

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Dare to Be Kingdom-Minded

Matthew 13:44-52

Welcome, everyone. As you take your seats, take your Bibles with me and turn to the **Book of Matthew. Matthew 13:44-52.** Today we begin a new series entitled, “Dare to Be Different!” And I see this entire series as an outworking of that great passage of Scripture that we looked at last Sunday, **Romans 12:2.** “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” **Have you memorized that verse yet, Harvest Decatur? Have you implemented that verse yet in 2021?** For the next eight weeks, I want to talk about how to flesh that passage out in our lives as Christ-followers. **Do not be conformed; but be transformed! Dare to Be Different!**

I heard once a great illustration on this verse by Theresa Nelson, Pastor Tommy Nelson’s wife. She taught **Romans 12:2** once by taking a glass bottle. And the glass bottle represented “the world.” And she stuffed a bunch of wires into the bottle. That’s us. We are the wires. And those wires get conformed to the shape of the bottle, just like we are conformed to the world. We are shaped by the world. The world squeezes us into its image. And then she took a hammer, and she smashed that bottle. [I thought about bringing a bottle to church this morning and a hammer as a little illustration for you... but I don’t think our deacons would appreciate me shattering glass all over the sanctuary]. And do you know what that shattering represents? That shattering of the bottle is your salvation! You’ve been set free. You are no longer constricted by the patterns of this world. Hallelujah! Jesus has freed you!

But here’s the problem. Those wires are still in the shape of the bottle. They’re constricted by that previous shape and they have to be re-shaped. And so, here’s what Theresa Nelson did. She took those wires one by one and reshapes them into a new form. And she bent the wires and says, “Here’s a renewal of your mind on the topic of your identity in Christ.” She took another wire and say, “Here’s a renewal of your mind on the topic of marriage and family.” She took another wire and say, “Here’s a renewal of your mind on the topic of sex and gender.” She took another wire and say, “Here’s a renewal of your mind on the topic of money and love and church and eternity.” And that’s painful. **Metamorphosis is painful; just ask a butterfly! But it’s a good kind of painful. Renewal is taking place. You’re being transformed.**

That little illustration there is how I see this series. You are free, Harvest Decatur. You have been saved by the blood of Jesus. Hallelujah. But by habit, we are still conformed to the image of the world, to worldliness and sin. And week by week in this series, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I want us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. Here’s God’s view on sex. Here’s God’s view on marriage and family. Here’s God’s view on contentment. Here’s God’s view on eternity. Here’s God’s view on morality.

You know I feel as a Christian and as a pastor a constant pressure to be more like the world. I feel pressure to be relevant. I feel pressure to blend in. I feel this now as a leader in the church, but I also felt it acutely when I was in the trenches of this world... when I was in high school and in college and in the workplace. I wanted to blend in. I wanted to keep a low-profile. I wanted my life and my faith to be camouflaged against the backdrop of this world. I thought that was the best way to win people to Christ. It was a soft sell. “Come be a Christian and nothing in your life has to change. You can blend in with the world and stay inconspicuous.”

But as I was soft-selling Christianity, I was also selling it short. I underestimated the impact that a radical, overt, dissimilar life, sold out to Christ, could have in this world. Here’s the thing that I’ve come to realize in my life. Dissimilarity from this world is compelling. Different is attractive to a world that is hell-bent on conformity. And here’s probably the most convincing argument for “Dare to Be Different” that I can give you this morning: dissimilarity from the world is biblical.

Sometimes churches work hard at being “relevant” and that usually means that they look just like the world. But in reality, if the church looks just like the world, then it (ironically) becomes no longer relevant. The church derives its relevance in our world by being discernibly different from the world. If the church is just as messed-up and sin-stained as the world, than why would anyone be attracted to the church? If Christians wander aimlessly and thoughtlessly like the rest of the world, why would anyone want to be a Christian? What makes Christianity compelling is not similarity but dissimilarity!

Not a dissimilarity that is rude and obnoxious. Nor a dissimilarity that is standoffish and hides from the world in isolation. But instead it is a dissimilarity that draws people away from the brokenness and the emptiness of this world. It’s what Paul describes as “the aroma of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15-17). That’s what’s compelling in a world that is wasting away.

So how do we chart a course for biblical difference from the world? What does that “aroma of Christ” look like? Well that will be our focus throughout this series. Last week we began this by looking at Romans 12:1-2. Today I want to continue the exploration of “Dare to Be Different” by looking at some of Jesus’s words in the Gospel of Matthew about kingdom-mindedness.

And my challenge for you today is to be kingdom-minded. I dare you to be kingdom-minded, Harvest Decatur. In a world that is focused on self and false kingdoms, be about the King, King Jesus, his Kingship, and promoting his kingdom in this world. That’s my challenge today.

And to help us with that, let’s look at Jesus’s words in Matthew 13:44-52. Jesus says this,

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” ⁵² And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Go ahead and write this down as #1 in your notes.

What does it mean to be Kingdom-minded?

We’re daring to be different. We’re daring to be kingdom-minded. What does that mean? What does that look like? I’ll give you three answers to that this morning.¹ Here’s the first. It means...

1) Treasuring above all else **Christ the King** (13:44-46)

Jesus says,

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field,

Now the context of our story is Jesus’s conversation with his disciples. Earlier in **Matthew 13**, Jesus went out on a boat and began teaching the crowd in parables. He told a total of four parables to the crowd including: **1)** the parable of the soils, **2)** the parable of the wheat and weeds, **3)** the parable of mustard seed, and **4)** the parable of the leaven. Well in **13:36**, Matthew tells us he left the crowds and went into the house, and it was there that his disciples pressed him for greater understanding. They were persistent, and they wanted to know particularly what the interpretation of the wheat and weeds. Jesus explained it to them, and then he follows that up with more fresh parables told only to this small group of disciples.

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

You know at this time, it was not uncommon in Israel to bury treasure in your field, because of the instability of the region.² **There were no banks at that time and there was no FDIC, so in some cases the safest place to hide treasure was in the ground.**³ And what inevitably happened in this culture is that people would die suddenly and leave their treasure buried in a field unbeknownst to any family or friends. And so

¹ My three points are derived from Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 538: “(1) The kingdom has overwhelming value, worth everything a person has (vv. 44 – 46). (2) Certain judgment is reserved for those who reject the kingdom (vv. 47 – 50). (3) Finally, the disciples have attained an understanding that makes them responsible to teach others the new truths of the kingdom as well as the old truths of the Torah (vv. 51 – 52).”

² We should not be concerned with the legality of this arrangement or the scruples of someone who secretly tries to buy a field in order to obtain treasure. This is not a relevant exploration in the interpretation of Jesus’s parables. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 223: “Jesus frequently tells parables in which unscrupulous characters nevertheless display some virtue from which Christians can learn.”

³ Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT, 541: “In a society that had no bans or safety-deposit boxes, all one could do with valuables was hide them underground. Archaeologists have often found jars of gold coins or even precious jewels and pearls buried in a field.”

generations could have come and gone with buried treasure left in the field. Well in Jesus's story, a person finds buried treasure in a field, possibly through plowing the ground or maybe after a rainstorm that altered the terrain of the field.⁴ Whatever the case, this treasure is so priceless, it's so compelling, that this person becomes elated. He goes and sells all he has to buy that field.

For an audience like Jesus's that was full of day-laborers and peasants, this is the ultimate rags-to-riches story. Most men and women would dream of stumbling across a jackpot like this in the field that would provide them and their families with permanent financial security.⁵ Jesus likens this extraordinary find and the joy that it would entail to the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is like that. It's like treasure hidden in a field, which a man is willing to sell everything he owns in order to acquire.

Now let's be clear about something. The treasure is not the Kingdom of Heaven. This parable, like the parable of the wheat and weeds before this, is an extended metaphor. The Kingdom of Heaven represents all the details in this parable: **1)** the person who finds the treasure, **2)** the treasure itself, **3)** the field, and **4)** the possessions sold in order to buy the field. All of that is part (is like!) of the Kingdom of Heaven. So the question is this, and this is what Jesus's audience would be hankering to have him answer: What is the treasure? What's the treasure, Jesus? What does the treasure represent in this parable?

Well hold that thought, Harvest Decatur! We'll come back to that in a minute. First look at **verse 45**:

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

In Jesus's day there were divers who would plumb the depths of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean to find pearls worth a fortune.⁶ Pearls in that day were valued more than gold.⁷ Some were worth the equivalent of a billion dollars in our day.⁸ This merchant here is looking for that "pearl of great price," and he is willing to sell everything he owns in order to buy it.

Jesus gives a second parable here that has a similar message to the first.⁹ But they are not exact. I was reading **Charles Spurgeon** this week, and Spurgeon observed that in the first parable the man wasn't looking for "treasure." He just kind of stumbled onto it. In the second parable, the merchant was looking for it.¹⁰ Some people are looking for the treasure in the Kingdom of God. Some people just stumble onto it.¹¹

But just to be clear, the "pearl of great value" represents the same thing as the "treasure" buried in the field.¹² The merchant is the same as the peasant man who found the treasure. In both cases, the great treasure that they've found marginalizes everything else they own.¹³ They are willing to sell everything for it. It's that valuable to them!

So what is the treasure? What is Jesus talking about? What is so valuable that people should be willing to forfeit everything in order to gain it? **Well here's the answer to that question. The most valuable treasure in this world is Jesus himself. And the person who finds Jesus finds something more valuable and of greater worth than everything else he or she possesses. This is what it means to be kingdom-minded. You value Jesus more than everything else in your life.**¹⁴

⁴ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 328: "In a land as frequently ravaged as Palestine, many people doubtless buried their treasures; but, as Huffman points out, actually to find a treasure would happen once in a thousand lifetimes. Thus the extravagance of the parable dramatizes the supreme importance of the kingdom."

⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 391: "People in Palestine often hid treasures, which might remain concealed if the hider died before he could retrieve them. Thus hidden treasure became a prominent motif in Near Eastern folklore... exciting the imagination of peasants for whom it represented the ultimate dream."

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *IVPBCNT* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 13:45-46.

⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, vol. 33A, WBC (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 397.

⁸ Timothy J. Keller, Sermon: "The Parable of the Pearl; On Priorities," August 28, 1994, Matthew 13:44-46, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013): "Pearls back then were even more valuable probably than they are today in the culture, in the economy, of the time. Just to give you an example, we know Cleopatra had a pearl that was valued at 25 million denarii, which a denarius was a day's wage. Therefore, that was \$4 billion."

⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 224: "Sometimes God calls would-be disciples literally to sell all (19:21), but they must always abandon anything that would stand in the way of wholehearted allegiance to Christ and the priorities of the kingdom. Interestingly, in the parable of the pearl the man is searching for wealth, whereas in the parable of the hidden treasure the man stumbles across it. As with the parables of mustard seed and leaven, Jesus is reaching out to every person in his audience. He calls the spiritual seeker as well as the apathetic atheist." See also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 396.

¹⁰ C.H. Spurgeon, *Commentary on Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom* (East Peoria: Banner of Truth, 2010 [first published in 1893]), 183-4.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 184: "In both cases all was sold to win the prize; and so in any case, however our conversion takes place, we must give up all for Christ; not of compulsion, but willingly."

¹² Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 396: "This analogy, like the re-hiding of the treasure by the person who found it, suggests that something of tremendous worth can be present and yet not known to others who may have frequently traversed the same field."

¹³ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 397: "The kingdom is like a small, inconspicuous pearl but one of incalculable value that, once discovered, calls for unrestrained response in the form of absolute discipleship."

¹⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 391: "Most early Christians emphasized that the kingdom is available to disciples only by grace through faith; but most also recognized that genuine faith involves embracing and yielding to God's reign, not simply acknowledging it and then passing it by as if it did not exist."

Some people might conclude that the “treasure” in Jesus’s parable is “faith in Christ” or “knowledge of Christ” not “Jesus himself.” I’m okay with that. The basic idea conveyed there is the same. **Jesus Christ is so valuable, he is so superior in worth and substance, that we would willingly abandon everything we have in order to gain Christ. What does it mean to be Kingdom-minded? It means that we would willingly relinquish all things in order to find Christ.**¹⁵

Paul says it this way: “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (**Philippians 3:8**). **I’ve said this before, let me say it again. Harvest Decatur, if you know Christ, if you have a saving relationship with Christ, you have everything you need in this life even if you have nothing else.**¹⁶ **And the opposite is true. If you don’t know Christ, if you don’t have a saving relationship with him, you have nothing of value, even if you have everything else that this world has to offer you. It’s like that old Caedmon’s Call song says, “This world has nothing for me, and this world has everything. All that I could want, and nothing that I need.” That’s the point of Jesus’s parable here. That’s what he’s teaching his disciples.**

Now Jesus isn’t done here. The stakes are ratcheted up higher in the next parable. But before we get to that, go ahead and write this down as #2 in your notes. What does it mean to be kingdom-minded? First of all it means, **treasuring above all else Christ the King. And secondly it means...**

2) Preparing for **Christ’s coming judgment** (13:47-49)

Jesus says this in verse 47:

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

Jesus is once again using the language of his audience with this fishing parable.¹⁷ Many of Jesus’s disciples were fishermen, and he told them in **Matthew 4**, “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And after that, “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (**Matt 4:19-20**).

Well here Jesus uses the same imagery of fish and fishermen in this parable.¹⁸ The net described here was a large dragnet also called a seine that fishermen of Jesus’s day would cast into the sea. Sometimes floats and sinkers were attached to the large net which was dragged by the boat.¹⁹ This seine could also be dragged between two boats or between boat and land to maximize the catch. Inevitably a large net like this would indiscriminately pull in a multitude of different fish, both good and bad.

This bring to mind something from Alastair’s childhood. When Alastair was just a little guy, we used to read to him every night from his Children’s Bible. And I remember this parable in that book. And the fish in that book were distinguished between good and bad by the look on their faces. It was hilarious. The good fish had a smile on its face and were happily tossed into the container. The bad fish had a menacing look like it was up to no good.

And you might wonder with this parable, how did the fisherman distinguish between bad and good? Well from what I’ve read, there are roughly 24 species of fish in Lake Galilee.²⁰ And many of those species are unclean or inedible, so the fisherman had to sort out the good from the bad.²¹ Some think that what Jesus is referencing is the difference in Jewish culture between kosher and non-kosher.

¹⁵ Keller, “The Parable of the Pearl; On Priorities”: “If you say, ‘Well, I’m willing, but if in order to keep Christ, I have to do *that* with my money or I have to do *that* with my sexuality, forget it.’ Then what you’re saying is you’re not willing to sell those things.”

¹⁶ Carson, “Matthew,” 328: “The kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship, and those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it.”

¹⁷ This passage possibly echoes Ezek 47:10.

¹⁸ The fishermen analogy is being used differently in Jesus’s parable here than in his call to his disciples to be “fishers of men.” But see the comments in Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT, 543: “This [parable] is not about the present time but has relevance for the present. At this time we cannot separate the good fish from the bad. Our task is fishing for souls, and we must leave it up to God to separate the good from the bad at the final judgment.” See also Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 392: “We must now stand and fish, casting the net, and waiting for a haul; not till the end shall we sit down and sort out our takings. Many are trying to do the last thing first.”

¹⁹ Keener, *IVPBCNT*, Mt 13:47–50. See also the comments by Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC, 399. “The σαγήνη is a seine-net with floats at the top edge and weights at the bottom that, having been thrown out in the water, encircled the fish and was then dragged up on the shore. The net naturally gathers fish indiscriminately: ἐκ παντὸς γένους, ‘of every kind.’”

²⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 392.

²¹ See J. Carl Laney, “Fishing the Sea of Galilee,” in *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels*, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 169: “After the catch, the fishermen must remove the bad fish (those without scales) that cannot be eaten from those that can be offered for sale.” “Catfish are the largest indigenous fish found in the Kinneret, but since they have skin instead of scales, they are not kosher and cannot be eaten according to Mosaic law (Lev 11:9–11). Referring to it by its Greek name (*korokinos*, “Water Raven”), Josephus reports that fish of this variety can be found by the springs near Capernaum.”

But for two reasons, I don't think this is what Jesus means. First of all there were many Gentiles in the region of Galilee, so a Jewish fisherman could just as easily sell a non-kosher fish as he would a kosher fish, as long as it was edible. But secondly there is no word for "fish" in the Greek Bible. Literally, this verse says in Greek, **"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet thrown into the sea which gathers all kinds of races (i.e. ethnicities)."**²² I think that Jesus is hinting here at what the meaning of the parable is. The net is cast all over the world and all types of people: Jews and Gentiles... Red and Yellow, Black, and White... will be gathered.²³ All of the world will be gathered at the end of the age.²⁴

But the question still remains: **"How will they be distinguished between good and bad?"** The answer must be that it's at the discretion of the fisherman. The fisherman knows the good fish and the bad fish. They know what is marketable and what is worthless. And after discerning the good and putting it in containers, they throw out the bad. Jesus never gives us an explicit explanation of this parable, but in light of what he has already shared, I think we can interpret it. We are the fish. Humanity is the fish made up of all kinds of ethnicities. And it's not ultimately about your ethnicity. It's about whether you are good or bad. The good fish, like the wheat in the previous parable are the sons and daughters of the kingdom. The bad fish are the enemies of the kingdom. The fishermen are the angels who gather up the fish from the entire world and distinguish good fish from bad fish, wheat from weeds, believers from unbelievers.

Jesus told a similar parable to the crowds earlier in this chapter about wheat and weeds. Jesus said about the weeds in **13:41** that **"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (**Matt 13:41-42**). Likewise he says about the bad fish in **13:49**:

⁴⁹ *So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

In other words the good and the righteous will be spared God's judgment. The evil will not. **In the first two parables Jesus is telling us, "Forsake everything in order to find Christ." In this parable he is telling us "Forsake everything in order to be found righteous." And if this is true... if the entire world is going to come down to one final judgment where everyone is put in one of two categories, (good fish or bad fish), then the most important thing in your life, the most important reality of your existence right now is finding out which category you belong to.**²⁵ **And can I tell you this? The entire world is working overtime right now to make sure you never think about those things or consider that. That's why you have to "not be conformed to the world."**

I'll give you an example. During the Christmas holidays a few weeks ago, I was introduced for the first time to the video game, Fortnite. And I know what you are thinking. Where have you been for the last four years, Pastor Tony? I know. I'm a little slow sometimes with these things. And I didn't play the game, I just watch another person play, and I can see why it's so addictive. And I'm not here to denounce Fortnite. I don't think video games are inherently sinful. But I do think that they are dangerous. In fact, I know they are dangerous, because I've been addicted at different times to different games. And if you're not careful, the world will so distract you by those that that you will never consider the fate of your own soul for eternity.

Another thing that we did over the Christmas holiday is watch season 2 of The Mandalorian. From what I've heard that show is the most popular show on streaming sites, and the second most popular show isn't even close to it. I'm not against that either, but I would warn you that binge-watching shows like that is dangerous.

Also we also played a lot of board games over Christmas and New Year's with friends and family. I'm not against that either. Both those things can be dangerous too. Here's why they are dangerous. I

²² R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 233: "The reference, as in the weeds, is not primarily to a mixed church, but to the division among mankind in general which the last judgment will bring to light." See similar comments by Origen, Gregory the Great, and Cyril of Alexandria in Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1-13*, ACCS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 288-9

²³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 224: "'All kinds' (v. 47) is, more literally, *all races*, a strange way of speaking of fish but a natural way of emphasizing the universality of God's judgment of people."

²⁴ J. Carl Laney, "Fishing the Sea of Galilee," 173: "A dragnet does not distinguish the kinds of fish it captures. Among the 'good' or edible fish are the 'bad' or non-kosher fish, the ones that lack fins or have skin instead of scales (Lev 11:9-12). After the catch, the fishermen must separate the fish that can be sold in the market from those which do not have value and must be thrown away. The parable teaches the lesson that during the present age there will be a gathering of all kinds of people, the righteous along with the wicked. But at the end of the age there will be a judgment which will separate the wicked from the true believers."

²⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 400: "Matthew never tires in warning his readers of the reality of judgment and hence the importance of genuine discipleship. It is a warning that both the world and the Church need."

could envision a life right now that mindlessly and distractingly goes from binge-watching shows to video games to hanging out with friends and never, ever considers the bigger questions of life. And Satan would be perfectly happy to have you live a life like that. I can envision young people living lives like that right now. Heck, I sometimes fantasize about checking out of life and just watching football all day long. There are times when that seems like a dream-come-true to me. That escapism sounds really dreamy right now, especially after the week that we've had as a country. I just want to disappear.

Do you know why you can't do that, Harvest Decatur? Do you know why that's so dangerous? Because eternity is racing towards us! The kingdom of Jesus Christ is advancing. The King is coming back soon. And there will be a great reckoning in this world. If there wasn't a great reckoning, I'm not so sure I wouldn't check out of life right now and just do whatever. Eat, drink, and be merry (and play video games) for tomorrow we die!

If you've never read C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, you should. One of the great tactics of the demons in that book, is distraction. Keep the patients, keep the humans, distracted. Keep them anesthetized by the little pleasures and the little trivialities of this world so that they never consider deeper things. Can I just say something about that, Harvest Decatur? Don't fall for that! Dare to be different. Dare to be kingdom-minded. Do not be conformed to this world!

Let's go back to Jesus's parable and unpack it more. Jesus says,

⁴⁹ *So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous*

Not just the good from the bad, but the evil from the righteous! Jesus ends the parable and starts interpreting here in **verse 49**. At the end of the age the angels will separate evil from the righteous. By the way, that word "age" (αἰών) in **verse 49** is the same word for "age" or "world" in **Romans 12:2**. "Do not be conformed to this world (or age - αἰών)"! **"Why not? Why not be conformed to it, Pastor Tony?"** Because this age will come to an end. And God will judge this world at the end of the age. That's why. And God will separate the whole world into two categories, evil and righteous. **And if that's true...which it is... then you need to be absolutely sure, without a shadow of a doubt, that you will be on the "righteous" side of the ledger when that final day of reckoning comes.**²⁶ **Are you?**

If you don't know, then let me help you with that. Paul says in **Romans 3:23-24**, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We call this in theological circles justification. You are justified, that is declared righteous, by grace through faith in Christ. The Greek word "justified" is related to the word for "righteous" in Greek. The Greek word for "righteous" is δίκαιος. That's the adjective used here in **Matthew 13:49**. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous (δίκαιος). Well the Greek verb δικαίωω is related to that adjective, and it means "to justify." δίκαιος is derived from δικαίωω. And to justify means to declare righteous. If we had a word in English "righteous-ify," I would use it. When we are justified through faith in Christ, we are "righteous-ified." We are declared righteous before God. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are ["righteous-ified"] by his grace... through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

That is why Jesus is the greatest treasure in the world, because he "righteous-ifies" us. We are declared righteous and escape the coming judgment, because of our faith in Christ. We will shine like the sun in Jesus's Kingdom forever. But for those who don't believe and for those who don't have imputed righteousness, there is an eternal destiny of fiery judgment, gnashing of teeth, and weeping.

⁴⁹ *So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Listen, hear me when I say this. Verse 50 is not parabolic, nor hyperbolic, nor illustrative. There will literally be eternal suffering in a lake of fire for those who don't have faith in Christ. Don't take my word for it. Take Jesus's. Nobody talked more about hell and the eternal suffering of unbelievers more than Jesus. Part of what it means to be kingdom-minded is to believe in the eternal suffering of unbelievers and to do whatever you can to steer people clear of that!²⁷

²⁶ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 225: "Our preaching ought also to bring people gently and tactfully to a clear point of decision, even as we recognize that there will be diverse responses to the gospel's call to repentance and faith in Jesus. Despite all opposition God still rules, furthering his purposes and hastening the day when his people will be vindicated. Hence, it is worth sacrificing whatever is required to be on his side."

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Matthew*, 185 is correct when he write, "Neither does the idea that fire causes annihilation find any support from the metaphor here employed; for in the furnace of fire 'there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"

I remember many years ago spending some time with an older pastor. And this particular pastor had recently preached a sermon on hell to his congregation. And he told me that after preaching that message, he went into one of the back rooms of his church and just wept uncontrollably. The reality of hell was so heartbreaking for him. What would possess a pastor like that to do that? What would cause us to speak out about hell boldly and heartbreakingly like that? Why do we have evangelism as a pillar in our church and emphasize it so much? Why do I preach so passionately about these things? Well, I don't do it to create a country-club atmosphere here at Harvest Decatur. There are plenty of country-club churches in our world. But this church was planted to preach the gospel, so that people could be saved, so that people could be declared "righteous" in God's sight at the judgment. Because the most important possession in this world is the "imputed righteousness" that comes from faith in Christ. Treasure that above all else, Harvest Decatur. If you have that you have everything. If you don't have that you have nothing no matter what else you have.

So after relaying these parables to his disciples, that have cosmic, eternal relevance, Jesus asks them...

⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes."

I don't know if they understood everything that Jesus was trying to convey to them, but they at least have the gist of it.²⁸ Eternity is racing towards us. The entire world will be divided into two groups: good fish and bad fish... the righteous and the wicked. **If Jesus asked you, Harvest Decatur, "Have you understood all these things?" what would you say? If your answer is "yes." Jesus says, "Okay! Since you understand this..." Look at verse 52.**

⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

"What does that mean, Pastor Tony? What is Jesus saying here to his disciples?"²⁹ Here's what he's saying. He's saying, "You are being tasked, disciples of Jesus Christ, with telling people about this kingdom. You are the scribes. You are the kingdom proclaimers. You have access to the treasure that will literally determine a person's destiny.³⁰ Go tell people about it. Go be the emissaries of the King proclaiming his kingdom!"³¹

Write this down as #3 in your notes. What does it mean to be Kingdom-minded? It means...

- 1) Treasuring above all else **Christ the King** (13:44-46)
- 2) Preparing for **Christ's coming judgment** (13:47-49)
- 3) Laboring to bring others into **Christ's kingdom** (13:51-52)

You know one of the things that is implicit to this talk of the Kingdom of Heaven is the reality that Christ is King. Jesus never says, "I'm your King, and I'm inaugurating my Kingdom," but that's essentially what he's saying in these parable. And that's a hard thing for us as Americans to accept. I read a quote from **Tony Evans** this week about this, and he says, **"Sure, redemption appeals to us in our autonomous, me-centric culture. We tend to be highly independent and self-serving, and many would even argue that our culture has given rise to an epidemic of narcissistic thinking. To acknowledge Jesus as King conjures up responses of obedience, dependence, honor, respect and self-sacrifice. It goes against what our culture tells us is the way to live our lives. Regardless, Jesus is King. And unless and until we understand and submit to Christ's rightful rule, we will not fully experience His power."³² You want a short synopsis of what it means to be kingdom-minded. There it is right there. We acknowledge Jesus's rightful rule and submit to him as our King. And not only that but we labor to bring others into his kingdom!**

²⁸ Carson, "Matthew," 331: "It is as wrong to say that Matthew has portrayed them as understanding everything as it is to say that they understood nothing. The truth lies between the extremes." See also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 401: "Although there is much ahead of them to learn and they will stumble in ignorance on more than one occasion, they are able—at least with regard to the parables—to answer with perhaps a deceptively confident voi, 'yes.'"

²⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 393 calls this a cryptic Wisdom parable or riddle "that invites further reflection."

³⁰ France, *Matthew*, TNTC, 234: "Jesus is not merely describing them, but as usual in parables is challenging them to fulfil a role: they have received 'treasure' through his instruction; now they are to 'bring it out' in teaching others."

³¹ Cyril of Alexandria's comments here are instructive: "A scribe is one who, through continual reading of the Old and New Testaments, has laid up for himself a storehouse of knowledge. Thus Christ blesses those who have gathered in themselves the education both of the law and of the gospel, so as to 'bring forth from their treasure things both new and old.' And Christ compares such people with a scribe." Quoted in Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1-13*, ACCS, 290.

³² Tony Evans, "Submitting to Jesus as our King": <https://tonyevans.org/submitting-to-jesus-as-our-king/#>. Evans also writes: "Much of the chaos and challenges we cannot overcome in our lives stem from the fact that we do not rightly respond to His rule. If we make our own rules while living in the domain of a ruling King, then we should expect to face the consequences. Jesus is King. Yet, like the Israelites of His day, we often praise Him one moment, only to seek to crucify Him the next. Why? Because we don't mind Him being King by name as long as He is not King by authority. We don't mind Jesus carrying around the title as long as He's not telling us what to do."

Jesus calls his disciples to this in **verse 52**. Jesus likens his disciples to “scribes” and “masters of the house.” That must have been very flattering to them. They were fishermen and day-laborers, not scribes.³³ But Jesus is calling them to be scribes.

Jesus says that every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven (i.e. “a disciple of Jesus”) is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old. Now the verb for “trained” here is the Greek word μαθητεύω, which is the verbal form of the noun μαθητής for “disciple.”³⁴ Jesus is saying here that every scribe *who has been disciplined* for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house. Jesus has disciplined these disciples.³⁵ And they in response are called to make disciple, to bring forth treasure for the world both old and new.³⁶

The Jewish scribes in Jesus’s day only knew how to bring forth old treasure.³⁷ They only knew the truth of the OT world. But Jesus’s disciples bring forth treasure from the OT and the treasures of the new covenant. Jesus’s disciples need to be ready to present to the watching world treasures that are both old and new. The “treasure” here is the same as it was in the first parable: it’s “**Jesus Christ.**” Or perhaps more specifically it’s “**knowledge of Jesus Christ.**” And a disciple must be capable of presenting the old treasure, in other words the OT references to Christ as the coming Messiah, the Savior of the World, the fulfillment of OT law and prophecy.³⁸ And a disciple must be capable of presenting new treasure, what we would call the NT treasure of the “Gospel”—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that makes salvation for sinners like us possible.³⁹ These are the treasures of the kingdom and our responsibility as disciples, as emissaries of the King, is to distribute them boldly and generously to everyone in the world.⁴⁰

This is what it means to be kingdom-minded: 1) Treasuring Christ the King above all else, 2) Preparing for Christ’s coming judgment, and 3) laboring to bring others into Christ’s kingdom. This is what Jesus has called his disciples to do. He’s the King. And he’s calling us to be proclaimers of the Kingdom.

I’ll just tell you, this is radically different from the world would have us do. The world would have you focus on other kingdoms: 1) your own kingdom, 2) The kingdom of some celebrity or athlete, 3) the kingdom of some political movement or some political ideologue. Don’t get swept up in that, Harvest Decatur. Jesus told us to, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:23). This is what we are called to as disciples of Jesus Christ. You only have one life, church. You only live once. YOLO, baby! You only live once. Don’t waste your life.

C.T. Studd said it this way in his poem “Only one life.”

*Only one life, yes only one
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past
Only what's done for Christ will last.
When this bright world would tempt me sore
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way*

³³ Amazingly, these day-laborers would go on to write Holy Scripture that would impact the world more powerfully than all the other writings in human history. Peter, Jesus’s disciple, would write two books of the NT. John, Jesus’s disciple, would write five. And Matthew would go on to write the Gospel of Matthew that records this great statement by Jesus.

³⁴ There is reason to believe that Matthew (Greek Μαθθαῖος), the tax-collector and the author of the Gospel of Matthew, derived his nickname from this noun μαθητής. Matthew is elsewhere referred to as Levi (see Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 401-2 disagrees and calls this suggestion “farfetched.”

³⁵ Carson, “Matthew,” 333: “[D]isciples’ does not refer to a special group of ‘teachers of the law’ within Matthew’s community (see further on 23:34) but to those who by Matthew’s day were called Christians. Just as they have been aligned with prophets and righteous men from past ages (e.g., 5:11-12; 10:41), so are they aligned with ‘teachers of the law.’ In fact, only Jesus’ ‘disciples’ are able to bring forth new things and old: the Jewish teachers of the law could bring forth only the old.”

³⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 401-2.

³⁷ France, *Matthew*, TNTC, 234: “What is new and what is old as a description of Christian teaching may include a dig at the Jewish scribes, who could produce only what was old!”

³⁸ Carson, “Matthew,” 333: “Thus the OT promises of Messiah and kingdom, as well as OT law and piety, have found their fulfillment in Jesus’ person, teaching, and kingdom; and the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom now brings out of himself deep understanding of these things and their transformed perspective affecting all life.”

³⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 225: “Jesus probably means that as his disciples teach God’s will, they will be drawing out the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures (‘things old’), while showing how they are fulfilled and apply in the kingdom age (‘things new’).” Augustine comes to a similar conclusion: “The learned scribe is now in the kingdom of God, bringing forth from his storeroom not new things only and not old things only. For if he should bring forth new things only or old things only, he is not a learned scribe in the kingdom of God presenting from his storeroom things new and old.” Quoted in Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1-13*, ACCS, 291.

⁴⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, 402: “If the Church carries on the work of the disciples, there is a sense in which not only Scripture scholars but every Christian must bring out of his or her storeroom both old things and new things, i.e., must represent a Christianity encompassing both Testaments.”

*Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

I'll close with this. When I was a kid, I learned a song that has stuck with me for 35+ years. I probably learned it in VBS, I don't remember. I honestly don't remember a time when I didn't know this song. It's a simple song. It's actually one verse of Scripture. **Matthew 6:33. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. And his righteousness."** Y'all ever heard that song before? I want us to sing it together.

The worship team is going to come up now and lead us in a final song. And they work really, really hard every week, Pastor Ryan and others, to lead us in worship and minister to us in worship. I want to do this as they come. I want to minister to them as a church. Can we do that? Let's stand and sing that together. And let's make this a heart-felt prayer to God on behalf of our church. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all these things will be added unto you. Hallelu-Hallelujah. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God. And his righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you. Hallelu...Hallelujah."