

Lucan Studies: Luke 18:1-43
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Introduction

- Kingdom appears more times in chapter 18 of Luke than any other chapter of Luke, with the exception of chapter 9 which has an equal number of occurrences.
- The two chapters which provide peaks in addressing kingdom things are in 9 and 18—the beginning and the end of the uniquely Lucan section.
- We previously supported an outline which unites 11:1-17:10 as a series of teachings (one narrative) with rotating audiences: the disciples, the crowds, and the Pharisees.
- References to the kingdom accelerate in this section (chapters 9-18): 27 references in 10 chapters with 16 references in the other 14 chapters.
- 17:20-37 -- The kingdom is not observable, it is not visible, it is within/among you. For kingdom people, the coming of the kingdom is anticipated. For others it is unexpected. Kingdom things are not addressed with “when” or “where” questions.

Kingdom principles

- The kingdom will be established with faithful, persevering, prayer people (will there be any?), 18:1-8
- The kingdom is not established by one’s own righteousness, 18:9-14
- The kingdom is to be received, 18:15-17
- The kingdom requires sacrifice, 18:18-30
- The kingdom is process, eventually reaching fulfillment in Jerusalem, 18:31-34
- Here is an example of what life in the kingdom looks like, 18:35-43

Applications¹

- How is the nature of the kingdom understood today in our culture? What is the nature of the kingdom in our culture? In our world?
- How does a kingdom person authentically hear and live out the gospel in North America today?
- God’s kingdom is not and cannot be established by human efforts.
- Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom speaks about God’s reign, brought about by God’s action and righteousness, in fulfillment of God’s purposes.
- The kingdom is not something we build. We only receive it, inherit it, and enter it. Our lives are to be drawn into what God is doing.
- The parables, especially in Luke, reflect this perspective again and again.
- Consider the more familiar parables—
 - The reign of God is like a hidden treasure, found by one who does nothing to earn it. The kingdom is discovered.
 - The reign of God is like the mustard seed that grows all by itself.
 - The reign of God is like seeds sown in strange places which bear remarkable fruit.
 - The reign of God is like a thief who breaks in at an unexpected hour.
 - The reign of God is like a bridegroom who comes when everyone has given up on him.
 - The reign of God is like a vineyard owner who arrives after others have stolen his vineyard and done away with his claim.
 - What is to be striking in these parables is the remarkable absence of human effort or initiative, even the reversal of human effort.

¹ Adapted from Brownson, Dietterich, Harvey, and West. *StormFront: The Good News of God*. (2003)

- The emphasis falls entirely on the mysterious and surprising advent and growth of the reign of God, quite apart from and beyond, even against, human efforts. In the true kingdom of God, the initiative always belongs to God.

Conclusion

For Jesus, hearing the gospel entails recognizing, entering, and receiving this surprising reign of God, in which god's presence and action intrude mysteriously and unexpectedly into our lives and invite us to participate in something greater than ourselves, greater than what we could accomplish on our own.

Questions

1. Contemporary conversations about the kingdom more and more focus on the marginalization of the church. What does that phrase bring to mind?
2. Liminality – the conscious awareness that as a group (or individual) one's status, role, and sequence in a society have been radically changed to the point where the group has now become largely invisible to the larger society in terms of status, role and sequence in society. Is this an accurate picture of the church today? If yes, to what extent? What are some examples of this process?
3. "There is no longer a consensus about meaning and purpose, values, and direction. Without this there can be no center....what is absent is an sacred or secular center. We are faced with a plurality of values, and ends competing with each other in a free market of beliefs. This is a new situation." (Roxburgh) Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What evidences could you cite to support your answer?
4. What are the major problems we face today in trying to understand the place of the kingdom in our modern world?
5. Agree or disagree with this? "One fears that in North America, rather than hearing this call of the Spirit to embrace and listen to the voice of God...the churches are continuing to work hard at rediscovering modes of existence and symbols of power that will move them back to an imaginary center....the continued assumption of cultural symbols of power and success will only produce an inauthentic church with little gospel, much religion, and no mission."
6. On a scale of 1-10, how do you think we are doing as a church with taking the gospel to our community?
7. On a scale of 1-10, how much religion do we have?
8. On a scale of 1-10, what percentage of our membership is actively involved in the mission of this church?