

5 Daily Devotionals (From November 15th Sermon)

Day 1: God Works in Small Beginnings

Key Verse: Matthew 13:31–32

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field."

Reflection

We often judge success by what we can see. We look for big results, impressive beginnings, and immediate evidence that something is working. But Jesus gives us a very different picture of His kingdom. He compares it to a tiny mustard seed and a little yeast mixed into flour. Both seem insignificant, yet both produce results far greater than their beginnings suggest.

Consider how God first brought His kingdom into the world. Jesus was born in a humble manger, grew up in an unimpressive town, gathered ordinary fishermen and tax collectors as disciples, and ultimately died on a Roman cross. By the world's standards, it looked like failure. Yet through His death and resurrection, Jesus accomplished the salvation of the world.

The same God continues working today through seemingly ordinary things. A Bible verse taught to a child, a prayer before bedtime, a Sunday worship service, or a conversation about Jesus may not seem significant. But God's Word is never powerless. The Holy Spirit works through His Word to create and strengthen faith.

We don't need to measure God's work by what we can see. We simply need to remain faithful to His Word and trust His promises.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me trust that You are working even when I cannot see the results. Forgive me for measuring success by worldly standards. Give me confidence in Your Word and help me faithfully share it with others. Remind me that even the smallest acts of faithfulness can be used by You for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 2: The Treasure Worth Everything

Key Verse: Matthew 13:44

"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."

Reflection

What is the most valuable thing you own? Perhaps it's your home, your retirement savings, your family possessions, or something with tremendous sentimental value. We spend considerable time and energy protecting the things we treasure. But Jesus tells us about something worth infinitely more: the kingdom of heaven.

In two parables, Jesus describes a man who discovers hidden treasure and a merchant who finds an extraordinary pearl. Both recognize that what they've found is worth more than everything else they possess. Their response is joyful because they understand the incredible value of what is before them.

Jesus isn't teaching that we can purchase salvation by giving away our possessions or doing enough good works. Salvation is God's free gift, won for us through Jesus Christ. We cannot earn it. The treasure is valuable because of what Christ has done for us. Through His death and resurrection, He gives us forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal life.

Our possessions, careers, relationships, and earthly blessings are wonderful gifts from God. But none can forgive our sins or give us eternal life. Only Jesus can do that.

When we recognize Jesus as our greatest treasure, our priorities begin to change. We can enjoy earthly blessings without making them our gods because we already possess something that will never fade.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me for allowing temporary things to become more important than You. Thank You for giving me the greatest treasure imaginable: forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. Help me recognize Your priceless love and live each day with gratitude for everything You have given me. Amen.

Day 3: The King Who Warns Us

Key Verse: Matthew 13:49

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

Reflection

Jesus' parable of the net reminds us that a day of judgment is coming. Fishermen gathered all kinds of fish in their nets, but when they brought them ashore, they separated the good from the bad. Jesus uses this picture to describe the final judgment, when God will separate those who belong to Him from those who reject Him.

These are sobering words, especially in a world that often prefers to think of God as someone who simply approves of everything we do. But Jesus speaks about judgment because He loves us. Think about someone warning you that a bridge is out ahead. That warning isn't unkind; it's an act of love intended to keep you from danger.

Jesus wants us to take sin seriously. Sin separates us from God, and we cannot overcome it through our own goodness or religious accomplishments. Even our best efforts cannot make us righteous before a holy God.

But here is the wonderful news: the same Jesus who warns us about judgment is the Savior who endured that judgment in our place. He took our sins upon Himself, died on the cross, and rose again so that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness and eternal life.

Our hope is not in how well we've lived but in what Jesus has done for us. When God's Word confronts our sin, we don't need to run away from Him. We can run to Jesus, confess our sins, and receive His forgiveness.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me enough to warn me about the seriousness of sin. Give me a repentant heart that does not excuse wrongdoing but continually turns to Jesus for forgiveness. Thank You that Christ endured the judgment I deserved and gives me the promise of eternal life. Help me live confidently in His grace. Amen.

Day 4: Knowing About Jesus Isn't the Same as Trusting Him

Key Verse: Matthew 13:57

"And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.'"

Reflection

Sometimes familiarity can keep us from recognizing something extraordinary. Jesus experienced this firsthand when He returned to His hometown of Nazareth. The people were amazed by His teaching and miracles, but instead of responding with faith, they questioned His identity. They knew His family. They remembered Him growing up. Surely, they thought, this ordinary carpenter couldn't possibly be the promised Messiah.

They knew things about Jesus, but they refused to trust Him.

It's easy to recognize the same danger in our own lives. We may have grown up hearing the Christmas story, celebrating Easter, memorizing Bible verses, and attending worship regularly. These are wonderful gifts. But familiarity can sometimes turn into complacency.

We can hear that our sins are forgiven without considering the tremendous price Jesus paid. We can receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion without stopping to appreciate the gift being given. We can know all the right answers while forgetting to live in daily trust of our Savior.

The answer isn't to chase a new religious experience or an emotional feeling every week. Instead, we return to the unchanging promises of God's Word. The gospel doesn't become less wonderful because we've heard it before. Jesus' mercy doesn't become less valuable because we've received it many times.

Today, don't settle for simply knowing about Jesus. Trust Him. Receive His promises with joy and let His forgiveness shape your life.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, forgive me when I become so familiar with Your Word that I forget how wonderful Your promises truly are. Keep my heart from becoming complacent. Help me hear Your gospel with fresh gratitude, receive Your gifts with faith, and trust You in every circumstance. Thank You for Your unchanging love and mercy. Amen.

Day 5: Don't Miss the Treasure

Key Verse: Matthew 13:44

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field."

Reflection

Throughout Matthew 13, Jesus tells parables that challenge the way we see the world. God's kingdom may begin in ways that seem small and insignificant. Its value surpasses everything we own. It brings a real and final judgment. And knowing about Jesus is not the same as trusting Him.

All these truths point us toward one central question: What will you do with Jesus?

It's possible to become distracted by the things of this world. We chase possessions, success, recognition, and experiences, hoping they will provide lasting happiness. But none of these things can give us what we need most. None can forgive our sins, reconcile us to God, or conquer death.

Jesus can.

The King of heaven gave up everything for people who had nothing with which to purchase their salvation. He bore our sins, suffered the judgment we deserved, shed His precious blood to redeem us, and rose victorious from the grave.

That is the treasure we have in Christ. It isn't a reward for people who have made themselves worthy. It is God's gracious gift, freely given through faith in Jesus.

Perhaps you feel small and unnoticed today. Maybe you're carrying burdens, struggling with guilt, or wondering whether God is working in your life. Remember that your hope doesn't rest in your circumstances or accomplishments. It rests in the Savior who loves you and has promised never to leave you.

Earthly treasures will eventually fade, but what Jesus has won for you will never disappear. Don't miss the treasure. Look to Christ, trust His promises, and live in the joy of His salvation.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me a treasure that this world can never take away. Forgive me for the times I've chased temporary things while neglecting the eternal gifts You have given me. Keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, strengthen my faith through Your Word and Sacraments, and help me live each day with the confidence that I am forgiven, loved, and secure in Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

Don't Miss the Treasure

Matthew 13:31–58 | The Kingdom of Heaven

Opening Question

Have you ever purchased something that looked amazing in an advertisement but turned out to be a huge disappointment? What made it so different from what you expected?

Transition: Sometimes things that look unimpressive turn out to be incredibly valuable. In Matthew 13, Jesus uses ordinary things—a mustard seed, yeast, a hidden treasure, a pearl, and a fishing net—to teach us extraordinary truths about His kingdom.

Read: Matthew 13:31–58

1. God's Kingdom Often Looks Smaller Than We Expect

Matthew 13:31–33 – The Mustard Seed and the Yeast

Jesus compares God's kingdom to a tiny mustard seed and yeast mixed into flour. Both begin in seemingly insignificant ways, yet produce results far greater than their beginnings suggest.

God often works through ordinary things: His Word, Baptism, Holy Communion, prayer, and everyday conversations about Jesus. We may not always see the results, but God's Word is never powerless. Our confidence rests in His promises, not in what we can measure.

Supporting Bible Verses:

- Isaiah 55:10–11 – God's Word accomplishes His purposes.
- Zechariah 4:10 – Do not despise the day of small things.
- 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 – God uses what the world considers weak.
- Romans 10:17 – Faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do we sometimes measure success by what we can see, count, or measure?
2. Where have you seen God work through something seemingly small or ordinary?
3. How can parents, grandparents, and other Christians faithfully share God's Word even when they don't immediately see results?

2. God's Kingdom Is Worth More Than Everything We Own

Matthew 13:44–46 – The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Jesus describes two men who discover something so valuable that everything else becomes secondary. The kingdom of heaven is worth more than anything this world can offer.

Our salvation isn't something we purchase through good works, religious activity, or personal sacrifice. It is God's gracious gift, purchased for us through the precious blood of Jesus. Because of what Christ has done, we can receive earthly blessings with gratitude without making them our greatest treasure.

Supporting Bible Verses:

- Philippians 3:7–8 – Knowing Christ is worth more than everything else.
- Ephesians 2:8–9 – We are saved by grace through faith, not by works.
- 1 Peter 1:18–19 – We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.
- Matthew 6:19–21 – Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things our culture encourages us to value above everything else?
2. What does it look like practically to treat Jesus as your greatest treasure?
3. How does remembering that salvation is a gift of grace change the way we respond to God?
4. What is one area of your life where you might need to reconsider your priorities?

3. God's Kingdom Brings Real and Final Judgment

Matthew 13:47–52 – The Parable of the Net

Jesus teaches that a day of final judgment is coming. The net gathers all kinds of fish, but eventually they are separated. Not everyone who is outwardly connected to the church has saving faith.

This is a sobering warning, but it comes from a loving Savior. Jesus doesn't want anyone to perish. The distinction between the righteous and the wicked isn't between people who have earned salvation and those who haven't. We are made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. He took our judgment upon Himself at the cross so that we might receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Supporting Bible Verses:

- John 3:16–18 – Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life.
- Romans 3:22–24 – We are justified freely by God's grace.
- 2 Corinthians 5:10 – We will all appear before Christ's judgment seat.
- 2 Peter 3:9 – God desires all to come to repentance.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think people today are uncomfortable talking about God's judgment?
2. How does the cross demonstrate both the seriousness of sin and the mercy of God?
3. What is the difference between trying to earn God's favor and responding to His grace?
4. How should Jesus' warning about judgment shape the way we live and share our faith?

4. Knowing About Jesus Is Not the Same as Trusting in Jesus

Matthew 13:53–58 – Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

When Jesus returns to His hometown, the people recognize His teaching and miracles but refuse to believe in Him. Their familiarity with Jesus becomes a reason to dismiss Him rather than trust Him.

The same danger exists for Christians today. We can become so familiar with Bible stories, worship, and the forgiveness of sins that we stop being amazed by God's grace. The answer isn't chasing a new religious experience. It's returning again and again to the unchanging promises of Christ.

Supporting Bible Verses:

- James 2:19 – Knowing facts about God is not the same as saving faith.
- Hebrews 2:1 – Pay careful attention to what we have heard.
- Romans 10:9–10 – Faith trusts and confesses Jesus as Lord.
- John 20:31 – Scripture is written so that we may believe Jesus is the Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can familiarity with church, Scripture, and worship sometimes lead to complacency?
2. What is the difference between knowing facts about Jesus and trusting Him with your life?
3. How can we approach worship, God's Word, and Holy Communion with renewed gratitude?
4. What helps you remember just how amazing the forgiveness Jesus won for you really is?

Closing Reflection: Don't Miss the Treasure!

The kingdom of God may look small to the world, but its King is greater than anything this world can offer. Jesus gave everything to redeem us. He bore our sins, suffered our judgment, died on the cross, and rose again so that we might have forgiveness and eternal life.

Our salvation isn't a reward for making ourselves worthy. It is a gift from the King of Kings. When the treasures of this world fade, what Christ has won for us will never fade.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible treasure we have in Jesus. Forgive us for the times we have placed the things of this world above You. Keep us from becoming so familiar with Your Word that we forget the wonder of Your grace. Help us trust Your promises even when we cannot see how You are working. Strengthen our faith through Your Word and Sacraments, and remind us daily that Jesus has paid the price for our sins through His death and resurrection. Help us treasure Him above everything else and share the hope of His kingdom with those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.