

Checking In

1. Take a few minutes to check in with everyone, see how they are doing, and open with prayer.
2. Church Life: Ministry Partners needed for Children, Students, Music and Media Tech. Baptisms are on April 29th between services. Prayer Retreat June 3rd for Small Groups.
NOTE: Week of 5/27 will be the last week for SG questions for this session

Learning

Knowing God

Key Doctrines

- *God* – God is a gracious judge. Grace and judgment are not opposing attributes of God, but are both true of God’s nature.
- *Heaven & Hell* – Heaven is the place where the righteous in Christ will dwell in their Father’s glorious presence. Hell is the place where the unrighteous will dwell in the anguish of separation from God’s presence.
- *Angels* – Creatures made by God to worship and serve him. The devil is an angel who chose to rebel against God.

Key Observations

- *Read:* Matthew 13:10-17, Luke 17:20-21

According to Matthew 13:10-17 what is Jesus’ purpose in teaching through parables? What responses ought we to expect to this kind of teaching?

Jesus teaches in parables in order to divide. Those that do not desire Christ will be turned away, but those who desire Christ will be drawn toward him to know more. The parables clarify where people stand in regards to Christ and his kingdom.

- According to Luke 17:20-21 what should we expect about the kingdom of God? How might the hiddenness of the kingdom inform the way we understand the parables Jesus teaches about the kingdom?
The kingdom is hidden. It is not obvious, clear or accessible in the ways we would expect. It certainly wasn’t in the ways Jesus’ audience would have expected. It is not marked by power and might, but rather by littleness and weakness. This must inform the way in which we hear all of the parables. The nature of the kingdom is surprising and unexpected. It can be easily missed.
- *Read:* Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, Matthew 24:36-51, Matthew 25:31-46
 - What do you notice about this parable? What features of the parable stand out to you and does Jesus’ explanation of the parable provide clarity about the story?
Allow people to share their observations. The primary thing to emphasize here is that Jesus’ interpretation of his own story ought to govern our interpretation. Pay attention to Jesus’ explanation and emphasis.
 - What does this parable teach us about God’s grace?

It is important to emphasize the grace, mercy and patience demonstrated by God. It is easy for us to be offended or bothered by the fact that the devil is still operating and that those who do evil in our world are allowed to remain. And yet, what is clear in the passage is that God's grace in this scene is for the good of his wheat. What we also know is that God can in fact transform some of the weeds into wheat, and in fact desires to do so before the final judgment arrives.

- What does this parable teach us about God's judgment? What do the other two passages from Matthew add to our understanding?

The end of the explanation (verses 41-43) in particular focuses our attention on final judgment. God is amazingly patient and merciful in the current state of his kingdom, allowing weeds to live and grow. And yet, Jesus is clear that a day will come in which God will judge, and in fact condemn the weeds. It is important that we pay attention to when judgment happens and who does the judging. It is at the end of the age, when Christ returns. It is a judgment enacted by God in his loving holiness.

Listening

Responding to God

- In light of hearing this week's sermon, our study together, and listening to God's Word, how might God be inviting you to take a step of obedience?

Loving

Obeying God

- What is happening in my own life right now that I need to share and for which I need prayer?
- This week I am committed to praying for _____ about:

Checking Out

- What was most meaningful about this group session for you (Give each person 1-2 sentences to share)?
- Close in Prayer and Read Daniel 12:2-3.