



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Matthew 13:44, Matthew 13:45-46, Psalm 16, Luke 5:37-39, Luke 15:11-31, Romans 12:1-2

REFLECTION AND STUDY

The last three weeks we have taken a look at what it takes to reflect God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. This week we change the focus a little and ask the question, "What is life in the kingdom worth?"

DAY 1: Read Matthew 13:44

In today's verse we learn that sometimes we stumble upon the kingdom when we least expect it. The man who found the treasure wasn't looking for it; he just happened upon it while doing something ordinary. You could say that the treasure found him! For some of us, discovering the kingdom is a lot like this man discovering the treasure. It comes suddenly and like a "Yay, God!" moment! When it happens, there's no mistake that God has intervened and dropped His kingdom right on top of us.

- Are you like the man in this verse who has stumbled upon the kingdom? If so, what was your response when you found the kingdom?

Pray and thank God for His kingdom. Ask Him to help you respond like the man in the story, and "sell everything you have" to follow Him.

DAY 2: Read Matthew 13:45-46

In today's verses we learn that sometimes we discover the kingdom through diligently working and searching for the best pearl. Like the man in verse 44, the jeweler or dealer of pearls was overjoyed when he found the kingdom and gave up all his less valuable pearls to have it. This seeker had the same end result as the man from yesterday's scripture, but they each found the kingdom in different ways. Our journeys are often like that, some of us have not been diligently seeking life in the Lord but our first glimpse of the kingdom is so breathtaking, so filled with grace that we run to embrace it with delighted surprise. Some of us have grown up in the church and our search for the kingdom on earth has been as constant as our recitation of those very words in the Lord's Prayer. However you found the kingdom, as an unexpected treasure you did not seek or as a fine jewel you searched for all your life, the important thing is recognizing the value of the treasure or the pearl.

- Are you diligent in your search for the kingdom among us?
- What spiritual disciplines do you practice to keep God first and foremost?

If you fall short in keeping God first, and most of us do, pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen your resolve to keep God before you.

DAY 3: Read Psalm 16

Both men in this week's parable reacted with great joy and sold everything they had because they knew the kingdom was worth *everything!* It's not a new idea because God has always desired our whole-hearted love and devotion from the time humanity was created in his image. Today's scripture is a beautiful psalm written by King David about what life looks like in the kingdom of God on earth. David used the phrases "you alone are my portion" and "I keep my eyes always on the Lord." And even before Jesus came to save us, David anticipated "eternal pleasures" at God's right hand. What we know today is that God came to live among us and to rescue us. He did not leave our finding the kingdom to chance instead, he taught us to pray for God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

- Does your life fit the description King David uses in this psalm?
- Is God alone "your portion and your cup?" Are you "all in" or do you have an idol that gets in your way?
- What must you give up so your equation becomes Jesus + nothing = everything?
- Is God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven worth any and every price? If our answer is yes, our life needs to reflect it.

Whatever you crave or value that prevents you from experiencing the fullness of life in Christ and sharing that fullness with others, that is the thing that you aren't giving up to possess the pearl or buy the field with buried treasure. Pray and give your idol up to the Lord.

DAY 4: Read Luke 5:37-39

The parables that we have discussed in previous weeks tie into what we learned this week about living a life fully in Christ. If we refuse to place the treasure of new wine in a new wineskin because we're too fond of the old one then we aren't "selling all we have" to receive the kingdom.

- Have you traded your old wine skin for a new one, or are you trying to live a kingdom life with old habits and under old priorities?

Pray and ask God to help you trade in your old wine skin for a new one. Begin living a kingdom life today!

DAY 5: Read Luke 15:11-31

If we refuse to go home to the Father when we discover we're on the wrong path, then we aren't "selling all we have" to receive the kingdom by fully living a life in Christ. If we refuse to joyfully share life in the kingdom because of self-righteous judgment or because we think we're entitled to the kingdom, then we aren't "selling all we have" to receive the kingdom by fully living a life in Christ. Staying The kingdom does not exist on earth as it is in heaven when we are estranged from or selfishly possessive of God's promises.

- If you resemble the lost prodigal before he returned home to his father, or the bitter and self-righteous older brother who didn't want to share a joyful life with his father and his wayward brother, what are you going to do about it?

Pray and give up any self-righteousness or defiance that is not allowing you to live life fully in Christ.

DAY 6: Read Romans 12:1-2

If we avoid helping a neighbor in need based on our own man-made assessment of our needy neighbor's worthiness, then we aren't "selling all we have" to receive the kingdom by fully living a life in Christ. The kingdom is among us when God's people offer themselves as a holy and living sacrifice, when people order their lives in loving obedience to the King of Kings, and when people live according to the equation: Jesus + nothing = everything!

- How does your life resemble a holy and living sacrifice to God?
- Will you pay the price for the unexpected treasure or the long sought-after perfect pearl?

Pray and ask God to help you "sell all you have" to receive the kingdom by fully living a life in Christ.

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.