

The King Describes His Kingdom (6:1-49)

This chapter overflows with meaning. In one lesson we cannot begin to capture the full richness of what Luke records for us. However, to get a small taste, we will highlight seven ways Jesus describes the kingdom of God ...

The kingdom of God is merciful (6:1-11).

The anger of the Jewish religious leaders is about to boil over. Jesus has publicly demonstrated He is superior to them in word and in power. They must find a way to diminish Jesus and regain their place of influence among the Jewish crowds. So, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of breaking one of the most important Jewish laws and traditions-the Sabbath.

Strict observance of the Sabbath is paramount to the Jews. The Jewish authorities had taken the simple command: *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy* (Ex 20:8) and added more than thirty categories of activities forbidden on the Sabbath. What God had intended as a day of rest and rejoicing, religious leaders had twisted into a day of burden and boredom.

Luke details two of these Sabbath conflicts. The Pharisees first condemn Jesus' disciples for picking handfuls of grain on a Sabbath day. Jesus responds: "*The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath*" (6:5). Later, they accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by healing a man with a withered hand. Ironically, their love for enforcing religious tradition makes them hate Jesus for doing good.

How does Jesus rebuke the Pharisees' behavior in Matthew 12:7?

The kingdom of God is revealed to the chosen (6:12-19).

Jesus ordains the proclamation of His kingdom is the work of those He chooses, starting with the twelve *apostles* (6:13-16) and expanding to the larger *crowd of his disciples* (6:17). God chose an obscure shepherd named Abram to be a blessing to the whole world (Gen. 12:1). In the same way, Jesus chooses ordinary disciples to take Christ's message to the whole world.

In the last part of 1 Peter 2:9, how does Peter explain this truth?

The kingdom of God blesses those who suffer for righteousness' sake (6:20-23).

Jesus preached to different crowds in different places. He proclaimed the same truths while adjusting the message to suit the circumstances. We can see this when we compare this "Sermon on the Plain" (6:17-49) with the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5-7). The message was the same, but Jesus adjusted the detail and delivery to fit the time, place, and audience.

In both sermons, Jesus says people are blessed when they encounter suffering for His name's sake. This teaching becomes a reality in Acts 5 when the apostles are arrested and beaten for preaching in the temple. How do the apostles react when they are released from prison (Acts 5:41b)?

Jesus promises we, as citizens in the kingdom of God, are blessed when we suffer for Jesus' name. However, the opposite is also true ...

The kingdom of God condemns those who seek satisfaction in unrighteous pleasures (6:24-26).

To contrast blessed people with condemned people in His kingdom, Jesus uses the phrase, "*Woe to you*," meaning "how terrible it will be for you." Jesus says it will be terrible for anyone who seeks spiritual fulfillment in money, food, laughter, and social standing. People who are satisfied with the fleeting pleasures of this fallen world will reject the greater gift of God. What then happens to these people, according to the last phrase of 1 Timothy 6:9?

This does not mean God won't save wealthy people. Matthew, Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, Lydia, Barnabas, and others were all materially successful people. However, as Christians, they used their material means for godly ends. Wealthy people who come to Christ are *to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share ... so that they may take hold of that which is truly life* (1 Tim. 6:18-19).

Jesus continues with another description of His kingdom ...

The kingdom of God reveals "agape" love (6:27-42).

Jesus sets a different standard for His kingdom as opposed to worldly kingdoms --"agape" love. In verse 27, He proclaims, "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*" The word translated love is the verb form of agapa (agape, uh-gah'-pay). Agape love seeks the welfare of the beloved, even when it is painful for the giver.

Jesus goes on to illustrate exactly what agape love looks like. We bless those who curse us, pray for those who abuse us, don't withhold from those who oppress us, give to the needy, and forgive those who steal from us. And Jesus never asks us to do what He has not demonstrated for us. In John 13:34b, He says: "*just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*" Then, what does our Lord say in the next verse (John 13:35)?

Jesus now expands His description of agape love by saying: "*Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned*" (6:37). Christians know there will come a final judgment day when everyone will stand in God's judgment. At its core, every sin is a sin against God Himself; therefore, only God has the right to execute perfect judgment.

While we **should not** spiritually condemn people, we **should** make moral judgments about sinful behaviors. We cannot truly love people if we do not hate the sin that leads to their destruction. Jesus gives us a model of this in John 8:1-11b. What does Jesus say to the woman caught in adultery after her accusers went away (verse 11c)?

Jesus speaks truth in love. He loves the person while denouncing the sin. We must learn to be "*fully trained*" and love like our "*teacher*" (6:40).

This brings us to Jesus' next description of His kingdom ...

The kingdom of God bears good fruit (6:43-45).

Jesus often uses objects from the natural world to illustrate truths from the spiritual world. In this case, Jesus says: "*for each tree is known by its own fruit*" (6:44a). This illustration is explained in chapter eight in what is called the "Parable of the Soils." We will carefully examine this parable in that lesson.

The simple point is true disciples of Jesus do not harbor sin in their lives. As people forgiven of sin, we no longer want to be mired in it. Although we are legally justified in an instant, the process of sanctification takes a lifetime. The moment we receive Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to "clean house."

My wife and I once bought a 70-year-old "fixer upper" house. Every part of that house was in some kind of disrepair. We scrubbed, painted, raked, hammered, wired, and hired professionals to do what we couldn't. For more than a year we went room by room cleaning up and fixing up. There was hardly a part of that property we didn't improve.

This is what the Holy Spirit does in us when we become Christians. He moves in and starts cleaning house. Then, as our inner parts become "fixed-up," our outward actions reflect the changes. What fruit blossoms out of a Christian's heart, according to Galatians 5:22-23?

Jesus concludes this sermon with a final description of His kingdom ...

The kingdom of God endures forever (6:46-49).

Jesus knows many of the people following Him are not "true believers." The crowds say, "Amen, Lord" with their mouths, but their works contradict their words. Therefore, Jesus rebukes them by saying: "*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord, 'and not do what I tell you?'*" (6:46).

He then tells one of His most famous, easy-to-understand parables about a wise man who builds his house on the rock. It is not enough to simply hear Jesus' Words. You must make them the foundation of everything in your life. God will bring a "flood" into each person's life to reveal what kind of foundation they have built upon. What will happen to the lives of people who do not build upon the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ (6:49c-d)?

King Jesus describes His kingdom like this: **it is merciful; it is revealed to the chosen; it blesses those who suffer for righteousness' sake; it condemns those who seek satisfaction in unrighteous pleasures; it reveals "agape" love; it bears good fruit; and, it endures forever.**

What part of your life is the Holy Spirit "fixing up" right now?