

The Net and the Sorting

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[0 : 00] How much junk have you collected? A lot, right? How much is in your storage shed, your garage, storage closets, under the bed storage, attic storage.

! We were just in Wisconsin where they have basements. That seems to collect storage. How many of y'all think we need more storage around the church, maybe?

How much junk do we collect, man? We collect a lot, don't we? We do indeed. Anybody know the name Marie Kondo?

Yeah. Can you guys pull up the picture we've got of her? Marie Kondo. She had a question that she would tell people to ask when they're looking into their junk, their valuables that they've collected through the years.

Does anybody know what that question is? Can we say it together? Does it spark joy? That was like an ice water bath down my back when I first heard that.

[1 : 24] Like, that's what's wrong with America today. We're looking at all this excess that we've collected over the years, and we're like, does this spark joy to me? I don't know.

Do you need it? That's probably a better question in my mind. But Marie Kondo got real famous. She got a Netflix special called Tidying Up, and the whole idea of it was kind of capitalizing on all of our excess, and she challenged people to sort through it and just go through stuff and clean it out, right?

Does it spark joy? Anyway, probably a real nice, shiny way of asking, do you really need this in your life? Now, this was not a new concept.

People have been going through, trying to sort through their stuff for generations. But somehow, generations keep passing down their junk to the next generations.

And then what happens? You have estate sales, and people try to sell off the junk from their parents and grandparents, etc. Now, look, sometimes there are family heirlooms that you get to hold on to, and those are cherished for generations, and that's always pretty cool to see.

[2 : 39] But let's not be crazy, because often the sorting process reveals that it's not all treasure. A lot of it's trash.

You say, what in the world does this have to do with the parables of Jesus? Well, this is exactly the kind of sorting process that Jesus is talking about in Matthew chapter 13.

Would you go with me to Matthew chapter 13, verses 47 through 50. While you're turning there, I'm going to give you a piece of really good news.

This is our 12th and final week in the Stories of the Kingdom series about the parables of Jesus.

Can we get an amen on that? There you go.

I've enjoyed it. I'm glad to move on to another section of Scripture. However, I've really enjoyed this, and I hope that we can close it out well today. We haven't covered every parable that Jesus told, but we've gone through the book of Matthew.

[3 : 39] By the way, we were not just doing a study of the parables of Jesus. I was also on the sly taking you through a study of the gospel of Matthew. And we've done that all throughout it, and we have kind of covered the themes that Matthew wrote about from his time walking with Jesus and recording what he had to say.

So Matthew chapter 13, let's look down at verse 47. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea.

It collected every kind of fish. When it was full, they dragged it ashore, sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw out the worthless ones.

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, and throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth.

Have you noticed that Jesus' parables always ended like that? Maybe not always, but frequently. Weeping and gnashing of teeth. It's like he was warning you of something to come, right?

[4 : 59] Let's look at that. Let's take it seriously. Y'all, a pastor can get up, and he can talk about any number of things. But I don't think it's ever wrong to talk about what Jesus himself talked about.

So that's what we've been doing in these last 12 weeks. And I pray that we're able to get a good understanding of what he was warning us about and teaching us in this passage.

Let's pray together. God, I pray right now that you would use this story of the net, the sorting, this process separating the trash from the treasure, separating the good from the evil.

How does this apply to us? What can we learn from this? I pray that by your spirit, you would teach each one of us something that would change us, transform us from the inside out.

We'll give you all the glory for it in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. So what are they talking about? He paints a very picturesque story here where you've got these people using what is called a dragnet.

[6 : 04] All right. So here's the idea. They have this dragnet, and they would stand. They would stretch it out. You see the net, the after results, the catch that they brought in from the fish.

It would bring in all sorts of fish. But what they would do is they would stand on either side, and there would be a row of people, probably 8 to 12 people, or maybe even more depending on the size of the dragnet.

It was also called a send net. I don't know if that's from the river Sen. I don't know. That's a whole different thing. Let's just call it a dragnet, all right? So the dragnet would be out there in the shallow water, and they would have it stretched out to its full capacity.

And they would have these weights on the bottom of the dragnet to keep it underwater, and they would have these floats or bobbers attached to the top to keep it afloat on the top.

And so they have this net just perfectly like creating this wall in the ocean, of course, in the shallow waters near the beach. So as they would, fish would come in, there would be kind of a pocket at the bottom that the fish would get trapped in.

[7 : 11] And eventually, when they felt like the net was full enough, they would all start retreating back toward the shore, and they would lay it out, and there would be thousands of fish caught in this dragnet.

Now, normally, all these references would be about the Sea of Galilee, and there would be over 20 different kinds of fish, probably, in the Sea of Galilee. Many of those fish would be inedible, useless, not really good for much of anything.

You need to throw them back in. So the sorting process would happen. And everybody would gather along the beach, and you'd have all those people that were out there fishing, and maybe some others who weren't strong enough to go out and manage the dragnet in the waters, but they could sort fish.

So they'd be sitting there, going through, finding all these different varieties of fish, throwing some back in, and keeping the ones that were good and useful.

So Jesus is referencing something that these people understood, many of them had partaken of, certainly all of them had seen, had experienced at some level.

[8 : 22] But what's he really trying to teach here? He's not teaching fishing methods, although it does sound fun to catch fish with a dragnet, right? For those of you who have sat in a rowboat, or sat on a dock, or sat on a shore, with your line in the water for hour after hour, and nothing seems to bite, right?

It's maddening. Be kind of cool to go out there and spend a few minutes with a big dragnet, and have thousands of fish come in, even if you couldn't use most of them. Still be fun. But that's not what he's talking about here.

He's talking about the sorting process. That's where the focus is. So there are two different emphases. First, the idea of the catch.

The idea is the sorting doesn't happen at first, okay? So in your bulletins, if you're taking notes, and there should be a pen in front of you, point number one is God's invitation is inclusive.

What do we mean by that? It includes everybody. It includes anybody and everybody who wants to come into the net. God holds the net wide open for all to come.

[9 : 42] Boy, we can be excited about that, right? We can love that. Very excited about that. 1 Timothy 2 and verse 4 sheds a little light on that. It says, God our Savior wants everyone to be

saved and to understand the truth.

That is a wide open net. I want them all. I want everybody, says the Lord. Lord, I'm inviting all, everyone. The Bible teaches very clearly Jesus died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.

God so loved the what? World. Let's say that together. Y'all know that. Verse John 3, 16. Ready? For God so loved the world. There you go. I watched the sermon last week, and he really got y'all talking, okay?

So I'm going to try to get y'all talking a little bit, too. Y'all did great. I was so proud of you. He did a wonderful... How many of y'all were glad that Jordan came and preached to us last Sunday? Wasn't that awesome? I never even met the guy.

We've had phone conversations, but we had a very trusted mutual friend, and he talked a little bit about that last week. I'm glad he came and did a wonderful job here. So we're going to talk a little bit today, but this idea that God's invitation is inclusive.

[10:57] The sorting process doesn't happen at first. Everyone is invited. The invitation is extended. There's a truth here. God's net, so to speak, is wide open for everyone to experience his love and salvation.

He created everyone, and everyone has equal opportunity. I believe God's an equal opportunity creator. I believe God has given each one of us an equal opportunity to respond to him in faith. The sad truth is, we're not all gonna. Not everyone that God created will respond to him in faith. Many will reject.

Some will seem to accept. But the truth is, in their heart, they never did. God knows how all that's gonna shake out in the end. He's gonna be in charge of the sorting process.

But what we have to worry about is, God's invitation extends to all. So what we then take away, we don't go and discriminate who we invite into the net.

[12:10] We'll take any fish who wanna swim in, right? Do you know any fishermen who would say, no, no, no, I don't want that fish.

I don't want that fish. We'll take it, man. Now, we might throw them back in once we get them on the boat, but we'll take anything that wants to bite. I say that like I'm a fisherman.

I'm not a fisherman. But I can imagine. Revelation 22, 17. You don't have to turn there. I've got it on the screen unless you'd like to. But Revelation 22, 17.

The spirit and the bride say, what does that say? Come. We can do better. Ready? The spirit and the bride say? Come. Let anyone who hears this say? Come. Let anyone who is thirsty?

Come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. What is God's invitation to man? Come. Come to him. Come to me, he says.

[13:08] Come to me. I'm the answer. Whatever stage of life you're in, if there's still breath in your lungs, the answer is come to him. Come to him for salvation.

Come to him for rest. Come for him for peace. Come to him for mercy. Come to him for forgiveness. Come to Jesus. That is always and forever the invitation.

So, question. Do we cast our nets as widely as Jesus casts his? Or do we create barriers for certain people?

That's the hard thing. Do we cast nets or do we create barriers? Do we allow any fish to come in or are we selective?

Look, we might say that anyone can come. Anyone can come and be a part of our fellowship of believers. Anyone can come and experience the goodness of God and the blessings of Christian community.

[14:25] The problem is, sometimes not as much with our words, but with our actions, we create barriers for those very people that we're inviting in.

We say, no, no, no. You're not the kind of fish that belongs here. You're not the kind of fish that we're interested in. We're going to throw you out.

The problem is, that's not our job. Our job is to do what the master commanded and go be fishers of what?

Men and women too, by the way. Go be fishers of people. That's who God came to seek and to save.

He'll work out the sorting process at the end. So, do we cast nets or do we create barriers?

[15:23] Number two. Before we get there, I want to share a quote with you. Martin Luther was one of the great fathers of the Protestant Reformation that kind of split off from the Catholic Church and from that grew Baptists and Methodists and all these evangelical Christian churches that you see around.

Martin Luther was a key father in that movement. Read about him in history if you haven't already. And he said this, it is the nature of all hypocrites and false prophets.

We got any of those in the room by uplifted hand? You're a hypocrite or a false prophet. Anybody? Look, I try not to be a false prophet. Thank you, Candy. But I will raise my hand on hypocrite because the truth is I am a hypocrite sometimes.

And all y'all can be too, all right? So we're not alone. It is the nature of all hypocrites and false prophets to create a conscience where there is none.

Y'all, this is getting a little bit deep, but we're going to try to break it down, all right? Create a conscience where there is none. And then, after they've done that, to cause conscience to disappear where it actually does exist.

[16:38] What's he saying? Hypocritical Christians are real good at making rules that God never made and ignoring rules that God did make.

You know what his rule is? Love people like I love them. Love me like I've told you to with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself.

God's rules are pretty simple, but man, are they hard. So instead of obeying that, we go back to Old Testament laws that don't apply to us under grace anymore, or we'll just go create our own like we saw the Pharisees do in the Jewish system.

Sorry. And Jesus kept butting heads with it. And they're saying, well, Jesus, you're not walking according to our laws and systems and traditions.

They say, listen, you missed the point. You're creating a conscience where I never created one. But you're ignoring the conscience or even causing it to disappear that I did give you.

[17:55] That's hypocritical. And often, it can even get into being a false prophet. Why? Because you're painting a different picture of Jesus for people.

Even without trying to, you're showing people that Jesus is someone different than who he actually is and who he revealed himself to be.

That's being a false prophet. I don't want to be that. I don't want to do that. I want to stick closely to what he said, to what he did, to how he lived. So I think Martin Luther's quote is very appropriate for those of us, especially those of us in the room.

I'm not going to make you lift your hands, but those of us in the room who have been Christians for most of our lives, grew up in church most of our lives, it's pretty easy for us to start to equate the traditions that we grew up with with Bible truth.

Y'all, the Bible never says that we have to sit in pews in a church building. The Bible never says you have to have both an organ and a piano. The Bible never says that you have to use a podium.

[19:04] The Bible never says lots of, now, doesn't mean those things are wrong. Those things can serve their purpose in their season. The Bible never says that you have to wear a clown suit to church, right?

The Bible never says you have to wear a big red nose to church. Thankfully, that'd be weird. But I guarantee you some people who didn't grow up how we grew up might come into church and think some of the things that we do are weird.

Okay, fine. Are we leading people closer to Jesus by our traditions that we have latched onto or are we forcing people to get over them to get to Jesus?

Does that make sense? Are we forcing people to climb over all these extra obstacles or barriers that we've created just to get to Jesus who is who we want them to get to after all, right?

All right, that's the point. We're going to move on to number two now. God's net is inclusive. God's invitation is inclusive. But heaven's entry is exclusive.

[20:15] You could take this as the bad news if you wanted to. The truth is it's justice. It's justice in God's eyes.

And who are we to say no? To all those who reject his son, they are excluded. They're thrown back. That's the picture he paints for us. He paints this picture of all these different fish being in the net. Look back at Matthew 13. When the net was full, they dragged it ashore, they sat down, and they

gathered the good fish into containers, but they threw out the worthless ones.

We have any idea what that is? It's just a speaker. All right. It's just the speaker likes what we're talking about in here. All right. It wants to have a part. All right.

Don't worry about it. Just a little white noise, background noise, no big deal. Heaven's entry is exclusive. Unfortunately, there are going to be some fish thrown back. That's kind of Jesus' point here, right?

[21 : 26] There's going to be some fish not allowed in. There's going to be people excluded. Guess what? Not everybody made it on the ark. Remember Noah and the ark and the flooding of the earth?

Not everybody made it on. Actually, very few made it on. Well, the Bible teaches that. Narrow is the gate that leads to life, but wide is the path that leads to destruction.

More will choose destruction rather than life. Hey, let's go to Matthew chapter 7. Back up a few chapters, would you? Matthew chapter 7 before we end up back in Matthew 13.

So, just a couple of pages, probably Matthew 7 and let's look at verse 13. Matthew 7, 13. Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction.

There are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult is the road that leads to life and few that find it. Matt's a hero. Let's give him a clap. Thank you, Matt.

[22 : 31] I don't know if everybody in the back of the room could hear it, but it was pretty loud up here, so thank you, sir. Narrow is the gate. Difficult is the road that leads to life.

How many of you have been on the road to life for a while and you'd say, yeah, it is difficult sometimes? Anybody? Is it just me? I think some of y'all not raising your hand also believe the road to life can be difficult at times, right?

It's not just me. Look, let's keep reading. Verse 15. Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves.

Hey, there's some of those false prophets we were talking about just a minute ago. We like to think of false prophets always as those who are preaching something totally different than the Bible. It's not hidden at all.

It's just like, man, Jesus isn't God. Joe Schmo is God, be it Mohammed or Confucius or whoever, Buddha. Usually those aren't the false prophets who lead God's people astray.

[23 : 33] Usually it's the ones who disguise themselves in sheep's clothing and they'll preach something that's very similar to what Jesus taught and what Jesus lived. But they'll throw extra obstacles in there.

They'll say, yeah, but you also gotta do this. Yeah, but you also gotta give me money and buy me my second jet. Or, yeah, but you gotta go say 40 Hail Marys or go confess and light this many candles and do all these extra things to have right standing before God and forgiveness with God. And I'm sorry, look, some of these people are well-meaning. But that's preaching a different gospel than Jesus brought us. That's not the good news. So be careful of that.

And then jump down, would you, to verse 21. There are all kinds of things that might lead people onto that wide, broad, more easy path away from the narrow, more difficult path, but you don't wanna end up where that wide path takes you.

Verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

[24 : 52] What is the will of the Father in heaven? That all would be saved. That all would turn to Him. So if you turn to Him, then you're doing the will of His Father in heaven.

And you will be saved. He will keep you on that narrow path. But if you don't, then you're stuck on that wide path until you do the will of the Father in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Yes, but you were a false prophet. Didn't we drive out demons in your name? Didn't we do many miracles in your name? Didn't we do all this stuff that we thought you would have liked? Seemed like a Christian kind of thing. Seemed like a religious type deal. Seemed like a church kind of thing. Seemed like a Jesus type thing.

We did all this stuff for you for all these years. I was a good, upstanding citizen. I was a member of First Baptist Church for how many years? What do you mean I can't get into heaven? Because you never humbled yourself and repented of your sin and said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[26 : 03] Save me. I can't save myself. Verse 23, then I will announce to them, I never knew you.

depart from me, you lawbreakers. You lawbreakers. Well, that's rude. You're comparing me to those fish that I was throwing out of the net?

You're saying I don't belong with the upstanding citizens? You're saying I don't belong with the good people? Are you telling me I'm a bad person, Jesus?

Yes. You're a lawbreaker. And you were never cleansed. You're still a lawbreaker. Do you understand that without Christ, every single person, man, woman, child, is a lawbreaker.

All of us in this room are lawbreakers. We've all broken God's law. The only way you can be not a lawbreaker anymore is if Jesus washes you, if Jesus cleanses you.

[27 : 14] You have to invite him to do that. He's not just going to do it. You have to say God, cleanse me, forgive me, wash me clean with your blood.

Then he says now you're not a lawbreaker anymore. You were but I made you new. Now you're my child. A lot of people call themselves God's children and they're going to get to heaven and he's going to say I never knew you.

You can't come in. You're out. It's a terrible picture. It's a terrible illustration but it's one that is most important, most essential and that's why Jesus repeats this theme throughout the parables.

We've hit on similar topics to this in our study of the parables over the last 12 weeks. Heaven's entry is exclusive. George Barna runs a research firm, probably the foremost faith-based Christian research firm in America.

It does a lot of valuable research on churches, on religious trends in America. Back in 2020 released through the Arizona Christian University Cultural Research Center, he released this information that says that nearly half, I want to make sure I get this right, nearly half, you ready for this, of evangelical Christians.

[28 : 43] Christians. Let me break that down for you. I referenced it a minute ago. That's like the Baptists, the people that go to churches that talk about Jesus and preach the real gospel of Jesus, salvation by God's grace through our faith.

We believe the correct salvation. People that go to those kinds of churches, they're called evangelical, nearly half, I believe it was around 46% of people who attend evangelical gospel preaching churches in America believe that good works are necessary to get into heaven.

Now look, I'm not trying to make you feel singled out if you are one of the nearly half of evangelicals that believe that good works are necessary to get into heaven.

but I'm sorry to have to tell you that you're wrong. Actually, I'm thankful to get to tell you that you're wrong.

Because look, you're never going to be good enough. How much good can you do that will wipe away the bad you've already done?

[30 : 03] If I go out and murder somebody, I can do good works for the rest of my life, but it will not bring that innocent person back to life. I can't undo what I've done.

Now folks, I might be crazy, but the data would suggest that there are people in this room still believing that good works in your life are going to get you to heaven.

That they're going to get you right standing with God. Let's see what God actually has to say about that. Let's go to the Bible. Titus chapter 3 and verse 5. He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his what?

Let's do it again. Not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his that's it. He was merciful, not because we earned it. Romans 10 and verse 9 makes it very clear on how to be saved.

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Say, Jesus, you're my Lord now.

[31 : 12] You're in charge. I'm not. I believe you rose from the dead. You didn't just die like all of us die. You proved you were God by rising from the dead. I put all my faith in you.

That's what saves you, not anything you can do. So the question is, are you caught up in the net, or have you truly decided to follow Jesus?

Are you really a Jesus follower? Or have you been hanging around the good fish? Maybe your whole life you've been hanging around the good fish.

I don't want God to throw you out. I don't want God to throw me out. God, that's why I've got to constantly verify in my heart, yes, I do believe in Jesus. I have confessed all my sins, past, present, and future to him.

Say, God, I know I'm a sinner. I'm always going to be a sinner while I'm in this flesh. Please forgive me. Make me your child. I don't want to be lawbreaker Sam anymore.

[32 : 22] Are you still lawbreaker Doyle and Molly? Felt like the least lawbreaker people I know. Are you still lawbreaker, Jared?

That makes way more sense. I'm messing with you. Are you still the lawbreaker version of you, or have you been redeemed by Jesus?

Have you been made new by Jesus, or have you just been hanging out with those who have? That's the takeaway from the sermon today.

Am I really a disciple? I told you we'd go back to Matthew 13. Look at verse 52. We're nearly finished. And y'all, this time we're not just finishing a sermon, we're finishing a 12-week series. It's a big day. I'm excited. Matthew chapter 13 and down in verse 52, Jesus says, he gets done telling them this whole story. There's going to be weeping and gnashing of teeth for the bad fish that are thrown back, that are separated the evil people from the righteous.

[33 : 23] Man, that's hard, right? Am I really evil? Yes, we are. Without Christ and his forgiveness, we are evil. So Jesus then turns to them and says, have you understood all these things? And his disciples said, yes.

Therefore, he said to them, watch this, every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven.

Did you catch that? not every teacher of the Bible is a disciple. Not every teacher of the Bible is a follower of Jesus.

I can promise you, you can get up here, not have a strong relationship with God, be at a really far off from God point in your life, and you can get up here and teach the Bible.

There's not going to be a whole lot of God's power behind it. God might use something just from the Bible that's quoted to stir something in someone's heart, but something's going to be missing.

[34 : 29] He said, you have to be a disciple. So even you, my disciples, who have been walking with me, I want you to be teachers of the law.

That was the whole point. Remember, Jesus was a rabbi. He wasn't just a rabbi. He was a rabbi with Shmiha. Remember that whole thing? He had authority to teach, to uncover new truth. Yeah, you think so?

He is the truth, the way, the truth, and the life, right? And so Jesus has these guys following him. Man, I can't believe we get to go with this famous rabbi everywhere he goes and learn from him. He's going to make us rabbis too.

No, boys, listen, I'm going to make you better than rabbis. I'm going to make you not just teachers of the law, I'm going to make you disciples. So he says, every teacher of the law of a house who brings out of his old storeroom treasures both new and old.

We're all the way back to Marie Kondo again. We're all the way back to the storeroom, the store closet, the garage, the attic. It's like you go into that and you bring out the good stuff.

[35 : 41] God's going to use his disciples disciples to bring out the good treasures. Is God doing that in your life? Is he using you as a disciple to bring out the good treasures, the good fish?

Is he using you to reproduce another disciple? Maybe in your children, maybe in your neighbor, maybe in your co-worker, maybe in your friend, maybe in your parents, a sibling?

Is he using you to be a disciple that he can use to make another disciple? It's a powerful truth he's teaching his followers.

So, we have to ask ourselves, we got to do a gut check, heart check, gut check, mind check, soul check, whatever.

We got to check it all and we got to ask this question. Is my faith a dull routine? Is my faith a dull routine or a dynamic relationship?

[36 : 56] Would you bow your heads with me? Is my faith a dull routine or a dynamic relationship? I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand, but would you ask yourself right now and be completely honest?

Look at your faith in God. Is it more honestly described as a dull routine or a dynamic relationship? You know what dynamic means? It changes. It doesn't stay the same. Sometimes it might feel closer. Sometimes you might feel further away.

That's the nature of a dynamic relationship. But it keeps changing. And over time it grows. And you don't stay in the same place with God as you've been.

He keeps sending you back into the storeroom for new treasures, new nuggets. He keeps using you to make new disciples. That's what it's like to follow Jesus.

[38 : 01] Go back in the Gospels. We've gone through Matthew. Go back to Matthew. Go to Mark. Go to Luke. Go to John. See what Jesus did with his disciples. And then look at your life. Is he doing that with you?

Has he been doing that with you over the last five years? Ten years? Twenty years? Thirty years? I'm going to stop there to not offend you. But look, is our relationship with him dynamic?

Or has it become dull? people? So our takeaway this morning, if you'll look up at the screen one more time, don't settle for proximity to God.

What do I mean by proximity? Just being close to him. Being physically close. Don't just settle for proximity to God. Let him change you.

Don't just be around God. Don't just be around Christians. Be a Christian. Don't just be around disciples. Jump in.

[39 : 08] Be one. Say, man, I'm not ready for all that. I'm not going to do it very well. Right. None of us do it very well. He wants us to, though.

He's inviting us to. And if you don't want to get thrown out of the net, you got to take the plunge. You got to become a disciple. You got to say, God, change me.

Our series can be summed up in Matthew 6 33. We didn't actually cover this in a parable. This is kind of the whole theme verse of the series.

It says, seek the kingdom of God above all else. Live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

what a life verse. What a verse to make the theme of your life. I'm going to seek God's kingdom above the kingdom of my world.

[40 : 10] I'm going to seek God's kingdom above any other kingdom on this earth. Y'all, everybody's got their own kingdom, and usually they're the king of it. And all these other kingdoms are going to vie for your allegiance.

They're going to come try to steal your allegiance away and make you pledge allegiance to their kingdom. And you know who's going to do that more than anybody? You. I try to get myself to swear allegiance to my kingdom more than anybody else does.

I'm my own biggest enemy. But if I'm swearing allegiance to God's kingdom, what is the last part of that verse promise? Do we believe the promises of God? Do we believe the promises of God?

So he says he will give you everything you need. You seek his kingdom, he'll give you everything you need, and nothing you don't need.

What a promise. What a powerful promise from God, from Jesus. Seek the kingdom. Are we a kingdom-seeking church, and is it God's kingdom?

[41 : 19] Or have we created our own? God, let our castle become so big that it's blotting out God's kingdom. God, let your kingdom work be done.

Let your will be done in this earth, in this church, in this town, in my family, in my heart, in my life. Let your kingdom come.

Would you pray with me now? God, that's what we go to you with. God, you want our hearts more than anything else. We can swear allegiance to you with our lips.

We can hang around you for years. We can show up. We can sit in the pews. We can sing the songs. We can clap for the choir. We can do all the things that look like we're a follower of Jesus, but when the great sorting comes, I don't want to get sorted out.

to get sorted out. I don't want to get thrown out. This net catches all kinds. Sometimes we think we've got a pretty good idea who belongs and who doesn't, but the truth is some of us are hypocrites.

[42 : 34] Some of us have even become false prophets. We've been preaching a different Jesus than the one that you actually were. Forgive us, God, where we failed you.

touch our hearts, break our hearts for what breaks yours. If there's somebody here today who needs to finally take the plunge and say, I'm not going to settle for just being around God.

I want God. I want him to change me. I want him to start on the inside. I want to follow Jesus. Let him make that decision today. Church, with your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm going to lead with that question.

Nearly half of churches like ours across America don't believe the true way of salvation that Jesus taught. They think they can earn it.

Jesus said, no, you can't. I paid for your sin on the cross. You can't pay for it yourself. How many of you would say by uplifted hand, I've had the wrong picture of salvation, or maybe I've just put it off, whatever it is, I need to come to Jesus today?

[43 : 45] Would you be bold enough to slip your hand up and say that's me? I need to be bold enough right now to turn to Jesus. Slip your hand up and I'll pray for you. Thank you. Thank you.

Let me ask this follow-up question. How many of you would say, I have not been seeking God's kingdom above all else? And maybe that's why I don't have everything I need.

Because I've been focused on my kingdom. I've been focused on some other kingdom, but I have not been seeking God's kingdom with my whole heart. Y'all, this whole thing has been about the heart. God wants your heart more than anything else.

Would you slip your hand up and just say pray for me? And I'll pray for you, I promise you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. God, you see the hands.

I don't know what's going on across the room, but God, you know exactly what we need in our hearts, and I pray that you would cut through. That you would pierce our hearts, that you would not give us rest.

[44 : 45] Don't allow us to go to sleep peacefully at night when we are not settled on your kingdom. That doesn't mean we're going to be perfect. That doesn't mean we're not going to trip up. But God, we're going to keep coming back to your kingdom and say, your kingdom over mine.

Your will be done, not mine. Teach us, God. Grow us. We'll give you the glory for it. We'll thank you for it. Church, Jared's going to lead us in just a verse of a song.

You can keep your seats. If you'd like to meet me down front and pray, we're happy to do that with you. If you'd like to come down and pray by yourself at this altar, come do that. But if you respond to the Holy Spirit however he's guiding you right now.

Amen. Amen. Amen.