

Lesson 21

Going into the Harvest Field

Group Icebreakers:

1. What does the term “harvest field” mean to you? (A field in which the crop that has been planted is ready to harvested)
2. Where is the harvest field? (Anyplace that seed has been planted and is ready to be harvested)
3. How does a person know when the field is ready to harvest? (The crop is mature: ready to be made into food or sown to produce more crops)
4. How does a person identify the maturity of the crop? (By testing it: visually, firmness, etc.)
5. What happens at harvest? (The crop is picked, accumulated and stored for future use)

Introduction:

Jesus has been preparing His disciples to produce the kingdom (rule of) of God in people. This will become their mission in life. In the previous three lessons we saw that Jesus revealed several kingdom truths through the use of parables. Those truths can be applied to people corporately or individually. Let’s summarize them here:

- The kingdom of God is planted in people’s lives by speaking the word of God to them. It may or may not grow to maturity depending on the condition of the heart. (Parable of the sower)
- The kingdom of God grows in people’s lives by stages: first the blade (childhood), then the head (youth) and finally the mature grain in the head (adulthood). Growth comes through watering (edification) and sunlight (persecution). (Parable of the growing plant)
- Those who cause stumbling blocks and live lawless lives affect the kingdom. (Parable of the wheat and the tares)
 - It is imperative that they are not heeded, as the heart will produce whatever is believed.
 - When maturity is achieved, those who cause stumbling blocks and live lawless lives will no longer have an affect on the kingdom.
- The kingdom of God grows both externally (visual evidence – numbers) and internally (spiritual maturity – wisdom and knowledge). (Parable of the mustard seed and the leaven)
- The kingdom of God contains undiscovered benefits. (Parable of the treasure in the field)
- The kingdom of God is the most priceless thing anyone can possess. (Parable of the pearl of great price)
- The kingdom of God will continue as it is until it is full, and then there will be a separation of the good from the evil. (Parable of the dragnet cast into the sea)

Reading the Scripture:

Matthew 8:23-34, 9:35-38, Mark 4:35-5:20, Luke 8:22-39

Jesus Calms the Sea

Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

And on that day, when evening had come, He and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." And leaving the multitude, they took Him

along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

Demons are Cast into Swine
Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39
Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when He had come out of the boat, He was met by a certain man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones. And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is **Legion**;¹ for we are many." And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. And the demons entreated Him, saying, "Send us into the **swine**² so that we may enter them." And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the **steep bank**³ into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea. And their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had the "legion"; and they became frightened. And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region. And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.

¹ **Legion**. At the time of Jesus a "Roman legion" consisted of 6000 infantry and a contingent of cavalry.

² **Swine** are "unclean" animals.

³ **Steep bank**. There is only one place on the Sea of Galilee that matches this description, near the small village of Kursi.

Evangelism **Matthew 9:35-38**

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

29 AD, Late Summer/Early Autumn

And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

The Commands:

- ❖ Let us go over to the other side of the lake.
- ❖ The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.

The Lesson:

Fundamental to proclaiming the kingdom of God is Jesus' ministry of signs and wonders. He **teaches** what the kingdom is like through His **parables**. And He **demonstrates** the power of the kingdom through His **miracles**. "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." (Matthew 12:28) The parables are verbal **proclamations** about the kingdom of God. The miracles are **visible manifestations** of the kingdom of God.

Having just finished His teaching on the parables of the kingdom of God, Jesus and His disciples, accompanied by a flotilla of boats, set a course for the eastern side of the lake in the region of the Gerasenes.

The eastern side of the lake was part of the Decapolis or "League of Ten Cities", which was controlled by the city of Hippos. The Roman general, Pompey, founded the Decapolis on his return from Syria in 63 BCE and conferred upon it pagan-Hellenistic city rights. The particular region they were headed for was the Gerasenes. In Hebrew, the word Gerushim or Gerashim means, "expelled people". And according to Jewish tradition this was the land of the Girgashites, one of the seven indigenous people of Canaan, that Joshua drove out of the land.

During the five-mile voyage they encounter a severe storm that threatens to destroy them all. Jesus is awakened from sleep by the disciples and He commands the storm and the sea to be calm. Arriving on the eastern shore near the village of Kursi the group encounters a demon-possessed man living among the tombs. Jesus casts the man's demons, about 6000, into a herd of swine and after being possessed by the demons, the herd of swine run down a steep slope and drown themselves in the lake.

Group Discussion:

1. Why do you think Jesus wanted His disciples to go to the other side of the lake?
(He may have wanted to demonstrate the power of the kingdom of God in confrontation with the kingdom of Satan or possibly to put the disciples in uncomfortable situations so they could observe the power of God in operation during difficult circumstances)
2. After rebuking the wind and the sea, why do you think Jesus said to His disciples, "Why are you so timid" and "How is it that you have no faith?" (He was challenging the disciples to have faith in God and to take authority over their circumstances. Throughout

His ministry Jesus, as the Son of Man, demonstrated power over the earth and evil spiritual forces but never over the free will of men.)

3. Are you fearful of taking the message of the kingdom of God into unknown areas?

The Lesson Continued:

Upon returning to the northern shore of the lake Jesus heals a woman, who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years. Later that day He raises a little girl from the dead, restores the eyesight of two blind men and causes a man who is dumb to speak. From there Jesus goes back to his hometown of Nazareth where He heals a few sick people by the laying on of hands.

As Jesus travels about on His next preaching tour⁴ he notices that the people are behaving like sheep without a shepherd. They wander aimlessly, without purpose, suffering every kind of malady and disease, as their enemies pick them off one by one. They need to be cared for, given direction, and provided protection. Feeling compassion for them and recognizing that He is not able to care for all of them Jesus calls His disciples to prayer.

Group Discussion:

4. Do you know anyone, who is behaving like a sheep without a shepherd and if so what behavior do they exhibit? (They wander aimlessly, without purpose, suffering every kind of malady and disease, as their enemies pick them off one by one.)
5. Why do you think Jesus told His disciples to pray for more harvesters and not more sowers? (It takes more people to harvest than it does to sow)

Point of the Lesson:

Find the harvest field and go to work.

Application:

Pray every day for the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest.

⁴ Probably April to October in 29 AD.