

08.30.26

Luke

Chapter 13 - An Unpredictable End
No Clue of Kingdom (vs. 18-21)

Luke 13:18-21: So He was saying, “What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.” And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

What is the kingdom of God like? Supposedly there has been a lot of thought about that, and especially as we come to this Gospel of Luke, man has his own ideas about what God wants. Strangely enough, we invent certain things within our mind; our own imagination goes wild, and before long we think, "Oh, I think we got it." At the

beginning of this particular chapter, it seems as if people were thinking that everybody else has to get right but them. And I think that's the way that a lot of people think, "I know what's going on. I know what I need to do. I know what God really is looking for. In fact, I know what God's kingdom is like." I don't know how they could know what God's kingdom is like unless they talk with God, because He was the only One that would know what it was like. If God ever was frustrated or ever could be frustrated, I would think that would be the most frustrating thing that God would have to do- to explain to people what His kingdom is really like. Because we don't think like God. I mean, we're so about appearance.

And of course, that's what Jesus was concerned about in particular in Luke 12:1,

"... "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

"You guys are only interested in looking good."

And we've oftentimes quoted the passage where Samuel was going to anoint a king. He looks like all the other brothers of the king, but God looks at the heart. He

doesn't look at the outward appearance like man does. And so, we just don't think like God.

Isaiah 55 puts it really clear, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher than ours." We don't think like God. Why is that? Well, we're so immersed in our own desires and the things that we want.

There's an interesting passage in Isaiah 5, if you turn there with me, that makes reference to just how far off we are. You know, I think sometimes we think, "It's just a little way off," and God goes, "No, no, no, no. You're just really upside down. You're just totally backwards."

It reads this way,

(Isaiah 5:18) "Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, And sin as if with cart ropes."

It's bizarre how we will work hard to believe a lie.

According to Romans 1, we'll actually suppress the truth, which takes work, by the way. We'll suppress the truth to believe the lie. But anyway, we'll work hard to do that.

(Isaiah 5:19) "Who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it...""

"Let Him convince me," basically is what we cry out to God.

"... And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near And come to pass, that we may know it!""

As if God hasn't already explained clearly what He's about and what truth is about. As we were talking about this morning, God has placed a conscience within our heart. We have a law written in our hearts, and then He gives us a law, and then on top of that, He gives us the wonderful message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we cry out to Him, "Let Him show us what He wants!"

(Isaiah 5:20) "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil..."

That's kind of upside down, isn't it?

"... Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

(Isaiah 5:21) Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
And clever in their own sight!

(Isaiah 5:22) Woe to those who are heroes in drinking
wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink,

(Isaiah 5:23) Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take
away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

(Isaiah 5:24) Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes
stubble And dry grass collapses into the flame, So their
root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as
dust; For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

Scripture is very clear that man is going after different things.

And if you look here at the beginning of Chapter 5,

(Isaiah 5:8) "Woe to those who add house to house and
join field to field, Until there is no more room,
So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!"

What are they desiring to do? It's all about their desires and the things that they love rather than following God.

Therefore, they can't see, they can't know what God is about. They can't understand His kingdom.

As we come back to this passage in Luke, it is the very thing that Jesus is conveying to them, "You think that you're okay. You think that it's all about looks, but you're not bearing fruit. The evidence isn't there. And the thing that I'm seeing is that you're soon to be destroyed and you don't even know it. You're heading to the judge, and you've convinced yourself that everything is right."

If you look in Luke 18, you see this kind of played out. And once again, these are all familiar verses. but it really defines how we perceive things.

As Jesus gives another parable in Chapter 18, it says,

(Luke 18:9) "And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

(Luke 18:10) "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

(Luke 18:11) The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ..."

I think it's interesting that it reads that way because I think God is basically saying, "I didn't hear it. So, he must be talking to himself."

"... 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'

(Luke 18:12) 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

(Luke 18:13) But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

(Luke 18:14) I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

But that's not the way we think. We don't think in those terms. We think that the important people are the ones that have the great things, they're the great person, they're the people that everybody looks up to them and

says, "Wow, these are really important people." And our perception is because they have certain positions and have elevated themselves, as Psalm 49 says, you congratulate yourselves. And that's an interesting picture of the world, "I'm wonderful and I'm just patting myself on the back and I just want to let you all know that I'm wonderful too. And anybody that wants to give me a trophy for being as wonderful as I am, I'm willing to take it and affirm your beliefs." But this is the way that we think, that these are the ones that are exalted. But Jesus will literally say, "But it's the humble that are exalted in the kingdom." And we go, "Nothing about that works in my economy." Well, that's why it's called the kingdom of God. And when we make reference to the kingdom of God, I think sometimes people are thinking about heaven. And certainly, it is about heaven, but it's more about the rule of heaven than it is about describing the place of heaven.

Our minds sometimes go to the place itself when we talk about the kingdom of heaven. I think one of the first passages that come to my mind is a passage like maybe

Ezekiel 1 where you see the chariot of God and you see these angels darting around. It's just a massive, marvelous picture. Or maybe it's Isaiah 6 where Isaiah sees God and the train of His robe going throughout the universe and wow, he hasn't seen anything greater than this. Or perhaps your mind goes to a passage such as 2 Corinthians where Paul turns, and he says, "You know, I was caught up in the third heaven." He actually explains that in Chapter 12, "And here's what God told me, 'Don't say anything.'" But he says, "I heard things that were so marvelous; I can't begin to tell you. It was just a marvelous experience. But God wanted me not to proclaim my experience; He wanted me to proclaim my weakness and how His grace is sufficient in my weakness." And so, he begins to explain that wonderful picture.

When you open up the Book of Revelation, you come to the end, Chapter 21, and then you go into Chapter 22, we see this marvelous picture of the city coming down out of heaven. And you know the declaration, there's not going to be any sorrow, there's not going to be any pain, there's

not going to be any crying. I mean, how wonderful it is. No liars in heaven and how wonderful that is. And he begins to show this city, the physical city coming out of heaven and a new earth that's created. And then you see this throne and the waters coming from the throne and going into, and it's the water of life and the tree of life is right there. Wonderful pictures. But that's not what Jesus is talking about. What Jesus is talking about is how God thinks and what's important to Him. And how do you explain that to people that, I mean, virtually it's inconceivable to them? It's certainly unconventional to them. It's an uncommon thought that you need to think the way God thinks. I mean, who can have the mind of God, right? I mean, that's fundamentally the debate that Paul throws out there in 1 Corinthians 2, "Your eye has not seen, your ear has not heard. It's not entered into your heart." So, there's just no way that you could have come up with it. But God wants to reveal to us how He thinks, and that's one of the most marvelous things. And so, though there are things that are unconventional and uncommon to us, and literally Scripture will define them as "things not seen." It's making reference to not only the

fact that we can't physically see the mind of God, but we literally can't comprehend the way that He would think. So, how do you explain something like that? That's an interesting question because when you think about having to explain things that aren't seen, things that wouldn't even enter into the heart of man, where do you begin? So, what Jesus does is He draws from the familiar. But we have to remember this as well; in Colossians 1, it's very clear that all things were created by Him and for Him. And He has a purpose in all things that have been created. So, Jesus will pull out of things that He created for a particular purpose to explain a particular thing. We sometimes think, "Well, the reason He created bread was for me to eat." Well, that was secondary. But He has a greater principle. And of course, as we read in Deuteronomy, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD." And of the bread of life that comes down out of heaven. I mean, everything that we have on earth is a shadow of those things that He desires to explain to us that are heavenly. And so, Jesus pulls from those resources of His creation as He begins to explain things that have literally

eluded us and we find ourselves in a quagmire of confusion.

So, what is He going to do within this particular passage? Well, in verses 18 through 21, He's going to use metaphors. He's going to use similes in some way. He's going to say, "The kingdom of heaven is like, or "the kingdom of God is like this." And He takes that which is familiar; He takes something that people know about, and yet in this initial example, He takes that which is fundamentally an anomaly in creation. That is to say, it's something that is abnormal from that which is regular. And that is this whole thing of a mustard seed. So, as we come here, He begins to explain the kingdom in this way. If you pick up with me in this Chapter in verse 18, it begins,

(Luke 13:18) "So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?"

If you've ever read through the Book of Isaiah, so many times God says, "Who would you compare Me to?" And you go, "Nothing. I don't see anything I could compare You to." I mean, who is like God? Nothing compares to

Him. So, how could you compare what is there on earth that you could use to in some way express the way that God thinks? Well, the first thing that He pulls out of the box is that which is abnormal. That's this little seed that seems to do so much in the garden.

So, He explains it this way,

(Luke 13:19) “It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.”

Wow, that's almost oversimplified, isn't it? A mustard seed. What is a mustard seed? Well, according to Matthew 13, it says that this was the least of all seeds as far as size was concerned. And so, you realize that one of the first things that God seems to be making reference to, of course, is that something least is going to be the greatest in His kingdom. Of course, once again, we think in terms of great fanfare, magnificence; this is greatness in God's kingdom.

When you think about the seven churches in Asia Minor, and if you've ever read about those in Revelation at the

very beginning of the book, you have these seven churches, and as you go through the list, there are fundamentally five that are really not following God. So, Christ is heavily correcting them. There are two that He virtually, though He is shoring them up, is not as much correcting them but praising their work. These two seem to be the least. If you look specifically at the church of Smyrna, He says, "Now, here's the deal. You're getting ready to be persecuted, and you will all die. Good job." The next one He talks about is the church of Philadelphia. And He says, "Everybody sees you as insignificant and nobodies. They've actually locked doors. You can't even come in. You're not a part of Judaism, you're not a part of their way of thinking, and you feel like an outcast. But here's the deal- I'm going to give you a key, you're going to open the door, and you're going to shut it, and I'm going to put you in charge."

Now, you take the church at Laodicea, and He goes, "You guys are really, really rich." And probably at the moment that He first says that, they go, "Thank You." And He goes, "It's not a compliment. Because you're trusting in that

stuff." And He says, "Because you're trusting in it, you've become lukewarm. Because you've become lukewarm, I'm going to spray you out of My mouth because I don't want to have anything to do with you. Because you don't really trust in Me. You think it's all about you."

All the way through Scripture, God begins to show that the least is the greatest. It just goes against our way of thinking. And it starts off at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. And Luke alone makes reference to the birth of Christ. He makes reference to this child coming from this old woman, specifically John the Baptist being born. And why would this old woman even have the capability of having a child? But those that are least likely to do anything, He begins to pull out, and she was seen in shame because she couldn't have a child. He goes, "I'm going to make you a woman of great stature." And then He turns to this girl that is just fundamentally a nobody, an indigent. We know they don't have much money and they live in a place called Nazareth. Could any good come out of Nazareth? And He's going to tax them heavily. And that's how He's going to bring them down into a place in

which the child is going to be born in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem, okay, according to Micah, it's the smallest of groupings. And then we're going to be in a stable and then the child's going to be in a manger. So, what's grand about that? We're going to have followers when He grows up and these followers are going to be fishermen. And it's going to be shepherds that are going to hear the announcement. All the way through, it's those that you go, "There's just no way. I don't think that way." And God goes, "Yes, so stop thinking your way." We sit around our homes and we perhaps look at people with, maybe in our mind, great ministries or they seem to do great things, and we go, "I'll never be that way." And God says, "I never asked you to be. What I ask you to do is love Me with all of your heart and serve Me where you are. I'll take care of the rest." He'll put you where He wants you. Because look, God doesn't need us to do anything. But what He wants you to do is He wants you to surrender and listen to Him. Instead of trying to figure out everything and trying to say, "I know what God's kingdom is like," you don't know what it's like. But let's go by what He says it's like. And so, He uses this interesting description of this

mustard seed, which is the smallest and the least in the garden. Of course, Jesus will say in Matthew 20:26, "The servant is the greatest." Who in the world is thinking that way? I mean, think about all the people that you've met and those that seem to have great deeds, and you say, "Wow, these are really great people." And God goes, "Not really. Not unless they're serving." Now, some of them are serving. And that's why Scripture says, "Not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise." But it doesn't say, "not any". It just says, "not many". So, there are some that are doing that, but there are those that are serving, but God is looking for the serving. He's not looking for the grandiosity. He's not looking for the fanfare. It's that gentle flowing waters of Shiloah. It's not the great rivers of Euphrates or the Nile. And He speaks to that specifically. He says, "You're going to the great rivers of humanity. And you're saying, 'You know, it's all about the great crowds and the great masses.' And I say, 'No. Go back to the gentle flowing rivers of Shiloah, the peaceful place in which I bring you.'" You think about Elijah, and of course, there he is in the mountain, and he's running from God. He's upset. And earthquakes, strong winds and gusts

of winds, and finally the gentle blowing of God is in this, and he listens.

What causes people to come to the Lord? You know, I've learned that It's not the great things that bring people to the Lord. And quite frankly, if we had to wow you to an extent that we got you in a frenzy, and you go, "I want to receive Jesus," you received Him for the wrong reason. If I convinced you by virtue of all scientific proof, and you go, "Now, I believe because now I can see," well then, you believe for the wrong reason because faith has nothing to do with seeing. We're looking at stuff that we don't see. And so, what we want to elevate are things that are literally invisible to man and it's not the way that man thinks.

An interesting picture that He gives,

(Luke 13:19) "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw..."

The Greek word that He uses here is, "*ballō*," which means that he had no care. Here you have these really small seeds, and you go, "What are they going to do?" So,

it gives that picture of insignificance to man. What could it do? It's so small. It's insignificant.

"... which a man took and threw into his own garden..."

And it's almost an exclamation point here,

"... and it grew..."

It not only grew, but it became a tree.

"... and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES."

I know a lot of people look at this different way but let me just read it to you another way. And it literally is the way that these particular words can be defined in the Greek. He literally is saying within this passage, "And the wings of heaven remained there." That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? I mean, the word "birds" is also defined as just "wings".

And if you look with me in Hebrews 1, an interesting picture is given there. In Hebrews 1, you begin to realize that God has ministers in nature for those that are His kingdom. Of course, this Chapter 1 is, "Which of the angels did He ever call 'sons,'" right? How marvelous it is that God has made us children of God.

And so, he ends this way in verse 13,

(Hebrews 1:13) “But to which of the angels has He ever said, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?

(Hebrews 1:14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”

Who is it that abides with us? The kingdom of heaven abides with us. There's more joy in heaven. They're singing over one that has been lost over the 99 that has been there. And so, you begin to realize that what is God looking for? What does He rejoice over? And where does the power of heaven rest? Where does the power of heaven abide? It abides with the humble, with those that are small, those that don't consider themselves to be great. The servant will be the greatest; the humble will be exalted. Therefore humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He will exalt you. Blessed are the poor in spirit. I mean, the theme just permeates Scripture, and yet we still come out going, "I'm not as great as I think I

should be." I go, "What are you thinking about?" Oftentimes, the people that God has sent us to minister to, it's not grand, it's not flamboyant, and nobody sees but God. God does see. God sees when you're ministering to somebody that's hurting. God sees when you're ministering and caring for somebody that can't care for themselves. God can see that. You say, "Well, what is this little thing that I do?" And God says, "It is the little thing, but that's what I make great. And that's where the heaven rests. The power of God rests right there, where the humble are beginning to work according to My perfect plan."

So, what you have within the first example is Christ wanting to explain how the Father thinks is that His way of thinking is going to go against all norms. The least is going to be the greatest, the servant is going to be the one who is exalted, the one that's going to humble himself, this is where it's at. And if we would spend more time thinking like God thinks, we would actually have greater opportunities and greater power in the ministry that we have. God would do great things. Not that we

would do great things, but that God would do great things through us.

Now, the second thing that He does is He demonstrates something by, once again, almost in a confusing way, because He's comparing the kingdom of God like leaven, which just kind of throws me off base right to begin with, because leaven never seems to have a positive connotation in Scripture.

It reads this way in verse 20,

(Luke 13:20) "And again He said, "To what shall I compare...""

"What shall I put alongside of it so that I can help you understand this?"

"... the kingdom of God?"

The way that God thinks. His rule. His standards.

(Luke 13:21) "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

Leaven. Okay, so every time I read about leaven, it's not good. And all you have to do is go back to Luke 12:1, "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." You go to 1

Corinthians 5, and it's substantiated as well, that you need to get the leaven out. That's the emphasis. Of course, leaven was always a picture of sin. And so, as you go through Scripture, whether it's Luke 12 or 1 Corinthians 5, in some cases it'll be made reference to false doctrine. In Matthew 16:12, Galatians 5:9, it makes reference to the false doctrine of the Pharisees or the different ones that are proclaiming false doctrine. It actually uses the word "leaven". It's like leaven. Now, what leaven does, of course we know, is it takes that bread and it makes it rise. And it's an interesting picture, I think, of pride, because you put a little leaven in and what do you get? A bunch of hot air, really. And that's fundamentally what you get. But it is an interesting picture of sin. So, why would Christ use this as an example to describe the kingdom of God? That's the question that you have to ask yourself. I mean, what is He trying to prove? Well, the first thing He's trying to prove is, you don't think like God and God is clearly out of the norm. The second is very clear, and I've seen a lot of commentaries on this, but I don't think He's changed what leaven is in this text. I think it's still sin. And I think

one of the points is that He doesn't say, "God is spreading leaven." A woman does this. But I don't think He's seeing it as a negative either. And this is that which describes the kingdom. So, what is He talking about?

If you look in verse 21,

"It is like leaven..."

Of course, we know that you put in leaven, it's going to have an effect of the bread.

"... which a woman took and hid..."

Now, I want to stop there. I want to emphasize that the word "hid" can be "concealed," or, and I would say in the text, it's probably not "concealed". It's probably "mingled". It has the connotation of mingling in or mixing. It's not like she's going, "Oh, I don't want anybody to see this." It's like she's putting it in the bread. And so, that particular word you can use is being concealed in the bread. Or more specifically, it's being mingled in with the bread and mixed up in the bread.

Now, it goes on explains it this way and I believe Scripture is doing it for a clear purpose,

"... a woman took and hid (mingled) in three pecks of flour..."

Now, from what I understand, this is basically 45 pounds of bread, which they say at this juncture where they're mingling in the leaven could easily feed a hundred people. So, with that in mind, nobody's hiding anything. I mean, what are you going to do, stuff it in your pockets or something and hope nobody sees the leaven? She's not trying to hide it. And that's an interesting point about this. And of course, the Jews are hearing Jesus say this, "It's like leaven." They go, "Oh, leaven. That's the stuff we need to get rid of. It can't be a part of. I mean, you have those 12 pieces of bread that are showbread and that's unleavened bread. You can't have fellowship with God unless..." But what God has said at the very beginning of this, what Christ has said at the very beginning of this chapter is, "But there's none righteous. No, not one. All of you are leavened." It's an interesting picture. And it's also an interesting picture of something that's going to be extremely offensive to the Jews, and that is the Gentiles

are going to mix in with them. Who's going to want that? Nobody's going to want that.

Well, right from the start, if you go back to Luke 4, You remember when Jesus stands up at His synagogue of His own hometown? He starts preaching. Of course, up to one point, they just go, "Yeah, this is great stuff. We like hearing that stuff." And then He goes, "Okay, but how about this?" And then He picks up with some examples of the Old Testament.

So, He says in verse 25,

(Luke 4:25) "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

(Luke 4:26) and yet Elijah was sent to none of them..."

(None of the women in the Jewish community) I'm just filling that in for you.

"... but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon..."

This is a foreigner. This is a Gentile woman. And this is where Elijah ended up. You're going, "Why would God do

that?" God goes, "Because there's nobody at home in any of the other places. Nobody had a longing like this woman who was a foreigner."

He then goes on and says,

(Luke 4:27) "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

Why? Because none of them were willing to do what God told them. And Naaman was going to have a hard time, but Naaman was going to ultimately obey.

And so, by the time He finishes with this interesting message, it says this in verse 28,

(Luke 4:28) "And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

(Luke 4:29) and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff."

I don't think they took it well.

So, you go a little bit further, and of course, one of the things that you see in Chapter 5, is the heart of these Jews

in particular; of course, obviously thinking of themselves as being righteous in and of themselves. So, Jesus in Chapter 5 is sitting with Levi in the tax office, and He says, "Follow Me."

(Luke 5:28) "And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him."

(Luke 5:29) And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people..."

I don't know who the other people were, but obviously, probably the "Who's Who of Insignificance."

"... who were reclining at the table with them.

(Luke 5:30) The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"

"Why are you with these people? Why are you letting them mingle with us?"

In this particular passage, Jesus is giving foresight of what the church is going to be. It's one of the reasons why it's called the bride of Christ. The church is inviting all. That's

what we do. This may come as a shock to you, but we actually allow sinners to come in the door. And they can mingle with us, righteous people. And we allow that to happen. Now, Scripture's not saying that the leaven's good. It's not saying that sinners are good. It's saying that the kingdom of God is going to allow sinners to come in. And of course, when you get to 1 Corinthians 5, he says, "Now, get the leaven out. Get it out of your life. It doesn't belong in your life." And we want to purify the church. But how wonderful it is to know that God is embracing all who are sinners. And of course, once again, go to the beginning of Chapter 13, and that's everybody. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And it's this wonderful message that really is highly offensive to the self-righteous. So, fundamentally, with these two parables, Jesus is going against every norm that they can perceive. He takes an example of an anomaly that takes place in nature. That is, you have the smallest of seeds, and it brings forth the greatest of a tree in the garden. It's talking about it in the garden of herbs, and the reason why it makes mention of the fact that it's an herb is because the difference is there are things that grow

bigger outside the garden, but they're not cultivated. And so, the way He seems to put it is, this is something that was discarded, and it becomes that which is the most cultivated and useful of all the garden in so many ways, and the power of God rests upon it. It's just a great picture to give. But it goes against norm because we would think in terms of maybe education. We would think in terms of maybe who you know. We would think in terms of maybe great deeds that you did. And He says, "No, just start off small. And if you'll do that, I'll use you greatly." And that just goes against our way of thinking. And the second thing that He wants to emphasize is that this is going to be highly offensive to all of you who are self-righteous because we're going to mingle with the ungodly. We're going to bring in the unsaved. The unsaved are going to be a part of this. "I came to save sinners." That's exactly what Jesus does. "Don't think that I came into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Me might be saved." And that's the wonderful thing about the open doors of the church.

That's our ministry that He's called us to. Now, how offensive is that going to be to so many?

I remember a number of years ago... Dave, you probably remember them coming in, but it was actually a little group of Satanists, and they were wearing their garb and everything. And somebody had come up to me and said, "You want us to help escort them out?" I said, "No, bring them in. I hope they hear the word of God." A few of them had come up to me after the service, and they go, "Wow, the Lord was really speaking to me in that."

Because the Lord desires to save, doesn't He? And the thing that closes the door is if we think that we're better or we think that we don't need salvation. I mean, the message that we proclaim is, "If He could save me, He could save you." And that's the wonderful words of life that we have often made mention to.

It's a very interesting passage because it takes us into a realm that is oftentimes extremely foreign to us. And you go through the Gospel of Luke and you see that Luke will bring out the Samaritans, and he'll say, "These people that you would discard, that James and John would wish

lightning to destroy, these are the good ones. And it's going to surprise you that the guy next to Jesus on the cross, that criminal guy, he's going to be saved too.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word, and we give You thanks for Your love for us. It's inconceivable to us. We don't think like You do. We think in terms of getting even with people when they do us wrong, but You tell us to forgive. You tell us not to take into account, but to actually do something good back, that we will defeat evil by doing good. This goes against our nature. It goes against the way that we think. We don't perceive these things. We can only perceive them by the Spirit, Your Spirit within us. And so, we come humbly before You today, realizing that's where it all begins. And we come and say, "We have no idea what You want." We ask You, reveal Yourself to us. Tell us what You want. We'll do what you want. May Your Spirit energize us to do those very things that You've called us to do.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. We're asking you just to be small and admit that you're one of those sinners that was mingled in. But God wanted it that way. It is the kingdom of God.