

Lesson Three: Stories of the Kingdom

Main idea: Since we are Christians, we represent the Kingdom of Heaven and carry the Kingdom of Heaven everywhere we go. We live like citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references, Matthew 4:17, 23; Ephesians 1:5; John 18:36; Matthew 28:18-20
- Gather: Bible; dry erase markers or chart paper and markers; picture of a mustard tree or oak tree; mustard seeds or acorns; markers, crayons or colored pencils; drawing paper; copies of the mini book for each student; scissors
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. Does your own life reflect that you are a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven? Do you pray for unbelievers, let even the smallest deeds reflect Christ, and share the Gospel with others?

Scripture references:

- Luke 17:20-21
- Matthew 13:24-33, 36-43
- 1 Timothy 2:1-4
- 1 Timothy 4:12

Game: Monster Drawing.

In this game, kids will learn that sometimes, the way we picture something is not always what it is really like. (Just like our pictures of Heaven don't quite match what Heaven is really going to be like.) Pass out drawing paper and coloring tools to each student. Fold the paper in half and open part way. This creates a shield so the kids cannot see what others are drawing. It's important that their pictures stay a secret! No one can see what they are drawing, or it ruins the second part of the game. Space children out and have them facing in such ways that make it difficult and less tempting to cheat. Allow students to take a few minutes to draw a detailed monster. Encourage them to use lots of

colors and add many details, like fur or spikes, stripes or polka dots, claws or tentacles, and teeth and eyes. Once they are done with their drawings, have them buddy up with a partner. They will take turns describing their monster to their partner, and the partner must draw what their friend describes. They may not ask questions. The describer has to do their best to give precise details on what their monster looks like. The drawer draws what they hear on the front of their folded paper. (Their own monster is still hidden inside the folded paper.) Make sure the describer keeps his picture hidden from the drawer! Then they switch roles, and the one who just described his monster will draw the monster of his partner, as his partner describes it. Once everyone has had a chance to try and draw their friend's monster based off of a verbal description, have the whole class show off their monsters. Share a laugh as you compare the original monsters with the described ones. Remind the children that sometimes things are not as we picture them.

Message:

Open in prayer, then say, This is our third week learning all about the parables. Who can remind us what parables are? (Allow a student to answer.) That's right, parables are stories Jesus told to teach us important lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven. From them, we learn what Heaven is like, what God is like, and what we should do as citizens of Heaven. Last week we learned about the story of the soils. We learned that everyone reacts differently to hearing the word of God, and that we, as Christians, have to tell everyone about Jesus, whether or not we think their hearts are good soil. Today's passages take place directly after Jesus talks about the four soils in Matthew 13. Each parable we will read today tells us something new about the Kingdom of Heaven, and what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. There are six parables in this passage that begin with the phrase, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..." Today we are going to study the first three of these "Kingdom of Heaven" parables, and next week we will look at the last three. They are all pretty short, but all of them pack a big punch. Teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven was a major mission of Jesus in his lifetime, and it should be a major mission of ours too. (Matthew 4:17, 23). These parables we will study today and next week will give us a better picture of what Heaven is like. It won't be a perfect picture. We can't know everything about a place without being there. It's like when we go on vacation to somewhere we have never been. We can look at pictures and read about Hawaii, but until we go to Hawaii, we won't really know what it's like there.

The Kingdom of Heaven, sometimes called the Kingdom of God in the Bible, is more than just a place, though. What do you usually think of when you hear the word “kingdom?” (Allow children to answer.) We usually picture castles and kings and rolling hills and knights in shining armor riding out to battle on white horses. We picture a kingdom as a place. The Kingdom of Heaven is a place, but in these parables, Jesus isn’t just talking about a place we get to go when we die if we love and follow him. When Jesus talks about the Kingdom of Heaven in the parables we are about to read, he is talking about a reign. I don’t mean rain that falls from the sky. I mean the reign, the rule, of a king. (Write the words “rain” and “reign” on the board so the kids can see the difference. Illustrate both words briefly, possibly with a rain cloud and raindrops, and a crown.) A king reigns, or rules over his people, even when his people visit other places. So the Kingdom of Heaven is wherever the citizens of Heaven are. The Kingdom of Heaven is inside people who follow Jesus as their King. If this idea seems a little confusing to you, don’t worry, you’re not alone. The Pharisees were confused by it too. Let’s have a sword drill to find a conversation they had with Jesus about the Kingdom of Heaven. Take all bookmarks and fingers out of your Bibles and hold them above your heads. When I say go, look up Luke 17:20-21. Go! (Have a student read these verses.) “One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, ‘When will the Kingdom of God come?’

Jesus replied, ‘The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs. You won’t be able to say, “Here it is!” or “It’s over there!” For the Kingdom of God is already among you.’”

In these verses, the Pharisees are asking Jesus about a place and a certain kind of rule they expected. But Jesus surprised them by saying the Kingdom of Heaven won’t be a place that shows up with trumpets and banners and knights in shining armor. He told the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God was already among them. The Kingdom of God, also called the Kingdom of Heaven, is in people who believe in Jesus and follow Him as their King. When we decide we want to repent of our sins and give our lives to Jesus, he makes us princes and princesses. We are adopted by God when we believe in Jesus. (Eph 1:5). Since God is the King, that makes us princes and princesses! Since we are sons and daughters of God, we follow his rule and reign wherever we go. Think of being on a sports team, or going on field trips with school. When we go out as a part of a group, we are expected to be on our best behavior so we can show that we come from a good team or a good school. Since we are Christians, we represent the Kingdom of Heaven and carry the Kingdom of

Heaven everywhere we go. These parables help us learn what we are supposed to do as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

So now that we understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is not only a place, but is Jesus ruling in our hearts, let's look at the parables that describe what the Kingdom of Heaven is like in more detail. Open your Bibles to Matthew 13. Follow along as I read the story of the wheat and the weeds in verses 24-30. (Read the passage with good inflection, giving the characters their own distinct voices.)

Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

"The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?'

"An enemy has done this!' the farmer exclaimed.

"Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked.

"No,' he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'"

This is one of the few parables that Jesus explains, like he did the parable of the soils. So let's skip ahead a few verses and read what Jesus says the parable of the wheat and weeds means. Follow along as I read Matthew 13:36-43. (If you feel able, draw brief illustrations of each part of the story. Having even a stick figure farmer can help kids visualize and remember the story better.)

"Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field."

Jesus replied, "The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. The enemy who

planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels.

Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!"

This parable tells us that there are often people in our lives who don't follow Jesus, and they tease or oppress those who do follow Jesus. These weeds, as Jesus refers to them, these people will face eternal punishment for not following Jesus and for mistreating those who do follow him. We learn two things from this. First, we learn that the Kingdom of Heaven is happening right now, in us, and that the Kingdom of Heaven will be established as a real place at the end of time. For now, Jesus is being very, very patient. God wants everyone to be saved, so instead of punishing people for rebelling against him, he is giving the weeds of this world time to repent. God gives us instructions on what to do concerning people who don't follow him. Let's have a sword drill to find out what that is. You can keep a bookmark in Matthew 13, since we'll come right back to it. Hold your Bibles above your head, and when I say go, look up 1 Timothy 2:1-4. Go! (Have a student read this passage.)

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth."

This passage tells us that we need to pray for everyone so they can be saved and understand the truth about the Kingdom of Heaven. Now I have a question for you. Sometimes it can be hard to put up with people who don't believe in Jesus, who are mean to you and tease you because of what you believe. Jesus says in the parable of the wheat and weeds that he will punish unbelievers at the end of time, but does that mean we have to just let these people be mean to us? NO! If someone is hurting you, either by the things they do or the things they say, TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST. Tell me or your parents. It is our job to help keep you children safe from being hurt. It is sad that people don't believe in Jesus and want to tease and persecute those

who do. You have to pray for them, but you do not have to let them hurt you. Please tell me or your parents if someone ever says or does anything to you that makes you uncomfortable. So in this first Kingdom of Heaven parable, we learn that Jesus is patiently waiting to give everyone a chance to believe in him before he punishes people for not trusting him with their lives. We learned that since we are the wheat, the good seed in the world, we need to pray for the weeds, the people that need to know Jesus. (On the board, write “story of the wheat and weeds.” Beneath this, write, “pray for people who don’t know Jesus.”) What are some things we might pray about, for people who don’t know Jesus? (Write student’s answers under “pray for people who don’t know Jesus. Include things like pray they would have soft hearts, that they would stop persecuting believers, and that we as believers would love them like Jesus does.)

Let’s read our next parable. This one is very short, only two verses. Follow along as I read Matthew 13:31-32. “Here is another illustration Jesus used: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.’”

There is a lot we can learn from these two simple verses. I want to focus on one thing in particular: God uses small things to do great work. Think of a mustard seed, or an acorn. These are teeny, tiny seeds, but God makes HUGE plants grow out of them, and these trees then become homes, safe places for birds to live in. The Kingdom of Heaven started off small, with very few people believing in Jesus, but now millions and millions of people all over the world believe in Jesus and have become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven! You may be young and small, but look at how God can use small things! Even the smallest thing you do for Jesus, He will use to grow big results! All we have to do is to trust Jesus to use the small things we do, to do big things himself. 1 Timothy 4:12 has some encouraging things to say to young people. It says, “Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.” From the parable of the mustard seed, we can learn that no matter how young and small we are, Jesus can do BIG things through us! (On the board, write, “story of the mustard seed.” Beneath that, write, “do small things for Jesus.”) What are some small things we can do to show others that we love Jesus? (List student’s ideas on the board beneath “do small things for Jesus.” Include things like say hi to other students in the hallway at school, clean your room before mom asks, and pray at lunch, even if no one else is praying over their food.)

Our last parable for today is only one verse long, and is very similar in theme to the parable of the mustard seed. Matthew 13:33 says, “Jesus also used this illustration: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.’”

Who would like to explain what this parable means? Does anybody have a guess? (Allow a few students answer.) In this parable, the flour represents the world and all the people in it, and the yeast represents Christians. What is yeast? (Allow responses.) Yeast is what is used in bread to make it rise. Yeast makes bread fluffy and delicious. It takes a very small amount of yeast to make bread good. In the parable of the yeast, we learn that even just a few Christians can make a difference in the world. In Matthew chapter 28, Jesus commands us to go out and make disciples of all nations. It is our job to tell everyone, everywhere about Jesus and how much he loves all the people in the world. In this way, we will be like a little bit of yeast, making a whole loaf of bread delicious! (On the board, write “story of the yeast.” Beneath that, write, “tell everyone about Jesus.”) Who are some people we can talk to about Jesus? (List their answers on the board. Include teachers, unsaved family members, neighbors, kids at school, the waiter at a restaurant, and the cashier at the grocery store.)

Through the three parables we have looked at today, we learned that since we belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, we live like citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. We do this by praying for people who don’t believe in Jesus, and by doing things, even little things, to show we love Jesus our King, and by telling everyone we meet that Jesus is the King. Next week, we will look at three more parables that teach us even more about what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven!

End in prayer.

Craft: Parables of the Kingdom Mini Book

Every week, students will make a mini book that retells the parable in very basic terms. This third mini book in their library reminds the kids how to live like citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. To begin, demonstrate how to fold the book. Fold along the solid lines. Start by folding the long side to the long side. Crease well. Keep it folded, then fold in half, crease well, and fold in half again, creasing well. Now unfold it all the way and fold it in half short side to

short side, so the dotted line in the center is folded in half. Cut along this dotted line. Do not over cut! Now unfold the paper and fold it in half again, this time long side to long side. Now for the tricky part. Pinch both short ends of the paper, with the crease facing up. Bring your hands together, causing the cut in the middle of the paper to open up. You should have a plus sign now. The last step is to press all the pages down so the cover is on top. Mush the pages down and crease all the folds. You may need to use a marker or pencil for these creases, as they are all now stacked up on each other. Now that you have a little book, have the kids write their name on the cover. Read each page and have the children illustrate it accordingly.

through us!

From the parable of the mustard seed, we can learn that no matter how young and small we are, Jesus can do BIG things

In the parable of the yeast, we learn that even just a few Christians can make a difference in the world. It is our job to tell everyone, everywhere about Jesus and how much he loves all the people in the world.

know Jesus.

We learn that since we are the wheat, the good seed in the world, it is our job pray for the weeds, the people that don't

Matthew 13:24-33

Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' 'An enemy has done this!' the farmer exclaimed. 'Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked. 'No,' he replied. 'You'll uproot the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.' Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches." Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

trusting him with their lives.

In the parable of the Wheat and Weeds, we learn that Jesus is patiently waiting to establish a physical kingdom so he can give everyone a chance to believe in him before he punishes people for not

Matthew 13:36-43

Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field." Jesus replied, "The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. 39 The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is not only a place, but is Jesus ruling in our hearts. The parables of the Kingdom of Heaven teach us how to live like citizens of the

Story Time with Jesus

Lesson Three

The Parables of the Kingdom

Name: _____