

HIS KINGDOM

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.” (Mt 13:44)

The kingdom of God is the main theme of the whole Bible. Who is the central figure of the kingdom? He is Jesus Christ, God’s King. When we have an understanding of the kingdom of God, we have the big picture. Hearing the word **“kingdom,”** what comes to your mind? Throughout history, kings exercised absolute authority over their subjects. Jesus said, **“My kingdom is not of this world”** (Jn 18:36). The kingdom of God is totally different from the kingdoms of this world. The word “kingdom” here refers to rule or reign. So, the kingdom of God is God’s rule or God’s reign.

In today’s key verse, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to hidden treasure like a jar full of priceless jewels. So, one who finds it joyfully sells all he has to get it. If you find such a hidden treasure, wouldn’t you do the same? Let’s think about why the kingdom of God has such supreme value. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to find newly the treasure in God’s kingdom and live to get its glorious riches.

First, the kingdom lost and God’s hope for restoration

Now, let’s think about how mankind was given the kingdom of God. Psalm 19:1 says, **“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”** On earth, God created humans in his image so that they might rule over all living creatures. For the first man and woman, God planted a garden in Eden. In the garden there grew all kinds of fruit-bearing trees and flowers. A river watered the garden, and the land was adorned with various kinds of jewels. There Adam and Eve lived like a king and a queen. No working for a living, no sickness or pain. In the middle of the garden were two trees that sustained the paradise—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees symbolized eternal life through loving fellowship with God in obedience. (Gen 1-2) God’s provision of everything humans needed for their happiness showed God’s love. In God are all the treasures we need and desire. Eden was “The Garden Kingdom of God.”

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How did humans lose the kingdom of God? Sadly, our ancestors were deceived to seek false self-fulfillment out of their pride, disobeying God. The consequences of sin are dreadful. Humans lost paradise. The image of God in them was greatly marred and the Holy Spirit left them. Ever since, human society has been filled with jealousy, violence, murder, and immorality. People have to toil for a living, and strife and wars are everywhere. The most formidable of the consequences is death. All humans have to face physical death, and then God's judgment (Heb 9:27). The world is filled with people who choose eternal separation from God. Man's sin also affected nature. All living creatures are also subject to death and decay and suffer in a jungle of the survival of the fittest. So, we see that all problems in the world came from humans' loss of God's kingdom. And all problems will disappear when the fulfilled kingdom of God comes.

Out of his great mercy, God began to work to restore his kingdom to humans. God called Abraham to raise people from all nations who would receive the blessings of his reign. Out of Abraham's descendants, God raised Israel and, after delivering them from their slavery, he made a covenant with them, **"If you obey me fully and keep my covenant....you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"** (Ex 19:5-6). God wanted to proclaim his glory to the whole world through the Israelites' holy life. However, Israel didn't understand the spiritual blessings under God's reign and sought prosperity after the way of the world. The results were slavery to sin and suffering under the oppression of the surrounding nations. However, God was with them until he established a theocratic kingdom through David. King David conquered all the surrounding enemies and reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right before God (2Sa 8:15). Under King David, the Israelites tasted the blessings of God's kingdom. God promised David, **"I will raise up your offspring to succeed you.... He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."** (2Sa 7:13-14) Based on this covenant, Christ who was to come was called the Son of David.

Due to sin, David's kingdom declined and finally ended. During that period, God, through the prophets, revealed his world salvation plan through the Christ. Prophet Isaiah foretold that the Christ would come as a child, but he is divine (Isa 9:6). He would suffer and die for the sins of his people and would be glorified (Isa

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53). He would bring God's knowledge, peace, righteousness and justice to the world. Later, a revelation was given to Prophet Daniel. Daniel 7:13-14 reads, **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man...He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him... his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."** One like a son of man was the Christ who would come as God Incarnate. Through his sacrifice, the Christ would purchase his people from every tribe and nation. He would restore them to inherit a new heaven and a new earth to come.

Old Testament history shows humans' unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. People were unfaithful, because they sought treasure in the world, rather than in God. But God was faithful to his covenant because of his love. The kingdom of God is our sure hope because of the unchanging love and faithfulness of God. Praise God!

Second, the kingdom restored by Christ

Now let's think about how Christ came to restore the kingdom. When the set time had fully come, the Son of God voluntarily renounced his heavenly glory and was incarnated to be the Christ (Gal 4:4). When Jesus entered Jerusalem the last time to be crucified, he rode on a donkey. Matthew later recorded in his gospel, **"This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 'Say to Daughter Zion, "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey...."'"** (Mt 21:4-5) Jesus' entry into Jerusalem showed a kingship that is totally different from that of worldly kings. Earthly kings come to claim their authority and demand servitude from their subjects. How did Jesus bring his Kingdom to earth? Jesus said, **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** (Mk 10:45). Christ came to bring his kingdom through his servanthip. How did he serve people?

First, he was with all kinds of sinners. He called his disciples from ordinary people to be with him (Mk 3:14). He was with Simon, a fisherman, and Levi, a tax collector, until they became St. Peter and St. Matthew. He became a friend to the

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outcasts and sinners to help them find a new life. He was with the sick and the demon-possessed to give each of them healing. He became a father to many. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (Jn 12:1). He preached the good news of the kingdom of God. His first message was, **“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”** (Mk 1:15) Jesus proclaimed that the promised saving reign of God was ushered into the world through his coming. He called people to repentance and forgiveness. He taught the word of God from the first day to the last day of his earthly ministry.

Second, he gave his life on the cross and he rose again. The betrayal, trial and condemnation of Jesus revealed the darkest nature of humans’ sin. But he did not open his mouth like a lamb led to the slaughter. He was condemned, punished and crucified as the representative of sinners. On the cross, he experienced the most dreadful hours of being abandoned by God (Mt 27:46). He was buried and his spirit fully tasted the pangs of death. In this way, he took our place and carried away our sins. According to the prophecies, Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. His resurrection proves that he did indeed die for the sin of the world, and that a perfect redemption comes to all who believe. By the power of his resurrection, he has freed all his people from the power of death and Satan. By faith in his blood, we have become God’s children and kingdom citizens.

Third, he gave the church his world mission command. For 40 days, the Risen Christ appeared to his disciples and planted resurrection faith in their hearts. He also spoke about how the kingdom of God would expand to the whole world through the witness of his Name. He promised that the Holy Spirit would come to empower them to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8). After giving this Great Commission to his church, he ascended into heaven. As he was going, two angels told the apostles, **“This same Jesus ... will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven”** (Ac 1:11). After fulfilling God’s will for world salvation, the Son of God returned to the Father to receive all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).

He will come again to judge the living and the dead. He will subdue all enemies until he hands everything over to the Father (1Co 15:28). The day will

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surely come when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Father and of our Lord, and he will reign forever! (Rev 11:15)

Third, the supreme value of His kingdom

We learned how Christ came to restore the kingdom on earth through his beautiful kingship. Now we want to think about how we should respond to the kingdom that has come. Let's read today's key verse again. **“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”** (Mt 13:44) The point of this parable is not that you buy or barter the kingdom. The point is: The kingdom of God has supreme value that it is worth losing everything to get it.

Why is the kingdom supreme in value? Under the power of sin and death, we experienced spiritual deadness, powerless and suffering of guilt. We didn't know the truth and meaning or purpose in life. Thanks be to God, who delivered us from sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord! We now bear the fruit of righteousness, and enjoy peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro 14:17). Though outwardly we are wasting away, our inner persons are being renewed day by day (2Co 4:16). When King Jesus comes again, he will raise each of us in a glorious spiritual body (1Co 15:49). Then we will enter the perfected kingdom of God. Jesus showed a vision of the Holy City to Apostle John. It is shining with the glory of God. There will be no more night, for God will be the light. There we will see our Lord face to face. We will walk on streets of pure gold. We will eat the fruits of the tree of life beside the river of life. There will be no more sin, death or mourning or crying or pain. (Rev 21:1-4, 11-21; 22:1-5) What can compare to the kingdom of God in glory, richness, and perfection?

The second part of Jesus' parable reads: **“When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”** Jesus is not teaching that we have to sell our houses or cars to inherit the kingdom of God. He is emphasizing the importance of knowing the supreme value of the kingdom and duly investing our life for his kingdom. I think that Jesus spoke about this for two reasons.

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First, he wants to have a heart-to-heart love relationship with us. When we think about this parable another way, we are reminded of what God did. God regarded each of us as a treasure of supreme value and made a great sacrifice to purchase us to be his own treasured possession. Jesus is calling us to give God our whole hearts, as God gave his whole heart to us. In the Bible, we read how much God was pleased with his people who gave their hearts to God. When Abraham offered Isaac to God, God was so pleased that he blessed Abraham with a blessing sworn by his own Name (Ge 22:17-18). The Lord Jesus was pleased with the woman who poured a jar of very expensive perfume on him and with a widow who offered to God all she had, and honored them (Mk 14:69, 12:43-44). When we meet the Lord, wouldn't he talk about the beautiful acts we have given to him? Our love story with God will remain forever in the kingdom of God.

Second, he wants to give us eternal rewards and glory. God will repay each person according to what they have done (Ro 2:6). We should remember that, though we will inherit the eternal kingdom, our rewards and glory will be different according to what we have done. Jesus said that anyone who gives a cup of cold water to his little ones will not lose their reward (Mt 10:42). How much more, will he reward the devotion we give to him? We shouldn't miss the word "joy" in Jesus' words, **"in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."** Why was the man joyful? Because he knew the far surpassing value of the treasure over his loss. He was not only joyful; he was excited. His mind and heart were captured by the treasure. Whatever we give to the Lord is not a waste. When we give ourselves to the Lord, he expresses his joy by filling our hearts with utmost joy and happiness.

I was a sin-sick young man. I didn't have the kingdom of God. I was fearful under the power of evil spirits. Through Bible study, God gave me new birth by the blood of Christ. Then I began to experience the freedom, peace and joy of the kingdom of God. The Lord called me to be a UBF lay Bible teacher and shepherd. I am most thankful to God for this calling. If I was not called, I would have wasted my life. UBF taught me taking up my cross for God's kingdom and follow Christ. Because of the discipleship, I could bear fruit that lasts. When I sold things that do not last, I gained Christ and his kingdom.

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I was a student missionary in Oregon State when P. Ron was the most faithful Bible student. I met a crisis, because my professor gave me an ultimatum that I should choose either Ph. D study or campus ministry. In my prayers, the Lord strengthened me to continue campus ministry, giving up my Ph. D candidacy. Then the Lord opened a way to finish my study under another professor. When I returned to Korea and worked as a professor of the Korea Military Academy, the Lord called me to plant a new UBF chapter. I responded to this call with a decision to be a B professor in order to be an A shepherd. God blessed my chapter to grow and send out missionaries. When time came for me to promote to be a colonel, the Lord helped me to promote ahead of my peers. Thus, he made me an A professor and A shepherd. These memories remain as love stories between the Lord and me. Through these, the Lord showed his delight and blessings on my small heart devotion to him. Through these, I leaned the Lord's sovereign power and faithfulness. What makes me most happy and thankful is that I could live for Christ and eternal kingdom. I believe many of you would testify to the same.

I shared my small devotions. I'd like also share a story of huge devotion. Jim Elliot, a Wheaton College graduate, was martyred at the age of 29 along with four other missionaries during their missionary efforts for the Huaorani tribe in Ecuador. In his diary his was written, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." "For Christ and His Kingdom" is the school motto of Wheaton College. Jim practiced what he learned, giving his whole heart, even his life, to Christ. We know that he has received praise and glory from the Lord which he will never lose, and that he is rejoicing for the decision he made.

Fourth, "Your kingdom come"

As God's dearly loved heirs of his kingdom, we should not forget the purpose and meaning of our life. As kingly priests, one of our privileges is to pray. Jesus taught us what to pray first; **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"** (Mt 6:9b-10). Our first prayer should be for God that his name be glorified, that his reign come, and that his will be done on earth. This is **God's kingdom vision**. The kingdom vision should start with ourselves. We should sincerely pray that God's

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name be glorified in and through us, and that God's lordship may fully come, and his will be done in our life.

Then we should pray that God's holy name be known, his rule be restored, and his will be done in the lives of people in our families, in campuses, and in our workplaces and communities, and in the world. Unbelievers are lost children to God and lost brothers and sisters to us. God does not want any of them to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2Pe 3:9). There are heart-breaking stories of parents who are seeking their lost sons or daughters. Those parents' broken hearts reflect the heart of our heavenly Father. As we remember God's great mercy and love, how can we be indifferent toward his broken heart and the fate of our lost brothers and sisters? The primary mission of the church is to be witnesses of our King Jesus for salvation of all peoples of the world.

We are going to have an international Bible conference with the theme, "His Kingdom." We have chosen this theme based on the key verse of Matthew 6:10—God's kingdom vision. Let's pray that God's kingdom may fully come into our hearts and lives. Let's pray that Christ may come in the hearts of our Bible students whom we invite. Let's also pray that our precious coworkers who are coming from all around the world may be refreshed and inspired by God's kingdom vision. May the Lord raise many short-term missionaries among our young people who would do beautiful things to the Lord. May the Lord also raise many silver missionaries who would reach out to 130 countries that are waiting for UBF self-supporting missionaries.

The kingdom vision is certain to be accomplished because it is God's vision. We are weak, but, as we give our hearts to him, God works out his vision by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit daily fill us with the joy of gaining the glorious riches of treasures that are in Christ and his kingdom.