

Luke 13:18-21

"The Unstoppable Kingdom"

September 21, 2025

1. Intro

a. What is the Kingdom of God like?

i. That's a pretty important question, isn't it?

1. Just in the four Gospels alone, this phrase, the "Kingdom of God," is mentioned 126 times

ii. We get the first mention of the Kingdom in Luke chapter 1, when the angel, Gabriel, comes and speaks to the young virgin, Mary,, and he says to her,

1. ³¹*"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, AND OF HIS KINGDOM there will be no end."*

a. The great King of David's kingdom was about to be conceived in young Mary's womb!

iii. In Matthew, chapter 2, wise men from the east, magi from possibly as far away as the land of Persia...

1. Follow a star to the city of Jerusalem, where they begin asking the question,

a. ²*"Where is he who has been born KING of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*

i. The great King of David's kingdom had now been born!

iv. Some 28 years later, the prophet John the Baptist began preaching in the wilderness of Judea...

1. ²*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

a. The great King of David's kingdom had come of age... the Kingdom had come near!

v. Jesus himself affirms this in Matthew chapter 4, as he begins his earthly ministry preaching the exact same words as John the Baptist...

1. ¹⁷*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

vi. This Kingdom language would indeed run throughout Jesus' brief ministry

1. In multiple passages, we read of Jesus going from town to town, from village to village

a. In each of these places, Jesus...

i. Taught in the synagogues

ii. He healed those with diseases and disabilities

iii. He cast out demons

iv. And he proclaimed the Gospel... OF THE KINGDOM

2. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray back in Luke chapter 11, the first thing that he taught them was,

a. *"Father, hallowed be your name... Your Kingdom come!"*

3. And in Acts, chapter 1, Luke tells us that, after Jesus was raised from the dead...

a. ³*He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

i. It is not an overstatement AT ALL to say that the Kingdom of God was at the forefront of Jesus' mission...

1. From the announcement of his birth, to the days just before he ascended to his throne in Heaven
 - a. Jesus was unwavering in his devotion to the Kingdom of his Father
- vii. So again, we cannot overemphasize the question, can we...
 1. What is the Kingdom of God like?
 - a. Now, we have to acknowledge that your answer to this question depends A LOT on your eschatology, doesn't it?
 - i. If you're not familiar with that word, eschatology is just a fancy word for the study of the end times
 1. We've talked before about the various views on the end times, and how there are good, strong believers who have all sorts of various interpretations of the end times
 - a. And therefore they have all sorts of views on the Kingdom
 2. Speaking in very broad categories, if you tend to fall in the PRE-millennial, dispensationalist camp...
 - a. Then you are likely to say that the Kingdom of God has not yet arrived
 - i. Many in this camp would say that all of this "Kingdom language" that is used in the Gospels was meant SPECIFICALLY for the people of Israel
 1. And so, when the people of Israel rejected Jesus, the offer of the Kingdom was rescinded... at least for now
 - a. FOR NOW, we are living in the Church Age
 - i. Jesus is building his church all over the world
 - ii. He is cleansing and sanctifying for himself a people
 - b. But ultimately, this people, the Church, will be raptured out of the earth
 - i. Christ will return to the earth to sit on the throne of David
 - ii. And he, along with the people of Israel, will finally usher in the Kingdom Age, as they rule over the nations
 2. So, many in this camp would argue that the Kingdom of God is still to come
 - a. And it WILL NOT arrive until Christ returns to establish his millennial Kingdom
 3. Now, if you fall more in the POST-millennial camp, you would tend to have a very different view of the Kingdom of God
 - a. Those in this camp would also argue that the Kingdom of God has not yet arrived
 - i. But the reason that the Kingdom has not yet arrived IS NOT because we are waiting on the return of Jesus...
 1. Rather, it is because the CHURCH is not following Jesus' commands
 - a. It is the responsibility of THE CHURCH to usher in the return of Jesus, as we begin to make this earth a place FIT for his Kingdom
 - i. We do this by taking over the political realm

- ii. We do this by reestablishing our dominance in the realm of education and science
 - b. We do this by reshaping every sphere of society
 - i. The arts...
 - ii. Sports...
 - iii. Schooling...
 - ii. The church is to reclaim ALL of these things for Jesus,
 - 1. And as we are OBEDIENT, this world will begin to look more and more like the Kingdom of God
 - a. And eventually it will reach a tipping point for the good
 - i. The Golden Age will come
 - ii. Christ will return
 - iii. And the Kingdom of God will be realized on the earth
 - b. Again, painting in very broad brushstrokes...
 - i. The Kingdom of God is not yet here, but we could fix that if we would just be faithful to our call, and retake all of society in the name of Christ
 - viii. Now, as I said a moment ago, there are good Christians that hold to each of these views
 - 1. John MacArthur was one of the giants of the faith, and he was very much in the premillennial, dispensationalist camp
 - 2. Jonathan Edwards, and many of the Puritans of the 1600's and 1700's – men who have been TREMENDOUSLY helpful to the church over the centuries...
 - a. Many of them fall very much into the postmillennial camp
 - ix. And so, humbly, I would say this...
 - 1. Is it possible that there is a DIFFERENT way to view the Kingdom of God?
 - a. Is it possible to just take a plain and simple reading of the Scriptures and say that the Kingdom is ALREADY here?
 - b. Is it possible to say that the Kingdom of God came into this world with the coming of Christ, and that it is even now advancing across the earth...
 - i. NOT as the Christians regain dominance in all the various spheres of society,
 - 1. But as the Church humbly and peaceably embraces the completely counter-cultural call of Jesus?
 - x. I would argue that this is indeed what the Scriptures teach us, and I believe our passage for this morning is a key text to understanding the Kingdom in this way
 - 1. Let's look at it together, starting in verse 18...
2. Luke 13:18-21
 - a. *¹⁸He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It 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." ²⁰And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."*
3. Now, I've said this many times before, but one of the most important tools you can have when you study the Scriptures is this...
 - a. When you see the word, "therefore," in the Bible, STOP and ask what it's there for!
 - i. Therefore is an intentional connecting word, that is meant to link the current passage with the previous passage

1. And so, if we just jump right into verses 18-21, without pausing to revisit the previous passage, then we are likely to miss the point
 - ii. So what happened in the previous passage?
 1. Well, if you remember from last week, Jesus had just healed a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years
 - a. The ruler of the synagogue got all worked up that Jesus would dare to heal this woman on the Sabbath Day, and so Jesus said to him in verse 15,
 - i. ¹⁵*"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? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"*
 1. The religious leaders of Jesus day were hyper-focused on keeping the people bound up in all their rules and traditions
 - a. And they didn't understand that, by doing so, they were keeping the people bound up by Satan
 2. But Jesus had come to set the prisoners free!
 - a. In Luke 4, as Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, he proclaimed,
 - i. *"The Lord has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the recovery of sight to the blind! He has sent me to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor!"*
 - b. As we saw in Luke 11,
 - i. Jesus proclaimed that, in his coming, he has entered into the palace of the strong man, Satan
 1. He who is stronger has attacked the strong man
 - a. He has overcome him
 - b. He has plundered his goods
 - c. He has taken all the spoils of the enemy
 - ii. And he said to the great crowds of people surrounding him...
 1. "The Kingdom of God has come upon you!"
 - iii. So when Jesus heals this poor woman here in Luke chapter 13, he is certainly reorienting the people's view of the Sabbath Day, which we talked about last week
 1. But at the same time, Jesus is breaking the bonds of Satan
 2. He is plundering the house of the enemy
 3. And he is beginning to establish the Kingdom of God upon this earth
4. THEREFORE, Jesus says, "What is the Kingdom of God like?"
 - a. Why would Jesus ask this question now?
 - i. Why would he SPECIFICALLY link this question to the FREEDOM that this woman was now walking in?
 1. Because the Kingdom of God was HERE!
 - a. NOW! On that very day!
 - b. But here's the key...
 - i. The Kingdom DID NOT come with a loud trumpet blast and the sending out of the angels of God
 - ii. The Kingdom DID NOT come with Jesus riding on a white horse with the armies of heaven coming behind him
 - iii. The Kingdom DID NOT come with Jesus triumphantly marching up to Herod's throne, kicking him out of his position, and then throwing all the Roman oppressors out of the land
 1. No, the Kingdom came like a mustard seed

- a. The Kingdom came in the small mustard seed of a young woman in the quiet little town of Bethlehem giving birth to the Son of God
 - b. The Kingdom came in the small mustard seed of this baby boy humbly and unremarkably growing into a young man in the backwater town of Nazareth
 - c. The Kingdom came in this unknown, untrained Rabbi, who is now casting out demons, healing the sick and the disabled, and preaching the Kingdom of God
- iv. The Kingdom came like a tiny little mustard seed
 - 1. But note what Jesus says about this tiny little mustard seed
 - a. He doesn't say that the mustard seed was planted, but the land rejected the mustard seed
 - i. And therefore the seed is just lying dormant and unseen until some later date
 - 2. That's not at all how Jesus describes it!
- v. The Kingdom is like a seed that has been sown
 - 1. And, rather than lying dormant, it does what seeds are supposed to do...
 - a. It GROWS
 - i. Steadily...
 - ii. Consistently...
 - b. Just as it has been designed to do,
 - i. The seed is sown into the ground, and it grows over time until it is a place of rest and refuge for the birds of the air
 - 2. So also has the Kingdom of God come!
 - a. The Kingdom was sown into the ground with Christ, as Christ descended to the earth and took on flesh
 - i. The Kingdom began to establish its roots as Christ began setting at liberty those who had been oppressed
 - 1. And the Kingdom of God CONTINUES to grow, just as it has been designed to do
 - a. It is not lying dormant as it waits for some appointed day in the future to try again
 - b. The Kingdom of God is growing, even as we speak, as THE CHURCH advances all across the globe
 - i. As THE CHURCH is faithful in living out the Great Commission, making disciples of all nations,
 - 1. The Kingdom is expanding across the world
 - a. Every time a church is planted in a new city where Christ has not yet been proclaimed, a new branch of this tree begins to take shape
 - b. Every time the Gospel is proclaimed, and an individual surrenders their life to Christ and puts their faith in him, a new bud begins to emerge on the branch
 - c. Every time that new disciple of Jesus goes out and makes MORE disciples, teaching them to follow after everything that Jesus has commanded,
 - i. That branch ERUPTS with new blossoms
 - 2. The tree continues to grow
 - a. The Kingdom continues to expand

- c. For the Kingdom of God 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
 - vi. But note that the Kingdom of God is also like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened
 - 1. Now, why would Jesus use the word “hid” in this passage?
 - a. That’s not the way we would typically describe the bread making process, is it?
 - i. If you were to look up a recipe for making a loaf of bread, it would say something like
 - 1. “Take such and such amount of leaven, or yeast, and MIX it into the flour... or STIR it into the flour...”
 - a. Or something along those lines
 - b. But Jesus says that the Kingdom is like leaven that has been HIDDEN in the flour
 - i. So why would he say that?
 - 1. Well, we have to be careful here and say that he IS NOT telling us that the Kingdom is supposed to be hidden and removed from the world, is he?
 - a. Jesus very clearly tells us that we are to be the salt and light in the world around us
 - b. He very clearly tells us that we ARE NOT to hide the light we have been given
 - i. We ARE NOT to isolate ourselves in monasteries
 - ii. Nor are we to isolate ourselves in our nice little church bubbles
 - c. We are called to be out IN the world, proclaiming the Kingdom boldly and unapologetically with both our actions and our words
 - c. So again, why would Jesus say that the Kingdom is like leaven that has been HIDDEN in the flour?
 - 2. I believe that he is addressing THE HEART with which we participate in expanding the Kingdom of God upon this earth
 - a. Friends, we are not called to advance the Kingdom of God through political power and authority
 - i. We are called to advance the Kingdom through meekness and humility
 - b. We are not called to advance the Kingdom of God by taking over society and forcing others to do what we tell them to do
 - i. We are called to advance the Kingdom by surrendering our lives and our rights and our wants, and by SERVING those in need
 - c. We are not called to rise up and get angry and to fight tooth and nail for the rights of the church
 - i. We are called to be gentle and kind
 - ii. We are called to be loving and compassionate
 - 1. Blessed are THE MEEK, for THEY shall inherit the earth
- vii. This is the upside-down nature of the Kingdom of God, isn’t it?
 - 1. From the very beginning, the Kingdom has come in such a way that it has upset all of the cultural norms, of every society

- a. This was what Mary sang about back in Luke 1, when she said,
 - i. *⁴⁶My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*
2. This was the incredible proclamation this young teenage girl made...
 - a. God's mercy is for those who FEAR him
 - b. He has no time for those who proud in their hearts
 - c. There is no place in His Kingdom for those who sit on mighty thrones
 - d. He has no regard for the rich and the wealthy in this world
 - i. But rather...
 1. He exalts those of HUMBLE estate
 2. He fills THE HUNGRY with good things
 3. He shows mercy to those who walk in reverent awe of who HE is... not of who THEY are
- viii. Friends, it is in this sense that the Kingdom of God is "hidden" in this world
 1. This Kingdom does not advance as the kingdoms of this earth advance
 - a. We don't advance through political power
 - b. We don't advance through the might of our sword
 - c. We don't advance by rising up and taking over
 2. We advance by following in the footsteps of our King
 - a. As we pray for those who persecute us
 - b. As we bless those who curse us
 - c. As we love those who revile us and mock us and seek to take our lives
 - i. In these ways, the Kingdom is hidden from those who do not have eyes to see
 1. But don't miss the fact that, just as the mustard seed grows as it is designed to grow,
 - a. So also the leaven affects all the dough, just as it has been designed to do
 3. I would love it if the Lord raised up more Christian politicians in our land – not just Christian in name only, but TRULY surrendered to Christ and to his Word
 - a. That would be a wonderful thing to see
 - i. But that is not necessary for the Kingdom to continue to expand here in our country
 4. I would love it if the Lord raised up more TRULY Christian teachers in our public school systems, and they began modeling for all these kids what it TRULY looks like to follow Jesus
 - a. But that is not necessary for the Kingdom to continue to expand here in our country

5. It would be awesome if more Christians entered into the arts and the sciences, and sports and education, simply out of the desire to make Christ known in all of those arenas
 - a. But that is not necessary for the Kingdom to continue to expand here in our country
 - i. For the Kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman took and HID in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened
5. Brothers and sisters in Christ, have no doubt about it...
 - a. The Kingdom of God will indeed expand here in the US, and in countries all over the world,
 - i. If we as the church would first of all acknowledge that the Kingdom is HERE
 1. Its not some distant promise that awaits a future day
 - a. The Kingdom of God came to this earth with the coming of Christ
 - i. And it IS growing, steadily and quietly, despite all of the attempts of this world to stop it
 - ii. But, equally as important as acknowledging that the Kingdom is here, we ALSO need to understand what OUR role in the Kingdom is
 1. And so we'll spend the rest of our time this morning unpacking three of our main roles in the Kingdom of God
 6. The first role that we have in the Kingdom of God is that we are CITIZENS of the Kingdom of God
 - a. We see this in Ephesians, chapter 2, if you will go ahead and turn there in your Bible
 - i. In Ephesians 1, Paul is talking about the glories of all that we have been given in Jesus Christ
 1. He unpacks the mystery and the majesty of God's plan that He has set forth from the very foundations of the world
 - a. And he reminds us that we have been brought into this incredible plan
 - ii. But here in chapter 2, Paul goes into greater detail of what all Jesus has done for us at the cross, starting in verse 11...
 1. *¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
 - a. Now, that's what we talked about last week, isn't it?
 - i. We are no longer under the law of commandments, because Christ has FULFILLED all the stipulations required by those commandments
 1. That's why we are not bound to the Sabbath Day of the Old Testament, because Christ has BECOME our Sabbath rest
 - a. All of that served as SHADOWS of what was to come
 - ii. And so Christ DID come, and he broke down the wall between Jew and Gentile
 1. And he has made ONE man in place of the two
 - a. A people who are ALL reconciled to God through the cross
 - i. Paul goes on...

- b. *¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

iii. Because of the cross, friends, you are now CITIZENS in the Kingdom of God

1. There is no more Jew or Gentile...

- a. There is no more barbarian or Scythian
- b. There is no more American Christian or Mexican Christian
- c. There is no more Russian Christian or Ukrainian Christian
- d. There is no more Palestinian Christian or Jewish Christian

iv. Our citizenship has fundamentally and eternally been changed, my friends

1. For our citizenship is now in the Kingdom of God

- a. This is what ultimately set all the Old Testament saints apart from everyone else in their world in those days

i. The writer of the book of Hebrews says in Hebrews 11:13-16,

- 1. *¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*

2. My friends, if our mind is set on making the United States of America the heart of Christendom here on earth, then we have missed it

- a. We must acknowledge that part of our dying to ourselves and surrendering to Jesus is the reality that we are now strangers and exiles upon this earth

i. We must set our desires upon the better country

ii. We must set our gaze upon the Kingdom of God

1. For THAT is where our citizenship now resides!

7. And once we come to grips with that reality, then we can embrace the second role that we have all been given in the Kingdom... and that is the role of AMBASSADOR

a. Turn now to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5

i. In this chapter, Paul is reminding the Christians in Corinth that this is not our home

1. These earthly tents that we are living in are just temporary

2. These earthly trials that we are experiencing are just momentary

- a. And because these things are true, Paul then tells them, starting in verse 16,

i. *¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.*

Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was

ii. My friends, if you are a citizen of the Kingdom of God, then you are an AMBASSADOR for the Kingdom of God

- a. But He has entrusted YOU to go out and tell others this incredible news
 - i. He didn't give this message to the angels, even though the angels could have delivered it far more powerfully and effectively than we can
 - ii. He didn't broadcast this message in the clouds for everyone to see, even though that would have been a quick and easy thing for Him to do

- i. And if you really think about it, how could we NOT be???

a. As priests within the Kingdom of God, we are first and foremost to call people to WORSHIP God

- b. We are to bring before Him the sacrifices of our praise
 - i. We are to bring before Him the sacrifices of our very own lives
 - b. Like the Apostle Paul, we are to be willing to be poured out as a drink offering, as we fight the good fight, as we strive to finish our races strong
- b. My friends, the Kingdom of God is indeed here, and it IS growing
 - i. It is not advancing loudly and proudly as the kingdoms of this world advance
 - 1. It is advancing through the steadfast faithfulness of the saints
 - a. Through those who have set their gaze on the better country of which they are now citizens
 - b. Through those who have embraced their appointed roles as ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation
 - c. And through those who have given everything to God, as his appointed priests in the Kingdom,
 - i. Pointing others to worship the ONLY One who is truly worthy of our worship
- c. This is the Kingdom that Christ has already begun upon this earth
- d. This is the Kingdom that will be fully consummated upon his return
 - i. And therefore, heaven sings out,
 - 1. *“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth!”*