is an authentic believer, one with a genuine faith. Because one that is saved through a genuine faith, that faith expresses itself, and we will get into that when we get into the issues of application. But a couple of points, that I want us to remember the context here. Remember this is a parable of the Kingdom. Remember their expectations that the Messiah was going to come and all Israel was going to be saved and they were going to enter into the Kingdom. But what’s happening and what’s going to continue to happen? Most of

Israel is going to reject the Word of the Kingdom and thus this describes the reality of the Kingdom from the first coming to the second coming of Christ. Notice the seed went all over the place but only one of the four produced seed unto salvation.

So this parable has the initial reader's understanding, why is it that people don't believe these things? They don't believe in the raised Messiah. We have 500 witnesses that saw Him (ref 1 Corinthians 15:6) living after being crucified! Why don't people believe? Because their hearts are hardened and it takes the Lord's grace to respond, and the road is narrow, the way is wide that leads to destruction, the road is narrow that leads to life (ref Matthew 7:13-14). And all of those things are at work here. And so we understand the Kingdom that as we are situated in between the first and coming, most of us are well acquainted with these responses. We see those that receive the Word with great joy but then they fall away either from persecution or prosperity, and we will get to that in a moment. But this brothers and sisters, this is part of the mystery of God, God's plan. And we read in Romans 11 that He hardened most of Israel for the Gospel to go out to the Gentiles (ref Romans 11:25). And thus we, by His grace, have had our hearts, our hardened hearts tilled into good soil by the Holy Spirit and that Word reached us and by His grace genuine faith is bearing fruit.

So a couple of dynamics regarding the Kingdom is first off few believed. Two, the Kingdom is met with resistance. And three, is that God's plan is at work in all these things. Now I have three points that I want to have weigh on us regarding what we read from this parable as believers. Now if you are a believer in Jesus of Nazareth and believe that message of the Kingdom, true God and true man, crucified, died, raised forever more then you are numbered among that last group where the seed found soil that was made good by the work of the Lord and you are bearing fruit. But nonetheless we need to hear that warning regarding tribulation and testing. Both testaments, the Old Testament and in the New Testament, we see faith proved genuine through testing, through trials, through tribulation. In James 5:10-11 we read of an example of Job, "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job (now steadfastness is just another name for endurance), and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." (James 5:10-11 ESV)

In the Parable of the Sower we saw the ones that propped up immediately but they fell away within a realm of testing and persecution (ref Matthew 13:5-6). And we know through the Scriptures that we are called to endure in the midst of tribulation and testing, not forsake our hope, and we need to continually hear that call to endurance, because it is through that, that the Word comes forth and nourishes us and strengthens us to endure. But in all honesty, I don't think persecution is the hardest test. Now it may be the most difficult as far as how we feel emotionally and physically. But the test of prosperity is as we look throughout history, a much more difficult test because we see how many people fall in the midst of much and that is a great test. And when you look throughout Church history, and you see when the Church is persecuted, what happens is because the tares (ref Matthew 13:24-30) won't endure persecution, they're purged, and thus the Church is purified. And so often throughout church history, even though the Church is being persecuted, the Church thrives in the midst of persecution because the Lord works through that which is weak.

Think of what the Church looks like in the midst of great prosperity, of when money flows in, it is a much greater test because so often the Church has become worldly and full of selfishness and corrupt in the midst of prosperity (i.e. Acts 5:1-11). Now whether we are persecuted or whether we have prosperity that is all under the sovereign hand of the Lord but know both of those are a test of our faith. Because see both of those in the Parable of the Sower, the cares of the world and riches caused one to fall away (ref Matthew 13:7, Matthew 7:22) and trials and testing and persecution had the other fall away (ref Matthew 7:5-6, Matthew 13:20-21). Be aware, we are surrounded by seductive influences. Be aware that the serpent roams roaring like a lion (ref 1 Peter 5:8).

And brothers and sisters it is our calling to remain steadfast, endure, and we can rejoice in our endurance knowing that our endurance does not depend upon our strength, it depends on His, so the call goes out and it really resounds from this parable. God's elect, God's people, the family of the King will endure in the midst of suffering. Therefore the call goes out to all, endure.

Secondly again we see in this parable, we are called, faith has been planted in our hearts in order to bear fruit, therefore we are called to bear fruit for the Kingdom. Now the opening of 2 Peter gives us a glorious description of what we are called to do as God's chosen ones. Now

let's read this and the aspects of bearing fruit for the Kingdom are stressed here. Beginning with verse 3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue (by the way this is fruit here), and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:3-11 ESV)

A wonderful text, that speaks of how we are called to be fruitful. First, Peter tells us that "He has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness (ref 2 Peter 1:3), we have what we need in Christ! We have everything we need! Then he calls us to action "make every effort to supplement your faith" (2 Peter 1:5). Then he lists these qualities, qualities that bear fruit in the lives of the people and notice the capstone here is love (ref 2 Peter 1:6-7). Faith expressing itself through love that is fruit, and notice the one who is lacking has forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins (ref 2 Peter 1:9). And what does this tell us? That the way to fruitfulness is not to keep our eyes fixed on ourselves, we're miserable subjects to think about, our eyes are to be fixed on the Cross, fixing our eyes on what Jesus has done for us. The one that is lacking these things has forgotten about, he has neglected to remember that he was cleansed from his former sins.

We are to keep our eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of our faith (ref Hebrews 12:2), and in the midst of that be diligent and bear fruit. And the way to do this is not to fix our eyes on ourselves but rather to express our faith through love and that is done is through the power of Jesus who has everything we need in life and godliness.

Finally we read of this, “for in this way we will be richly provided an entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (ref 2 Peter 1:11). So we are laboring for a rich entrance. Now this Kingdom, we looked at the Kingdom here, the Kingdom is already a reality, this Peter is speaking of is when the time when the Kingdom comes into its fullness. The King comes and sets up His Kingdom and we are going to enter into it when His Kingdom comes to earth, and purges the world of sin and unrighteousness and He sets up His Kingdom from the New Jerusalem (ref Revelation 3:12, Revelation 21).

So finally, our calling for this coming Day is to run for the reward. We see in this context that believers bear fruit. If you are a believer in Jesus of Nazareth, you are bearing fruit. Now some bear 30, some 60, some 100 fold (ref Matthew 13:8), some more, some less. But Paul tells us what our attitudes are supposed to be, we are only in the Kingdom because of God’s grace, and that alone (ref Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Timothy 1:9) so we need to remember that. But our attitude as far labor for the King is not to be a minimalist and just say “well I’m in, that is good enough for me”. No that is not what the inspired Scriptures tell us our attitudes should be. Instead in 1 Corinthians 9, the inspired author Paul tells us, verses 24 through 27.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath (by the way a wreath is similar to a trophy here), but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27 ESV)

So now the truth here is, we know that all believers are going to be rewarded in one sense. So it’s not that one person is going to get the prize and everybody else is losers. That’s not what Paul is talking about here. Rather he is talking about our attitude. Run in such a way to win! Run in such a way that you’re forsaking all that it entangles and any encumbrance and run this race before us. And again our reward isn’t something that we’re doing for our greed, “for me”. I am convinced through carefully reading a lot of the dynamics in Revelation and what we speak of, and what of the Scriptures speaks of reward is, reward is greater opportunity to bring glory to Jesus of Nazareth and the Kingdom. And I tell you, in our resurrected bodies that is going to be the chief joy to be able to give Him more and more glory and honor. And it comes down to

figuratively taking any crowns we have and throwing them at His feet and magnifying Him alone. And that is what the true reward is and that is going to be and when we see it, as the greatest reward! So run in such a way that when we get to the Kingdom, we will be able to glorify Jesus more and more. Again He has done so much for us, and remembering that, our focus shouldn't be on really "what can I do for Jesus". First we got to remember as we see, we need to remember what He has done for us first and foremost that's the Gospel, that's grace.

But not neglecting what Paul says here, "labor for your King, run the race" (ref 1 Corinthians 9:24-27). So brothers and sisters we see throughout these things that yes indeed we are saved by grace though faith alone, we remember that He has purchased us to be zealous for good deeds (ref Titus 2:14) so we are called to pursue purity. And brothers and sisters we have been placed on this road by the King of Kings so we want to throw off all the things that which we would labor for that would be temporal and labor for that which is imperishable and that is seeking the Kingdom first (ref Matthew 6:33). Labor well brothers and sisters, and I can say with full confidence that the ones that labor for the Kingdom of God, when that entrance comes you will by no means be disappointed in the result of your labor for the King.

So brothers and sisters this is a task for each and everyone one of us individually but it also a task for us together. Remember what we are called to do as we see the Day of Christ drawing near. Do not throw off gathering together, but encourage and exhort one another to good deeds more and more as we see that Day drawing near. It is coming! The Lord watches over His Word to fulfill it, the King is returning, the Kingdom will come in its fullness. Let us labor to be pleasing to the King so whatever crowns we may receive, we can throw them down at His nail scarred feet.

Let's pray. Sovereign Master, Jesus of Nazareth, we thank You for Your sacrifice, and we thank You that You are interceding for us right now as we come before the throne of the Father. And Father we thank You so much for Your Son. We thank You that You have placed Him forever as our intercessor and we are found in Him. And Lord we thank You that you have given us Your Holy Spirit to be with us forever. We thank You that you have planted Your seed in us. And Lord we see it, although we know we fall so far short in so many areas we see it bearing fruit. Lord help us abound in good fruit for the Kingdom so that we might be pleasing to You. And Lord we know that standing before You is based solely on who we are in Your Son, but we

ask Lord that You would fill us with His power, to bring that what we know we are position-ally righteous in Christ. Lord we ask that we be practically righteous as well, purify us Father both individually and as a community. We love You so much and Lord may our love be not just expressed with words but with deeds and actions and truth as we await the return of Your Son. Maranatha, Lord Jesus. In His name we pray, Amen.

**Sermon By**

Ryan Habbena

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**Contact**

[ckfellowship.org](http://ckfellowship.org)

651.797.8427