**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**KINGDOM COME**

**Luke 13:10-21**

**INTRODUCTION**

Today we come a controversial but massively significant topic. Our church has joined thousands of other churches around the world in characterizing ourselves as being a “gospel-centered church”. This phenomenon has become so common-place that even secular news sources have taken note. For example, back in 2009, TIME magazine published an article called “10 Ideas Changing the World Right now”, and on that list, at number 3, was “The New Calvinism”. The return of churches to a gospel-centered emphasis on Reformed doctrine has become a world-wide phenomenon.

Given the centrality of gospel-centeredness to our identity as a church, it’s crucial that we understand exactly what we’re talking about when we say “gospel”. After all, gospel literally means “good news”. But good news about what? Being gospel-centered means we are good-news centered, but what good news are we centered upon?

We could say it’s the good news about God’s grace shown to sinners. The gospel is the good news that anyone who believes that Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead for the forgiveness of sins will be saved from God’s justice and adopted into God’s family to spend an eternity with him in heaven. Most of the time, when we talk about the gospel, we’re talking about this great news of salvation, and we are absolutely right to do so.

But what about Jesus? When he talks about the gospel, what does he say? In the three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and (most importantly for our purposes) Luke – Jesus uses three words to sum up the gospel: “Kingdom of God.” Back in Luke 4, Jesus said,

“I must preach the good news (gospel) of the *kingdom of God* to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” (4:43)

In Chapter 8, Luke writes,

“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news (gospel) of the *kingdom of God*…”(8:1)

And in Chapter 12, as Jesus encourages his followers to not be anxious about anything, he comforts them with these words:

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the *kingdom*.” (12:32)

What is the Kingdom of God, and why does Jesus put so much emphasis on it? Some have said that Jesus is teaching a different gospel than the gospel of grace taught by Paul, but that isn’t true. Jesus isn’t teaching a different gospel. He’s merely choosing to emphasize a different aspect of the gospel. When we talk about the gospel, we tend to emphasize God’s work in redeeming individual people. Jesus, on the other hand, chose to emphasize God’s work in redeeming all of creation.

The “Kingdom of God” emphasizes the element of the gospel that tells us that God’s rule and reign are breaking into our world through the coming of Jesus Christ, the King. Kevin DeYoung helpfully defines the kingdom of God as follows:

“At its simplest, the kingdom is where the King is. Where God is acknowledged, where his subjects are saved, where his enemies are vanquished, where his ways are obeyed, there we see the coming of the kingdom.”

This element of the gospel holds a prominent place in Jesus’ teaching, and therefore, we cannot afford to forget about it. At the same time, however, we need to be careful to believe only what Scripture says about the kingdom. Nothing more, and nothing less. This is important, because in recent years, the concept of the kingdom of God has been used and abused to spread all sorts of false ideas. For example, some would say that the centrality of the Kingdom of God means that God doesn’t want Christians to plant churches. Instead, he wants us to provide social services. After all, they say, isn’t the alleviation of poverty, the treatment of sickness, and the creation of a truly just society what the Kingdom of God is all about?

The answer is yes and no. Yes, the Kingdom of God is about God establishing his rule and reign in the world, but no, that isn’t done only by addressing social evils (though that is certainly a part of it). It’s done through the full message of the gospel, including the fact that the greatest evil in the world is our sin, and the greatest problem we face is how sinners like us can become right with a holy God.

Over the next four sermons in our series, we’re going to look at Luke Chapters 13 and 14 and see what Jesus says about the Kingdom of God. Jesus is going to speak about a number of different topics, but the common thread running through both chapters is God’s kingdom.

The title of this message is **Kingdom Come.** My aim today is to show you that **The Kingdom of God Came and is Coming with the King.** We will have three points today:

1. Signs of the Kingdom
2. Opposition to the Kingdom
3. Growth of the Kingdom

(1) **SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM**

Our text today begins with a miracle. Verse 11 tells us that, while Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on a Sabbath, “a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years” was there. Jesus sees her, calls her over to himself, and says, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.” He then lays his hands on her in verse 14, and she is immediately healed.

How does this fit with what Luke has said, and what he is going to say? Is it just a randomly inserted miracle, or does it serve some other purpose?

Remember that Luke’s Gospel is roughly broken up into three parts. First, Chapters 1-9 detail Jesus’ ministry in the towns surrounding Jerusalem, and the overall focus is on Jesus’ identity. Luke wants to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” and he does so by pointing us to miracle after miracle, including the healing of an entire town, the miraculous catch of fish, the healing of the paralytic, the raising of the widow’s son from the dead, the calming of the storm, the feeding of the five thousand, and most importantly, Jesus’ transfiguration. Luke’s answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?” couldn’t be clearer: he is the Messiah, the Son of God, who has come to save sinners from God’s justice.

The second part begins at the end of Chapter 9 when Jesus starts his journey towards Jerusalem. At this point, Luke’s focus shifts away from Jesus’ identity and centers on Jesus’ teaching. The main question Luke wants to answer is, “What does Jesus require of us?” This is why the second part contains fewer miracles and more parables and sayings from Jesus. Our text is found in this second part.

The third part begins later in Chapter 19 and focuses on Jesus’ time in Jerusalem, where he will be betrayed, persecuted, and crucified. The sole focus of this section is to answer the question of what did Jesus come to do? He came to die on the cross and be raised from the dead in order to make a way for us to become right with God.

This big picture overview is important because it helps us see the purpose of this miracle that we find in our text. Without the context, it’s easy to see Jesus’ healing of this disabled woman as just a randomly inserted miracle. I wonder how many of you have read this in the past and thought to yourself, “Ok, another healing. That’s nice. Let’s move on to more interesting parts of Luke.” This miracle fits within a context, and it serves an important purpose within that context. In fact, I believe it’s meant to teach us at least three important things about what Jesus has come to do, and I’ve tried to identity those three things for us in our three points today.

The first purpose of the miracle, then, is this: to teach us that miracles are signs that the Kingdom of God has come. We see that in how Jesus transitions from completing the miracle to talking about the kingdom in verse 18, where he says, “What is the kingdom of God like?” In other words, Jesus performed the miracle, and Luke recorded this miracle and placed it here, to show us that God’s Kingdom has arrived. His rule and reign have broken into our world, and he has begun to fix everything that is wrong with his creation, whether it be the sickness of sin, or the sickness in our bodies.

Jesus didn’t just do miracles to say something about who he is. He did miracles to say something about what he came to do, and that was to bring the Kingdom of God into our world. His coming has completely changed our world, and his miracles are like signposts telling us about the nature of our changed world. The King is here, and he has brought his Kingdom with him.

But what happens when a King brings his kingdom into a foreign land? War breaks loose. This is what we find here. The healing of the disabled woman wasn’t just a miracle. It was an act of war. Look at verse 16, where Jesus says, “Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham *whom Satan bound* for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

*Satan* bound the woman. He was the cause of her disability. Of course, not every disability is caused by Satan, but some of them obviously are, including this one. So in order to heal the woman, Jesus had to bind up the one who bound her.

Jesus brought his Kingdom into a foreign land ruled by a foreign prince, Satan himself. The dark reality about our world is that this is Satan’s domain, and his sole purpose is to paint a dark smear over God’s good creation by leading people like you and me into sin and sickness. But Jesus has come to put an end to that. He has come to free people from the devil’s earthly reign, and to bring us into the peace and joy of God’s kingdom.

That is precisely what Jesus did on the cross. Paul tells us in Colossians that Jesus disarmed Satan and his demonic forces by taking away our sin, which was the only thing that gave them power. Our sin is what separates us from God and his kingdom. Our sin is what makes us citizens of Satan’s kingdom. But Christ died for us, taking the penalty of our sins upon himself, so that all who trust in him are transformed from being slaves of sin and Satan to being the very children of God. As Paul says in Colossians 1:13-14:

“[God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

So when we read about miracles in the Bible, or if we have the privilege of witnessing a miracle in our lifetime, then we must not forget the awesome truths that they represent. Miracles aren’t just amazing supernatural events. They are profoundly theological events. Every time a miracle happens on this side of the cross, God is reminding us that the King has come into our world, and he has brought his Kingdom with him. And if the King has come, then the reign of the demonic prince of this world has come to an end.

As Jesus said earlier in Luke 11:20:

“But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

(2) **OPPOSITION TO THE KINGDOM**

Miracles are a sign that the King has come into the world bringing his Kingdom with him. That’s the first lesson of this miracle. The second lesson is that not everyone welcomes the kingdom. Rebels continue to rebel even after the King has arrived. This leads to our second point: opposition to the kingdom.

Notice what it says about this occasion in verse 10. Luke says that, before Jesus healed the disabled woman, he was teaching in one of the synagogues “on the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was Israel’s sacred day of rest. One of the Ten Commandments was that Israel was to remember the Sabbath day and to do no work on that day, because God rested on the seventh day of creation and did no work.

Over history, Jewish leaders and teachers developed a long lists of regulations regarding this command in a collection of writings called the *Mishnah*. These regulations detailed what you could and couldn’t do on the Sabbath. You can bring your animal to pasture, but you can’t pick up sticks; you can tie up your animal so that it doesn’t wander, but you can’t milk it, etc. The Sabbath was a strictly regulated day where the slightest infraction could lead to condemnation and punishment.

And so, when Jesus healed this woman on the Sabbath, it was a very controversial event. But it’s not the first time he did something controversial on the Sabbath. Back in Luke 4, Jesus healed a demon possessed man in Capernaum on the Sabbath. Then in Luke 6, Jesus encounters a man with a withered hand on another Sabbath, and he heals him as well. Later in Luke 14, Jesus is dining in a Pharisee’s house – also on a Sabbath – when a diseased man walks in and Jesus heals him. It’s the same pattern again and again. Jesus heals on the Sabbath, and the religious leaders question him, criticize him, and grow in their hate for him.

The response of the synagogue ruler in Chapter 13 is no different. Look at verse 14: “But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, ‘There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.’”

The synagogue ruler was upset not because Jesus healed the woman, but because he healed the woman on the Sabbath. From the ruler’s perspective, it was more important to keep the Sabbath regulations established by the *Mishnah* than to heal someone from their disability.

Rather than get into a debate about what the Mishnah says and doesn’t say, Jesus simply exposes the man’s hypocrisy in two powerful verses, verses 15-16: “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

In other words, Jesus is saying that they were treating their animals better than people. They allowed Sabbath exceptions to take care of their animals, but they didn’t allow exceptions to take care of people. This was hypocritical. At home, they were allowed to do good to their animals, but in public, they weren’t allowed to do good to their fellow human beings.

This is the reverse of how life is supposed to be. Humanity is meant to be the crown jewel of God’s creation, not animals. If good should be done to anyone on the Sabbath, it should be done to people.

The synagogue ruler and those who took his position didn’t see this. All they saw was their list of rules. It didn’t matter that the disabled woman had to suffer for another day. According to them, rules were rules. You keep them, or you face the consequences.

This is one of the characteristics of Satan’s domain. People made in God’s image are treated with less dignity and less worth than animals. That may sound like a foreign idea to you, but all you need to do is look at our country’s abortion statistics to see this kind of thinking.

Here’s another example. CBC News published an article this past January called “It shouldn’t be taboo to criticize parents for having too many kids.” The article was in response to the announcement by the stars of a reality TV show that they were expecting their fifth child. In response, this is what the author wrote:

“While having a child or five is a very personal choice, it’s also a choice that affects everyone who inhabits our planet… Procreation is becoming a global public health concern, rather than a personal decision. So when people do irresponsible things like having five children, we absolutely need to be calling them out.”

The author may have used different language than the synagogue ruler, but the reasoning is the same. The ruler’s main concern was upholding the *Mishnah* at the expense of doing good to human beings. The author’s main concern is upholding *environmentalism* at the expense of giving birth to human beings. Environmentalism can become, and has become, one of the many new “religions” that govern what people believe about what is right and what is wrong.

When the world’s religions come in contact with the Kingdom of God, there will be an inevitable clash of values, and some people aren’t going to like it. Some people would rather hold on to their own values and traditions than give into God’s. That’s what happened here. It didn’t matter that Jesus had just miraculously healed a woman who had been disabled for eighteen years. There should have been celebration, but instead there was only criticism.

The same is true for Christians today. We can be engaged in all kinds of good work, the kind of work that you would think would be celebrated, but the world will criticize us instead. That’s alright. If Jesus suffered criticism, then we can as well. The King has come with his Kingdom, but many will reject him, because they choose to follow their own ways rather than God’s.

(3) **GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM**

But now you may be wondering, “Here we are two thousand years later, and where is this so-called kingdom? If the King has come with his Kingdom, then why don’t we see more of it?” This leads to our third and final point: Growth of the Kingdom.

Jesus transitions from his response to the ruler to a final lesson about the Kingdom of God. He gives us two pictures, or analogies, to help us understand what the Kingdom of God is like.

The first is in verses 18-19: “He said therefore, ‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

Jesus loves to tell parables, and to tell them with a twist. We saw that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where he chose the least likely of characters to be the hero of the story. Here once again, Jesus does the same thing, except this time he’s not talking about people. He’s talking about seeds.

The Jewish people believed that, when God’s Kingdom came into the world, it would come suddenly and completely. This belief was one of the reasons why Jesus’ disciples argued between themselves about who would be greatest in God’s Kingdom. They thought that they would be kings in God’s Kingdom in their lifetime. But they were wrong. According to Jesus, the Kingdom wouldn’t come suddenly and completely. It would begin like a little mustard seed, which at 1-2 mm in diameter was the smallest of all the common seeds in the region. It would come into the world and barely be noticed. It would have humble origins, not grand ones.

But with time, this little mustard-seed-Kingdom would grow. Like the mustard plant, which could grow up to twelve feet tall, the Kingdom would rise up and be invisible no more. Instead, it would be seen by everyone, and like birds making nests in the branches of a plant, people everywhere would find shelter and rest in the safety of God’s Kingdom.

The second illustration makes a similar point. Jesus says in verses 20-21, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.” Once again, the Kingdom of God is likened to something that is small, hidden, unseen. The woman took leaven, which is like yeast, and *hid* it in flour, until the whole batch of flour was leavened. The leaven is God’s Kingdom, and the flour is the world. The leaven may not be seen now, but it’s only a matter of time before it completely changes the flour’s nature.

In other words, the Kingdom of God has both come and is coming into the world. It is both here and on its way here at the same time. It’s like a newborn baby. A baby isn’t full developed, and yet he or she is still fully human. The seed of the Kingdom has been planted, and it is only a matter of time before it becomes fully grown.

We don’t know where we are in the history of the Kingdom’s growth. We may be two thousand years removed from when the Kingdom was planted, but that doesn’t mean we’re close to its full maturity. The point here is that, although God’s Kingdom has broken into the world, it’s not yet what it will be. It’s here, but at the same time it’s still on its way. We live in the good of the Kingdom now, and we hope for the fullness of the Kingdom then.

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus has a lot more to say about the Kingdom. He’s going to talk to us about entering the Kingdom, about the kinds of people who live in the Kingdom, and about the cost of obtaining the Kingdom. But for now, our text poses one, simple question for all of us today: do we want to be a part of God’s Kingdom, or do we want to be part of a different one? Will we be like the birds building their nests in the mustard tree, or will we be like the synagogue ruler who rejected it?

Jesus is the only way into the Kingdom. Believe in him, trust in the gospel, and be welcomed into God’s Kingdom as both a citizen and an heir. If you’ve already put your trust in Christ, then our text today is meant to give you incredible, joyful hope. We aren’t home yet. The life we live is not the life we will live forever in our Father’s Kingdom. Let’s remember to pray what Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come.”

But if you have never put your faith in Christ, then right now you have no hope. God’s Kingdom doesn’t belong to you. It may not seem to make much of a difference to you now while the Kingdom isn’t here in its completeness, but when the Kingdom has grown to its fullness, you will spend an eternity regretting your choice to not trust in Christ.

So will you trust in Christ today? Jesus welcomes all into his Kingdom. His arms are opened wide to receive you. Come to him, and he will save you.