

Kingdom Faithfulness

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- [0 : 0 0] Awesome, thank you Alex. And those are really cool glasses by the way, you know. Whether they're real or not, hey. They're working. Good morning everybody, like Alex said. My name is Jesse.
- I have the privilege of being one of the elders, the eldership team that leads this church. And gonna continue on in our parables of Jesus today. If you got a Bible, go ahead and turn to Matthew 21. And then also keep a tab in Luke 13 as well.
- There's a parable there that we're gonna read from as well. Before we jump into it, I just want to bring to your attention just like some cool things in the life of the church, evidences of God's grace.
- And we had our first partnership class yesterday and had 16 adults show up for that that went through the partnership class. And just, yeah, it went really well. We were excited. Well, from our view, it went really well.
- Like we haven't talked to them yet to see what they thought about it. But yeah, I appreciate all that who showed up for that and all the work that went into that to include Lisa and Kevin and getting the place looking nice and food and all that.
- [0 : 5 8] Much appreciated. So yeah, just wanted to share that good news with you all. So anyways, again, back to our parables. We are gonna read these three parables.
- There's three parables from all these verses we're getting into today. They all have a common thread for today's big idea. Today's big idea, big thought about the kingdom is kingdom faithfulness. Now, what I wanna do is I wanna get ahead of some confusion that may happen because when we read these parables, you're gonna say like, man, Jess, I'm not seeing faithfulness here.
- I'm seeing a lot about vineyards and fruitfulness. Right? It seems like they're all about producing fruit. And I would say explicitly, they are about producing fruit. But what is implied, and I would argue, and I think from these passages of what we will see, what is quite necessary to produce fruit is actually faithfulness and kingdom faithfulness.
- I mean, it's an important thing for us to realize is that when we get into this and thinking about like what kingdom faithfulness is and about what these things say about producing fruit, we can get the wrong idea and walk away with the wrong idea that it's up to us that we better go about producing fruit.
- Like we have the ability to do that apart from Jesus and we can't. Okay, first thing is you cannot produce the fruit of the kingdom. It's God who does that in you and through you. He produces the fruit.
- [2 : 1 7] To say it another way is God's kingdom is a part of you as much as you are a part of it. This calling into this kingdom, this walking in the kingdom is the with God life, as Dallas Willard put it.
- And to be with God means that we are becoming more like him. We are walking with him alongside. He's walking along with us and he is guiding us and leading us and transforming us along the way.

Now, again, this isn't something, this change and this transformation, it's not something that you and I can accomplish without him. We can't do it in our own strength. The evidence of the with God life are only gonna manifest, those fruits are only gonna manifest because we have the Holy Spirit, that empowering presence in us.

While it's true that God is the one, the Holy Spirit is the one who produces that fruit in us, I would have to say this too, it is also true that you and I, as disciples of Jesus, have a responsibility to submit and to surrender to the work and will of God.

That is very, very important. So let's look at these three short parables that Jesus gave on bearing fruit and how they point to kingdom faithfulness. So parables one and two, they're kind of a, they're different parables, but they're told together by Jesus in response to something.

[3 : 39] And Jesus says, what do you think? A man had two sons and he went to the first and said, son, go and work in the vineyard today. And he answered, I will not.

But afterward, he changed his mind and went. And when he, and he went to the other son, the father did and said the same. And he answered, I will, sir, but did not go.

Which of the two did the will of his father? And they said, the first. And Jesus said to them, truly I say to you, the tax collectors and prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John the Baptist came to you in a way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

Hear another parable, Jesus said to these Pharisees. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

[4 : 41] And when the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first.

And they did the same to them. And finally, he sent his son to them saying, they will respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, this is the heir, come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.

And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When then, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? And they said to him, he will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.

And Jesus said to them, have you never read in the scriptures The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

[5 : 53] Now, parable number three in Luke 13, verses six to nine, and it says, Jesus told this parable, a man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. There's that vineyard again. And he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

And he said to the vine dresser, look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground? And he answered him, sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and put on manure.

Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down. This is God's word to us. So before we jump into this idea of faithfulness, we have to tackle this idea and get an understanding of fruitfulness.

And one of the things that's obvious from these three parables is that God expects his people, those that he has planted in his vineyard, in his kingdom, he expects them to bear fruit.

Not only does he expect it, God is jealous for his children to bear fruit because he is a good father. This week has been a big one for the Kintzer family.

[7 : 02] Riley got his driver's license. He passed the driver's test, which was like super exciting. And then Asher, we drove him up to college and said goodbye and he's up there, far away from us now.

But both have stepped into this amazing privilege that has been given to them, like for Riley's case, the authority of the state and saying, hey, you did well enough.

You can now drive. And in the case of Liberty University where Asher's at, like he gets to be there and learn and study and enjoy all the things that happen in campus life.

And this privilege they receive also comes with responsibility. Right? If Riley disobeys the laws, he's going to get fines. Right? He may even get his license revoked if it's bad enough.

Asher, he can do so poorly that he flunks out of college or gets thrown out for certain kinds of behaviors. See, as much as they stepped into those privileges, the privilege comes with expectation.

[8 : 07] Now I want to say this, the state, North Carolina, the state of North Carolina and Liberty University aren't exactly a great correlation to the kingdom of God. Right? Nobody at the DMV is going to grieve over Riley breaking the law and getting a speeding ticket.

My wallet may, but they won't. Nor will they give one more thought to him driving safely to avoid an accident. At Liberty University, they would forget Asher in two and a half seconds were he to leave.

But me as his father, me as their father, I have a very different investment into them. Because of my love for them, I want them to succeed and I want them to flourish in life.

I am jealous over Riley to bear the fruits of a good driver. And I am jealous over Asher to bear the fruits of being a good college student. And it's not because I need them to be for some selfish reason because like, hey, when you do well, I look really good.

I'm jealous for their sake. And that same jealousy is one that God gives to us and to those who lead the church. We carry that for the church because I believe God puts it in us and it reflects his jealousy over us.

[9 : 23] He wants us to flourish. He wants us to bear the kingdom's fruit because he is jealous for his children. And his divine jealousy is good and pure and it is holy.

And his jealousy to be jealous, to be jealous is simply this, is to have a strong desire towards someone for a very specific reason.

Some jealousy, yes, it is impure. Yes, it is selfish. Jealousy, certain kinds of jealousy can use people to feed personal gratification or to glorify ourselves or to seek power.

And if I want the glory of being a good father, I am going to, and if that is dependent on my children proving that, man, my jealousy for them is gonna go sideways in a lot of ways.

It's gonna make me manipulative or controlling, perhaps even abusive toward my children in order to get them to behave in a manner that I need them to that shows everybody else, look how great I am.

[10 : 26] As a dad. But our heavenly father is different. His glory, think about this, his glory doesn't rise and fall on our fruitfulness.

It doesn't. He had all the glory he need before he created anything. Think about that. His jealousy for our fruitfulness is rooted in his unconditional love for us.

That's a beautiful thing. That is a freeing thing. That is a thing that we can think of God to thank God for and be like, yes and amen. Oh my goodness. In these last few moments with Asher this week, saying goodbye to him, you kind of just think of like, man, I just wanna, I just wanna give him some of my best parting words here.

I don't wanna say everything. I don't wanna overwhelm him. But there's like, what can I get across succinctly? What are the few things that I can impart before I leave? And then on the way home, there's just like, man, I just felt this like jealousy over him.

And it wasn't in reference to myself as his dad. I just wanted God's best for him. Which is, what is best for him? And actually, if you and I really think about it, that's what kingdom fruitfulness really is.

[11 : 45] Kingdom fruitfulness is God's best for his children. So what takes place in your heart when you hear God's desire for you to bear fruit? His expectation that his children will bear fruit.

Is that a burden? Do you hear that and you're just like, oh. Do you see and hear that and suddenly this oppressive list grows in you of all the things that you can't do and all the things you have to do?

And if that's what's happening, that's kind of a starting point that leads us towards two false gospels. The gospel of legalism or the gospel of license.

And those two are false ways of trying to relate to God. Legalism, what it does, it takes on the burden to produce fruit in order to keep God from being angry with us. Like it's on us for God to keep smiling.

It's on us to make sure that he's not upset because something that we did might have robbed him of glory. And we can think that way. There's the false gospel of license which looks at the burdensome list and says, you know what?

[12 : 53] God doesn't care about such things. I can just live as I want to. Both are wrong. And they're wrong because they're rooted in a poor theology of who God is.

The legalist sees God as punitive and relates to him out of fear of punishment. I better do what is right lest God pay it back on me.

The licentious person sees God as permissive and that he's just this father up there that it just doesn't care. He just is disconnected. That's how he relates to the father, this God far away in the sky.

He's just like, yeah, I'm just lovey-dovey and I'm just like, I'm not with you. You know, I'm just here to meet your needs and indulge in your desires. Legalism understands God to be indignant.

License understands God to be indifferent and both are wrong ways to relate to God. He's neither of those things. He wants his best for his children.

[13 : 56] Now, I want to say this, within that, his wanting his best for his children, wanting us to produce fruit, as a good father that he is, there is a lot of patience and gentleness and forbearance toward us as his children in that.

But he still loves us enough to have his sanctified expectations. And as the first parable points out, God's best requires our faithful obedience as his children.

That's what that parable of the two sons really spells out. I remember reading that the first few times and studying this and it brought this picture to mind that just really made me laugh because I kind of experienced this with my kids.

You know, I'll go to them and I'll be like, hey, Rory, I mean, Riley. You know, that happens with dads when you get older. You get the names wrong. But I need you to go clean the bathroom. You got to do your chores. And they're like, you know, if they're looking at their phone or playing video games, you just get the uh-huh.

And you're thinking like, you know, sweet, I think they got it. They're going to get to it. But then later on, you realize two hours later, the bathroom still looks like it did before. And you said like, hey, what happened?

[15 : 03] And they're just like, oh yeah, I forgot. Or, oh yeah, I really wasn't paying attention or something like that. And I want to say, they get it honest from me. Like, I do the same thing to Haley. You know, she'll talk to me and I'll just be in on something, maybe reading a book or anything.

And I'm just like, uh-huh, uh-huh. And she's like, remember we spoke about that? And I'm like, have no clue. But I want to say that only happens on the rarest of occasions. Let me ask you this way.

Has God ever quickened your heart to do something and you say, uh-huh, but then never get to doing it? Right? We all know what that's like. Again, hear this, hear this in God's patience and gentleness and kindness towards you.

Hear this in his very loving nature. You can be faithful and yet imperfect with regards to obedience. Kind of an aside here when we're thinking about this fruitfulness and this heavenly father who expects it from us.

He is not like looking at our branch of fruitfulness and comparing it to others and being like, man, you only have three and this person has five. Bad on you, good on them. He is not going with the measuring stick and saying like, ooh, your fruit just isn't the right size yet, buddy.

[16 : 19] This is like fail, you know? He's not doing that. Our faithfulness may be imperfect but man, God really cares about it.

The son who said no, he repented and turned and did the father's will. The other son didn't and that parable led us into the next about the tenants of the vineyard who kept assaulting the master's servants and then ended up killing the son and that was an indictment on the Pharisees' failure to yield the fruit of God's kingdom that he desired for his people.

And then there's the fig tree in the vineyard. The fig tree's fruitlessness was really about a lack of repentance, a lack of change of mind in returning to do what they should have been doing.

That's one of the common threads that we're seeing through these parables. And one of the things that led into that parable of the fig tree is this conversation that Jesus was having just before that.

We can pick that up in the beginning of Luke 13. It says, There was some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifice and he answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?

[17 : 40] No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those 18 on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?

No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And then he goes into the parable of the fig tree. The point of all this is that faithfulness for Jesus' disciples doesn't require perfect perpetual obedience.

obedience. And yet at the same time, obedience really matters to God. And for those who love him, it's gonna matter to us as well.

Which is why when we disobey, we feel conviction about it. And I would say that too comes from God. The Holy Spirit is the one who convicts us of our sin. And that conviction is a gift.

And that gift is meant to lead us to an amazing provision of grace from God, which is repentance. Repentance for followers of Jesus is an important part of being faithful.

[18 : 47] The faithful aren't perfect. We aren't. We're gonna mess up. We're gonna fail. We're gonna sin. We're gonna do things we know we shouldn't have done. But what we do is we repent. We repent.

We have that change of mind. Even though we said no to the Father, we can have that change of mind and turn and do His will.

That was the first analysis of the Son, right? He had that change of mind. And that's what's beautiful about life in God's kingdom. Anytime that you and I sin, anytime that we disobey, anytime that we rebel, what repentance does, it lets God have the last word.

Is there a limit on how many times that He will do that? No. Are there certain sins and acts of rebellion that God won't forgive? No.

You can be addicted to drugs, alcohol, pornography. Maybe if you're in an affair, having an affair, had an affair, in other kinds of sexual sin, maybe you've done things that you're very ashamed of like abuse.

[20 : 05] I would even say the worst thing that you can think of, even murder. Now, they may have consequences in this life, but in the bigger scheme of the kingdom, which will carry on into eternity, God has the last word when we repent and turn to Him.

The writer of Hebrews says this, Jesus' blood speaks a better word, speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. And the blood of Abel that it's talking about there is the blood that cries out for justice because Abel was murdered.

The writer of Hebrews says, you know what, Jesus' blood speaks grace and mercy. mercy. Is God pleased with our obedience?

Does He want it? Of course. He delights in our obedience. When His children are obedient, He rejoices. And that delight is a motive enough for us to obey.

We want to be those because we love the Father being about His businesses, doing His will and delighting in Him. But He also rejoices when we repent.

[21 : 12] He does. The parable of the two sons shows us that repentance is a return to obedience. And repentance, like obedience, is faithfulness.

And that kind of faithfulness bears fruit. Obedience is great. It will bear fruit. Repentance, when we mess up, turning away from what we are doing and turning back to the will of God.

And it's going to bear fruit in our lives. And it requires humility and dependence on God. Trusting and believing that He will forgive and He will restore. Repentance requires faith to believe that God's will is His best for us so that we do return to obedience to Him.

Now what I want us to walk away with is this. I want us to walk away with confidence in God's desire to bear His fruit in us.

That we believe that actually God wants to do that. and also that He has the ability to empower us to be faithful for that fruit to bear in our lives.

[22 : 20] So remember this, God will bring to completion in us what Jesus has already accomplished for us. God's going to water and mulch and manure you to fruitfulness like that vine dresser was going to do for that fig tree.

He cares deeply for you. He gives you what you need to bear kingdom fruit. And you can have confidence in that because He already gave you all that you need in Jesus.

When we struggle to obey we do not need to despair and give up. We need to look to Jesus who is our perfect obedience. Should we fall into sin we need not wallow in the guilt and shame of it but instead turn and look to Jesus whose sacrifice on the cross atones for all our sins.

His blood speaks a better word. Your latest failure and I would say even your latest success are not the last word on your faithfulness.

Jesus who He is and what He's done for you is the last word when it comes to our faithfulness. In Jesus the penalty of our sin has been paid.

[23 : 38] The power over sin the power of sin over us has been broken and the perfect obedience we need has been accomplished for us and what Jesus has already accomplished for us God will work out in us until He brings it to completion.

Philippians 1 6 puts it this way I am sure of this He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

So then what you and I do our part in this is to be fruitful by faithfully remaining in Him.

we remain by faith in Jesus Christ and all He has done and all He is doing. He did it for us He is working it out in us.

We get both of those as we remain in Him both of those are ongoing realities. Never stop believing that God wants you to bear fruit and that this isn't a burden God's fruitfulness is God's best for you because fruitfulness means you are remaining in Him you are abiding in Him.

[24 : 53] Remember Jesus said apart from me you can do nothing. Apart from me you cannot bear fruit. That's it. Before you and I can begin to glorify God with a fruitful life we have to learn to enjoy Him by faithfully abiding in Him remaining in Him and guess what He really really loves that.

He really wants to spend time with you. He really wants to speak to you and encourage you and prove His love to you and remind you of all the things that He is His goodness and His love His mercy and His grace.

His best God's best is giving Himself to us. We have to be with Him that's His best. Jesus is proof of that.

Some of the simple ways that we remain in God just some practicals handles you can walk away with man slow down your life so that you can actually do this and spend time with Him.

Learn to live at a speed that allows for intimacy with God. It's not always easy to do in this life that pulls us in so many different directions all the time.

[26 : 11] But you'll find when you do that that He is worth it. And all the other things that you've been running at that you think you absolutely needed you'll realize like man as good as those things are this is the one thing that is most necessary.

Spending time with Him. It isn't a burden. It's the greatest source of joy and peace and love and goodness. And that's why faithfulness is not a burden for us.

it's a privilege. As the band comes up and we look to respond. If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, actually you know can we do this?

Can we all stand together? If you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I want you to know that He wants to have the last word in your life.

Right now, He wants to have the last word. Whatever you think you have done, whatever you think, how far you think you have wandered, the doubt that you may have, God isn't looking for a perfect faith.

[27 : 24] He just works in you a faith that believes. Jesus is the Son of God sent to live a life on your behalf, die a death you deserve.

But by faith you can be saved. By faith, the last word of Jesus over you is not the blood of Abel that cries out for justice and punishment. It cries out love and acceptance.

It cries out, you are my child. You are forgiven. You are healed. Just think about the thief on the cross.

God's love and the gospels tell us most likely that both thieves were involved in the mocking of Jesus, though they were also being crucified with him.

But at some point, one of those thieves had a change of mind like that son did in that parable. Suddenly, he became convinced like, whoops, this is the Son of God.

[28 : 26] And Jesus said to him, this day, I will see you in paradise. That's not a lot of fruit.

That guy can't look back and walk into heaven and being like, look at all this fruit that I did for the kingdom of God. That is simply believing. If that's you, I call you just come to him.

Jesus is inviting you to him today to have that last word. Surrender. Turn to him. It does not matter what you have done. There's going to be a prayer up on the screen that you can pray.

If you're already a follower of Jesus, we're going to come to the communion table right now. This reminds us that Jesus gets the last word. As his disciples, his blood speaks a better word.

He invites us to behold it as we come to the table, to participate and to partake of it, the sign and the symbol of his blood. Before you come, if we can just close our eyes, just want us to think about what are you doing?

[29 : 46] What do you got today? What are you coming in with today? Maybe it is regrets for things that you have done. Maybe you are full of guilt and shame for things you have said, behaviors, actions.

Things that you were like, man, if anybody finds out, I would just want to crawl in a hole and die. your Savior knows and your Father in heaven knows and you can bring that to him.

Whatever you think, man, that repentance, come to him. He is saying, come and let me have the last word. Confess it. Bring it to him.

Repent and turn from it. just remember as we come to the table, we come to a Savior with open arms of invitation that says, come and partake of my grace.

Come and partake of my last word. And be confident that God who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion. Father, I pray over my friends, that you would come and you would meet us right where we are at.

[31 : 12] That we would find in you an amazing God who is full of mercy and grace. The night that you were betrayed, you took some bread and you broke it and gave it to your disciples and said, eat of this.

This is my body broken for you. And you took a cup and you gave it to them and said, drink. This is my blood, the blood of a new covenant shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

We get to come, we get to remember, and we get to partake of these things in faith. Lord, use this time to heal what needs to be healed, to restore what needs to be restored, and to return us back to you.

amen. When you are ready, you can go to the communion table nearest you, come back and take it when you're ready.

Amen. Thank you.