

1. What is the Kingdom of God?
 - a. King
 - i. This parable comes right after an issue of authority - Jesus' lordship of the Sabbath, authority over physical illness, and authority over Satan
 - ii. This, then, means that the kingdom of God is about the authority of the King, Jesus, and His people whom He rules, protects, provides for, and pervades with His power
 - b. Kingdom
 - i. Christianity is a kingdom, a ruling power
 - ii. The nature of the ruling power in Christianity is the life of God himself

2. The Kingdom of God is the Power of New Life Hidden: (Sown into soil/Folded into dough)
 - a. There is a subversive aspect to the growth of the Kingdom of God
 - i. The Spirit blows where He wishes (John 3) and you don't see Him, like the wind
 - b. The kingdom of God grows in the hearts of repentant people who entrust themselves to the rule and reign of King Jesus
 - i. When you introduce a seed into dirt made ready (fertilized with organic nutrients) you have a new order of life spring from lifeless soil
 1. The dirt without the seed is dead, but the Word implanted into dirt prepared produces a growth of the Word
 2. This is what happens to the Christian upon conversion:
 - a. The heart prepared by God (regeneration by the Holy Spirit), what Scripture calls being "born again", receives the Word of God with joy
 - b. Thus, new life is born into the heart and creates a new order of ruling power
 - c. You don't become a Christian in mere word, but in power of the Word of God and the power of the Spirit to produce faith and life
 - ii. The Word of God, received by faith, as a seed implanted, produces the fruit of the Spirit as it grows
 1. 1 Peter 1:23 – you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable seed, by the living and enduring Word of God preached to you
 2. James 1:18 – He chose to give us birth through the Word of Truth that we might be the first fruits of His creation
 3. John 3:3 – unless you are born again you cannot even SEE the kingdom of God
 4. John 3:5 – unless you are born of the Spirit you cannot enter the kingdom of God
 5. 2 Pet 1:3-4 – 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, ⁴ 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.
 - iii. These all show us that Christianity is not merely a worldview or idea that one adopts, but it is to be "born again"
 1. To receive the Spirit of God, the divine nature, the life of God, eternal life, a new nature of power with a new order of life
 - a. It is an imperishable seed
 - b. a power that is implanted through faith by God Himself, a ruling power which grows with new life into something greater and more glorious
 - c. Without this new life, this *born againness*, one is not in the kingdom of God
 - d. But if one is in the kingdom of God, this new life has already begun!
 2. Being born again is to be raised to a new order of life, a different and more glorious type of life
 - a. The glory of the Sun is different than that of the moon
 - b. There are progressive categories of life in nature that differ by glory
 - i. Plants can sense their surroundings and respond to variations in temperature, light, etc.

1. But they have no eyes to see nor ears to hear
2. Their capacity for “response” and “sense” is not the same as “thought”
- ii. Animals have 5 senses and respond in a differing, and more glorious (in this sense), way than plants do
 1. Thus, crows can problem solve, using cause-and-effect
- iii. Humans have a self-awareness, creativity, and thoughtfulness that extends beyond their own world to the world beyond them in a way more glorious than animals
 1. If a human is living like an animal, we would say that they are in a living death
 2. They are living a life inferior, below what they were made for
 3. A person is existing, but not living
- iv. This all shows us that there are variations of the order of life that are progressive in glory, and being born again is a new order of life, a greater order of life, a power that is not produced by a person but is planted within a person by God Himself through belief in Jesus Christ when one receives the gospel
- iv. In the same way, when you receive eternal life, born again by the Spirit of God, you are pushed to a differing way of living, from merely existing to truly living
- c. Thus, the kingdom is the people of God under the rule of Christ Jesus with the power of Christ indwelling you to a new order of truly living

3. The Kingdom of God Pervasively Grows to Greater and Greater Glory

- a. Being filled with the Spirit, there is a great transformative work being done, not merely in conversion, but in transformation into the image of Christ
 - i. Becoming a Christian, coming into the kingdom of God, is a life-altering transformative event
 - ii. It is being turned inside-out, powerfully moved from one degree of life so inferior to the life of God that it is death, to the life of God implanted within you to change you
 1. You do not become divine, but you do become glorious
- b. This transformation is not "all-at-once", but rather it is progressive transformation, change coming seasonally and slowly, from Winter's frost to Springtime's rains to Summer's heat; from tender shoot to the full maturity of a tree able to withstand every tumult
 - i. Seeds don't explode into trees...they gradually grow, noticeably changing, but not immediately arriving
 - ii. They take time – it is not the power of dynamite, but the organic power of life
 1. You can move mountains two ways: lots of dynamite or lots of time
 - a. Mount St. Helens was altered in a moment, and left in the ashes of death, killing everything around it, altering the landscape but covering everything in grey lifeless blanket
 - b. But what is there now? Life is altering the landscape to beauty, growing slowly and moving to glorious
 2. You can alter a field by blowing it apart or you can alter a field by planting an orchard, or a crop
 3. If you drop a seed against a stone, the stone will smash the seed, but if you plant the seed in a crack in the stone, over time the seed will destroy the stone
 - a. That's the power of gradual progressive organic life
 - b. Stones don't grow, soil doesn't grow, but life grows and spreads and powerfully alters things around it
 - iii. This powerful life of the Spirit is the gradual, secret, relentless growth which comes from God and bears the fruit of godliness consistent with the seed of God's life implanted
- c. Col 1:6 – “bearing fruit and *increasing* among you since the day that you heard it and believed”
 - i. The gospel of the kingdom of God grows in believers, from the day it is believed, and continues to grow

- ii. Bearing fruit – that is, the increasing aspect is not merely an increasing of the numbers of believers, but rather an increase of the fruit of the Spirit, the Christ-like holiness and godliness which grows in every believer as we come to *functionally* believe the gospel more
- d. 2 Cor 9:10 – “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”
 - i. Here we see that the supply of seed which grows is the seed of righteousness which produces righteousness
 - ii. This comes from the Lord, and as we take in His Word by faith, we are nourished and strengthened to depend upon Him wholeheartedly and expectantly pursue His kingdom and glory to the point where we take great risks for His kingdom and glory

“Let me urge upon you the importance of cultivating faith if you are to be able to walk in love and spiritual power. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but those who believe are given more grace than they can handle. Believing is to expect God to be with you and change you and change others. Therefore, expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” ~C.J. Miller

- e. The seed and the leaven do not become the soil or become the dough, but they transform the soil and transform the dough into a likeness consistent with their nature
 - i. The life of God within you doesn’t alter your personality, making you more intelligent or less intelligent, more emotional or less emotional
 - ii. But, the kingdom of God does alter you to think the thoughts of God, to desire the desires of God, to express emotionally consistent with the nature of God
 - 1. You become more loving, more peaceful, more joyful, more patient, kinder, gentler, etc.
 - 2. This alters not your personality, but your soul expressed through your personality, and you are transformed like rising dough
 - 3. The growth of the kingdom of God pervades you like leaven and as it rises toward godliness it takes you with it, shaping you into its own form, the form of the divine life of God, i.e. godliness
 - iii. It may take a while, but it will transform you!
 - 1. How can you tell if you have the Spirit of God?
 - 2. The doctrines of God become more than mere intellectual realities and become deeply loved truths that thrill your soul and alter your affections and behaviors
 - a. You become long-suffering in the face of provocation because the doctrine of God’s provision for you in Christ and the hope of glory give you fortitude in the midst of suffering (He could return tomorrow!)
 - b. You become loving to your enemies, pouring out your life and power for those who don’t appreciate you, because you are so deeply humbled by God’s provision for you in Christ Jesus and His cross, that you cannot think more highly of yourself than others
 - c. You become gentle, using your power for the sake of the weak, being thrilled that God was so gentle toward you in Christ Jesus
 - 3. The realities of the faith are “more real” than they’ve ever been before, so real that you *cannot* remain the same!

4. How is This the Ruling Power of Christ?

- a. Think about this: Why do you worry?
 - i. You worry because the threats of life are “more real” than the authority of Christ.
 - ii. But when the authority of Christ and His love for you are “more real” than the threats of life, you are peaceful, at rest.
- b. Think about this: Why do get bitter?
 - i. You get bitter because what people have done *to you* is “more real” than what Christ has done *for you*.

- ii. When what Christ has done for you is “more real” than what people have done to you, you forgive and love self-sacrificially – new life in the power of God’s Spirit
 - c. Think about this: Why do you pity yourselves?
 - i. You pity yourself because what people have said about you, or what you say about yourself, is “more real” than what Jesus says about you and to you, i.e. “I love you.” “In me you have great glory and nothing to be ashamed of.”
 - ii. But when the words of Jesus to you and about you become more real to your heart, the more they rule your self-thoughts and the more free you are from self-pity to become more and more joyful
 - d. To the progressing degree that the doctrines of the gospel become “more real” than all other claims upon your heart, mind, and affections, the more you are ruled by the Kingdom of God and the more you take on the shape of Jesus Christ in the fullness of the Spirit and live the life of God
- 5. There is Hope for Change Today...by Receiving the Word of God
 - a. As we believe the gospel, take it in as the Real, the more real, we are transformed
 - i. Romans 15:13 – “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. “
 - b. Maybe for the first time today, you receive the Word as true, the power of God and the life of God implanted within you as you entrust yourself to the only true Savior and source of all life, Jesus Christ
 - c. Maybe you are a sapling, tender shoots, easily bruised, yet to mature, but the Word of life has sprung up in you and you are of a different life, a greater life, an eternal life because of this seed.
 - i. Take it in, ask the Lord to reform and transform you into His image, adjudicate the claims for what is true and real by it until your affections are fixed upon the glory of Christ Jesus and the thrill of His life in you moves your soil and shapes your life into His image
 - d. He is doing it! It is true! Take hope, my dear friend!
 - i. It may be that you cannot see the change at such short intervals, so ask your believing friends to vindicate the changes that they have seen the Lord work in you
 - ii. If they are there, be confident that you belong to Him!

“And this is the testimony: that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1Jo 5:11-13)

Benediction:

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:10-11)