

**Two Kingdoms**  
**Matthew 13:24-33, 44-50 (L16-A; L17-A)**

**WFLAGC**

Two situations: Parents tell children they can go out and play **IF** they clean up their toys.  
Parents will love you no matter what. Nothing can change that,

**Theme verse:** Colossians 3:1

*<sup>1</sup>So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

“... to the kingdom of Christ, in which my conscious is at peace, where there is no Law but only the forgiveness of sins, peace, quiet, happiness, salvation, and eternal life.” (LW #26, page 11)

**Two Kingdoms – Wednesday Musings**

The concept of the two kingdoms doesn't describe two different things as much as it describes two ways of looking at things or two different ways of understanding what is happening.

Luther talked about two kingdoms, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world, for the kingdom on the right and the kingdom on the left. The kingdom on the left or of this world is the one we understand best because we can see it at work most clearly. It is associated with God's law. It's that sphere where God does the creating and sustaining of this world. It's the world of cause and effect, of laws and governance, of reward and punishment. Luther understood this to be God's kingdom, and the work of governing, judging, protecting, educating, and sustaining society is God's work. All of us participate in this work. Everyone participates in this work, whether they know it or not. The atheist judge who presides in a just manner is as much a part of God's kingdom on the left as a Christian judge. And Luther would say that the atheist judge who is just is more to be commended than the Christian judge who acts unjustly.

The kingdom on the right or the kingdom of Christ is often more difficult to see and more difficult to describe. It is not the difference between spiritual and physical. The spiritual realm can be just as much a part of God's left hand kingdom. And the kingdom of Christ is always manifest in the physical world. It is, however, the area where faith is the center, and God's love and forgiveness are at work. In the right hand kingdom of God there is no law, only love. And in this right hand kingdom of Christ, people also govern, judge, protect, educate and sustain society, but there is something radically different – a relationship with the loving God, who gives life by giving up life.

The paradox comes in that, for people of faith, the two kingdoms are at work at the same time. I am participating in God's kingdom of the left hand of God right now, but I am also participating in God's kingdom on the right.

We'll start with the church, because that is where we are right now – in church. It is not correct to say that the church is the kingdom of Christ is the church, and the kingdom of this world lies out there somewhere. Both are right here, right now.

I'm preaching because you have called me to be your pastor. You pay me. The call came after a congregational meeting which followed all the constitution's rules. The Leadership Council oversees my work, and I can't just do anything I want, because I need the approval and cooperation of the congregation. We have rules. We have guidelines. We have a sexual abuse policy because we know that we live in a fallen world with people who are sinners, and that includes all of us. All of this is part of God's kingdom on the left.

But something else is going on here. The good news of God's love and forgiveness is being preached, both by me and by our participation in worship. The Spirit is creating a fellowship which unites us to God and to each other in the praying, confessing, singing, and sharing in the meal. Our resolve to act differently in our world is strengthened. We become the yeast that infuses God's love into the world. And there are no laws governing how this will happen. The Spirit will lead us. We may publish an order of service (kingdom on the left), but through that order God's Spirit will be at work creating a sense of peace and joy and inspiring us to be God's people in the world (kingdom on the right).

Luther kept pushing that it is important to distinguish this difference, because when we blend the two, the church becomes an arm of forces in the kingdom on the left.

There is perhaps no area where this is more apparent than in the argument between those advocating for social justice and those who say the church should take care of spiritual matters. There are no such spiritual matters. The Spirit of Christ is always, always, at work in this world, in our fleshly world with sickness and death. The gospel story makes no sense if the people of God are supposed to remain only spiritual. Jesus was born a real baby, who cried and pooped. He died a horrible death.

On the other hand, when the church becomes part of political arm, then it has lost its focus of calling people to God's justice and God's care for creation. All political solutions, all remedies for our social ills are part of the fallen kingdom on the left. God is not on anyone's side to the exclusion of the other side. God doesn't care who wins the World Series. God cares about justice and mercy. God's anger is kindled against all forms of oppression. God sides with the powerless, no matter what form that powerlessness should take.

## Sunday Slides

**#1** Introduce the concept of Two Kingdoms. The concept helps us understand our world and how the church and we as the people of God fit in this world. The concept helps us understand some of the mystery of life, even though the concept is itself a paradox. Both kingdoms are real and often in the same place at the same time.

**#2** The kingdom on the left, the kingdom of the world is the world of government, of laws and rules. It is the realm where we order our lives, where we work and play.

**#3** It is the kingdom where we experience the rules of reward

**#4** and punishment.

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But it is the kingdom that is always tainted by sin. And every attempt to make this kingdom the perfect kingdom of God is already a part of the infection.

**#5** The kingdom on the right, the kingdom of Christ, is more difficult to show in pictures. It's like this kingdom is as part of another dimension that is still very real and exists alongside or within the kingdom of the world. Both exist at the same time in the same place. But at the heart of the kingdom of Christ is Jesus himself, in the flesh, suffering and dying for humanity. In the kingdom of Christ, we always come back to the cross. The kingdom of Christ takes many forms, and our examples come from stories and pictures. Like:

**#** "... to the kingdom of Christ, in which my conscious is at peace, where there is no Law but only the forgiveness of sins, peace, quiet, happiness, salvation, and eternal life." (LW #26, page 11)

**#6** It's like the forgiveness of a parent for his or her sons or daughters.

**#7** Healing a paralyzed man, or a blind man, or any kind of restoration to health.

It's where love rules, where our relationship with God is the defining feature. But that relationship is always initiated and sustained, not by us but by God. In this kingdom God establishes justice. It is where we experience the peace that goes beyond understanding, where joy is abundant, where generosity defines what we have and not scarcity, where freedom is possible not matter our external circumstances. Here's what Jesus has to say about it.

**#8** **Read the gospel, Matthew 13:24-33, 44-53**

**#9** **Show the video clip**

Example of today's worship: church as both kingdom on the left and the right.

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Church isn't a social justice program or a spiritual sanctuary from the world.

- God's kingdom is just as material as this world.
- Church can't create a God's kingdom on earth through the systems of this world. They are always flawed.
- We live and witness in this world to the concerns of this world, with the humility of knowing that all our efforts may be flawed. No utopias this side of the grave. But that makes it possible for us to work with people who disagree with us. We all agree that we may be wrong.
- Sin Boldly.

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### **Matthew 13:24-33, 44-53**

#### **The Parable of Weeds among the Wheat**

<sup>24</sup> He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup> So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup> And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup> He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ <sup>29</sup> But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

#### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

<sup>31</sup> He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup> it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

#### **The Parable of the Yeast**

<sup>33</sup> He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with <sup>[a]</sup> three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

#### **Three Parables**

<sup>44</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

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

<sup>47</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; <sup>48</sup> when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

#### **Treasures New and Old**

<sup>51</sup> “Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” <sup>52</sup> And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” <sup>53</sup> When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

#### **Footnotes:**

- a. [Matthew 13:33](#) Gk *hid in*