**The King and His Kingdom**

*Advent 2016*

**Matthew 13:31-33, 44-46, 47-50**

DISCUSSION QUSETIONS

1. Has the Lord’s Prayer (see Matt. 6:9-13) been a part of your Christian experience? If so, have you ever pondered what is meant by “your kingdom come”? If so, what did you assume it referred to? In what way(s) do you struggle with the idea of a king and a kingdom? Why? What does the history of Israel’s (mostly) faithless and fallible kings say about their ability as a nation to usher in God’s kingdom? In what surprising ways does the Old Testament speak of the coming Messianic King (compare Isa. 52:13-15 and Isa. 53:3-5)? In what way(s) does Jesus fulfill these prophecies? Why was Christ’s announcement that the kingdom of God had arrived (see Mk. 1:15) not received by most of the Jews and their leaders (see 1 Cor. 1:23)?
2. Read Luke 17:20-21 and describe why a spiritual, invisible reign of God was not expected by most of the Jews at the time of Christ. What elements of Christ’s earthly life and ministry did not fit with the Jewish expectation(s) regarding the kingdom of God (see Jn. 1:46, Acts 4:13)? In light of this, why is Jesus’ use of the mustard seed in his teaching on the kingdom of God appropriate? What was Jesus conveying to his audience? How does an understanding of the nature and activity of the kingdom of God encourage us today when we encounter rampant evil, roadblocks to the gospel, and personal battles with unbelief (Matt. 13:31-33)? In your own words, explain how Christ’s kingdom moves from “small to supreme.”
3. In your own words, explain Jesus’ parable of the hidden treasure (v. 44). How do you think the original audience would have understood/reacted to this parable? What modern equivalent could you use to explain this same concept to someone? Why is the man’s reaction so important to understand (see also Ps. 16:11, Jn. 15:11; 16:22)? What does this say about the difference between the gospel and mere lawful obedience?
4. What is similar between the parable of v. 44 and vv. 45-46? What is different? What do you know about pearls and ancient Near East culture that might shed some light on this parable (see also Matt. 7:6, Rev. 21:21)? How do we naturally view Christ and his kingdom (see 1 Cor. 1:18)? What must be done for us to see it as priceless instead of primitive (see 2 Cor. 4:6)? Explain the difference between simply admiring the pearl and purchasing the pearl. What is meant by purchasing the pearl?
5. In what way(s) does the parable of the dragnet (vv. 47-50) demonstrate Christ’s sovereign Kingship over those who treasure him as well as those who do not? Since we know that all men deserve judgment (see Romans 3:10-11), how would you explain what is meant by the terms “evil” and “righteous” in v. 49? In what way(s) does this passage refute the idea that hell is merely annihilation, the further indulgence in a treasured sin, or a party with old buddies? What effect should this passage produce in our lives?