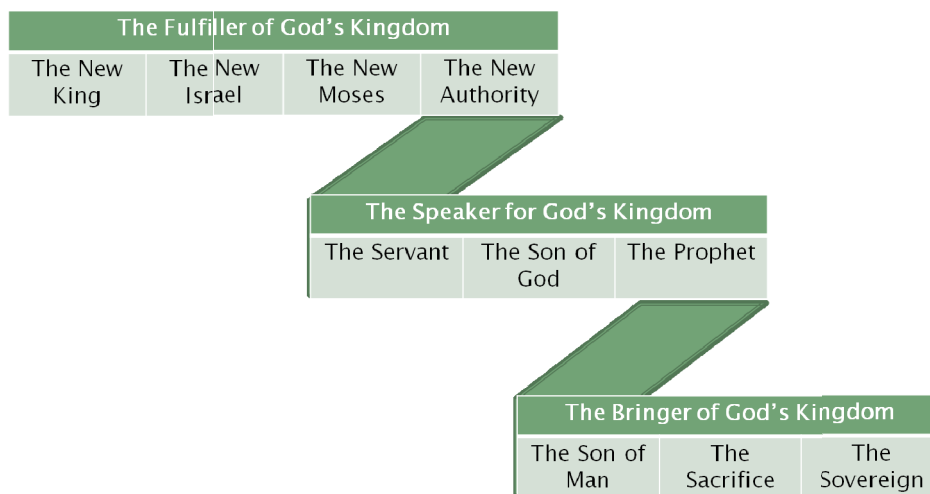


The Giving of the Kingdom

Matthew 19:16-20:33

Many modern phones have apps in them that use the GPS information to locate you. Therefore, when you search for something it tries to show what is near to your location. Well, we need a locator app. Where are we in Matthew?

Locate ourselves in the book



We are the section where Jesus is the speaker for God's kingdom. In the last of the three units that make up this section, Jesus is the Prophet.

Well that puts in the correct neighborhood. But, where are we in the argument? What is Jesus doing with the parables?

We have seen that the kingdom is experiencing *a great change* in its character, its scope and its citizens.

We have seen that the kingdom have *a slow and mixed growth* over a long time.

Different ways to receive a kingdom:

- Take it by force from another...
- Take it by political maneuvering...
- Inherit as a son or daughter...
- Receive it as a gift from its king...

This chapter in Matthew shows that God is giving His Kingdom, but not as it is expected...

The King's Treasure

(19:16-30)

Matthew opens this section on the kingdom by contrasting two understandings of the kingdom's treasures and the King's reward which form the back drop for the key issue.

Its Heart Demand

(v.16-22)

¹⁶ And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷ And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸ He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰ The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

What has gone wrong here? An earnest seeker who appears to be a prime candidate comes and asks what to do to have eternal life. Jesus' response is clearly Old Covenant – do the Law and have life. The young man honestly thinks he has done all the commandments and now wants to know why he is not "in".

Now Jesus illuminates that inheriting eternal life is not about the deeds we do but about a demand of the heart. Jesus' response totally reframes the question. Sell all. Give to the poor. Follow Jesus. Do so because you have reoriented your treasure. Except, he doesn't. His great possessions had him in their grip.

Its Surprising Difficulty

(v.23-26)

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Why is it so hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom? Is it as hard as a large camel going through one of the smallest gates in Jerusalem? Or is it as hard as dragging a huge animal through where thread should go?

This is a surprising difficulty because even the disciples are astonished. They are missing something about the kingdom. Their question betrays their problem. They still are thinking of the kingdom on human terms. But the salvation that brings one into the kingdom is impossible for men, even rich ones. But, it is possible with God.

Its Future Promise

(v.27-30)

²⁷ Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" ²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

OK, so now Peter seems to get it. He has heard what Jesus told the young man and asserts that the disciples have done it. So, since there is treasure in heaven, what is it? Define the terms for us.

Wow, what a reward. Follow Jesus now and there will be future thrones, power, place and position. Twelve disciples on twelve thrones over the twelve tribes. There will be one hundred times return on your investment. And eternal life to boot. What a dazzling reward the King holds out for His followers. Or is He exposing their hearts?

The King's Rights

(20:1-16)

Jesus connects his parable here to what has gone before. The disciples are eager for their “forsaking all” wages. So let’s see what that might mean.

The Agreement

(v.1-2)

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Jesus gives them a story to make a point. The kingdom of heaven then is like a guy who owns a vineyard. Early in the morning, he contracts with laborers for a days work at a day’s wage.

The Recruitment

(v.3-7)

³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’

Every three hours, he goes out to the market place and contracts with idle laborers. But he does not set the wage; he asks them to trust him to do what is right. He hires the last group just an hour or so before quitting time.

The Payment

(v.8-9)

⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.

He has the foreman line up the workmen in the opposite order that they were hired. Then, he gives everyone the same wage. Each one gets a day’s wage.

The Argument

(v.10-12)

¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’

As you can imagine, those who worked the whole day were incensed. This is not fair. How could he pay them the same as he paid everyone else? After all, they

worked during the hardest part of the day. I think I start to see the disciples squirm a bit. They are starting to hear themselves in the story.

The Assertion

(v.13-16)

¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last."

The owner of the vineyard has not wronged anyone. He paid what was promised and was extraordinarily generous to the others. Here comes the punch line: can't he do what he wants with what belongs to him? Yes, the disciples are now squirming. Why? Because of the connection being made between 29:30 and 20:16 – they realize they are seeking to serve on a contract whose reward is known, defined and yes, greatly desired.

The kingdom may be freely given to whomever the King pleases.

The King's Standard

(20:17-28)

Matthew now shifts the scene to walking along the road on the way to Jerusalem.

In Its Suffering

(v.17-19)

¹⁷ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸ "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

Why this here? Why does Matthew put this here? Is it just what's next in the events of Jesus' life? No, God is going to give His kingdom through the sacrificial slaughtering of His Son. Jesus is pointing his disciples down a road that leads to a city where He will be killed and be resurrected.

He uses the term "Son of man" This is connecting Himself with the Son of man in Daniel 7:9-28. In a marvelously glorious scene, the Son of man is placed on the eternal throne by the Ancient of Days. He receives the kingdom. So Jesus is pointing to the cross and the resurrection as the path to the crown.

From Its Request

(v.20-21)

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

Well, someone gets it. To her credit, James and John's mother hears what Jesus is saying, makes the connection between Jesus' statement to the disciples earlier and to Daniel (and other texts) and comes with a request. Where do I get that? From the word, "then". She asks on behalf of her sons that they might sit on the thrones *right by Jesus' side*.

By Its Requirement

(v.22-23)

²² Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." ²³ He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

Jesus with simple and deep love says, "You get it but not completely." So, James and John, so church, can you drink Jesus' cup? Did you hear with understanding what He just said about the road ahead. You are missing the connection between the cross and the crown. The kingdom is given to those who willing to drink the cup. But it is more than willing, it "able". And following Him, they will be able. And so will you as you take up your cross and follow Christ. But note what he says here that connects with the parable: Jesus is not the One who gives the kingdom; that, is for those prepared for it by the Father. The ones who will govern in the kingdom will be those who are prepared for and enabled to sacrifice and suffer, to take up the cross.

With Its Response

(v.24-28)

²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

What is up the jockeying for special privilege and position? What are you doing sending your mom? Can't you see their anger? But at a careful distance from Jesus. He sees it though. And He calls them over to deal with it.

He basically levels the playing field. All of you are thinking like the world when you think following Jesus is about crowns and thrones and place and position. This is the way the world thinks. So Jesus now exposes the hearts of all the disciples. Some like Peter are looking for the kingdom to be given them as a wage, a reward for following Him. But what James and John have exposed is *that they all want to rule over others*. They want to be the lords in Jesus' kingdom.

The path to the crown involves the cross. The kingdom is not for those who will be granted places of power and leadership but to those who are willing to sacrifice and suffer. Jesus is walking the road that we must walk if we are going to receive the kingdom. It is the road of the cross.

The King's Mercy

(20:29-33)

²⁹ And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³¹ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³² And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³³ They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."

So now the road is coming out of Jericho. The band of disciples is now joined by a crowd.

In Its Need**(v.29-30)**

Along the road are two blind men. Frankly, walking along the road are a lot blind people. The two men are physically blind; the crowd are spiritually blind. They cry out in their need. They are a bother; they need to be quiet. But they are persistent for they see what others do not see.

In Its Recognition**(v.30-31)**

In their cry they recognize three important things.

We recognize that *WE ARE BLIND*. Yes, they recognize their need. What they need is painfully obvious to them and to others. But here are the blind who see with faith.

We recognize that *JESUS IS LORD*. Here is a recognition of the Divine authority of Christ. Here is His power to do what He chooses to do.

We recognize that *JESUS IS KING*. Yes, they recognize Him as the King, the promised Son of David. He then is the appointed authority over the kingdom.

In Its Expression**(v.32-33)**

So what is needed by those are blind are expressions of the mercies of the King.

The King's pity moves Him to reach out and touch them.

The King's power flows from Him to reach out and heal them.

So what has just happened? The kingdom has been given the needy and the humbled who see their need and call out the Redeemer and Ruler.

Reflect and Respond

The kingdom is recognized and made up of those who were blind but whose spiritual sight great King restored. The fundamental question for you is not whether you will sit on thrones and you might. It is not whether you will receive a reward, you probably will. It is whether you have eyes to see.

Do you see that you are blind and need the King's pity and the Kings' power?

Do you see that the King is Lord? Are you willing to bow to Him?

Do see Jesus as the promised and appointed One whose living and dying and rising from the dead is your greatest need?

God the Father will give the kingdom to whomever He will because He has given the kingdom to His beloved Son who has died and raised again for them. The kingdom is given through the cross to all who plead for and trust in the merciful grace of God.