

Kingdom Stories
Week 5: Dragnet

What is your immediate thought when I say "The Kingdom of Heaven or The Kingdom of God?" If you weren't raised in the church, you might think it sounds like something fanciful and quaint, a metaphor for God's love. Seriously, we don't have real kingdoms anymore. Royals and their lives are for our amusement. That is not what Jesus taught.

If you grew up going to church, you might have read right over this phrase again and again because it's obviously about our eternal home in heaven after we die. That is only half true and the half that is right is the biggest understatement ever. It's like calling the Taj Mahal just another building, the Grand Canyon a big hole in the ground, or what is happening in Ukraine a "conflict". The Taj Mahal is one of the wonders of the world, the Grand Canyon is God's finger creating something breathtaking, and the Ukraine is a brutal war by a tyrant.

The Kingdom of God is a present reality and a future hope.

The Kingdom is the restoration of God's rule and reign here on earth.

We challenged one another to memorize these verses, which are the driving force in this series. It's what connects all of these kingdom stories together. ¹² To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them...¹⁶ "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷ I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it. Matthew 13:12 &16-17

This is an exciting day for me. Finally, a kingdom story that I know a bit about. We have had farming, birds, finding buried treasure, and pearls/fine jewelry, which I know nothing about. Finally, Jesus has arrived at the story where I am dialed in immediately!

⁴⁷ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but **threw the bad ones away.** ⁴⁹ That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the **wicked people** from the **righteous,** ⁵⁰ throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ Do you understand all these things?"
"Yes," they said, "we do." Matthew 13:47-51

The title of this is dragnet. Now to those of you millennials, gen-xers and gen-zers, you won't have the same picture in your mind as us old people do. Dragnet was a cop show where **Sergeant Joe Friday** was looking for, "**just the facts mam.**" But at this time in history using a dragnet was one of the more **popular ways of fishing**. Instead of trying to explain the picture that was in these first hearers mind, just watch this video. [video](#)

Get the picture? They are not targeting any particular fish, just dragging the net toward the shore, trapping the fish between dry land and the net. Then the net is **pulled slowly toward shore** so that the fish do not even know what is happening. Finally, pulling them into the net as is and up on the shore. **Then you see that you have** ones that are good and others that aren't. The good fish **go into crates** and the bad ones are thrown away.

Sound familiar? Well this story is a bit like the one we heard a few weeks ago. ²⁷ "The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy has done this!" the farmer exclaimed. "Should we pull out the weeds?" they asked. ²⁹ "No," he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'" Matthew 13:27-30

In both stories, both those who are following Jesus and those who have refused to listen, are **side by side, mixed together, not to be separated.**

That is the kingdom of God, the present reality. Those who are being made new, restored, transformed by Jesus, are amongst those who are not listening. There are weeds with grain and good fish with bad fish. **They aren't separated until the end.**

Distinguishing good fish from bad fish.

Based upon **Leviticus 11:9-12**. This was the law of Moses. Translated to people it used to be about, those who are of **the right ethnic group**. The **law was to keep them clean** and, therefore, acceptable to God. According to the law, they were **not allowed to eat fish that had no scales or fins**. **The law was to set them apart** as God's chosen people.

Now it is about the kingdom of God, initiated by Jesus, his son, and those who acknowledge **Jesus as the one who makes them clean.**

As people, we like something that we can do that makes us ok with God. That way we are in control. We pick the right fish and keep ourselves separate from the world.

The good fish that are not doing anything to distinguish themselves are good. It is clear that they have been with Jesus. **This is the righteousness of Christ, not behavior...taking on the righteousness of Jesus.**

For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is **God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness**, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17

The distinguishing characteristic is something that is given, not earned. The righteousness of God is a **gift** through Jesus.

Oh, but there's more. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him **we might become the righteousness of God.** 2 Corinthians 5:21

We become the righteousness of God through the transforming power of the gift. He is making us into a good fish or a righteous person.

This is a completely different thing than being self-righteous. That is when I decide what the standard of what is righteous or good and then I become what I have invented. It usually looks ridiculous because even when setting the standard for myself, I miss key aspects of being good that others can clearly see. It's like putting on a very expensive suit by Armani, walking proudly with shoulders back feeling good about myself, not realizing that my zipper is not up and the tag is hanging from the jacket sleeve.

This is very tempting for us when we obey God's standards in the Bible, to look at others who are not, and think we are doing something.

Being a good fish is about living in the new reality of being adopted by God through Jesus. It's about **abiding or remaining in this new reality of being brought close to God through Jesus.** It's not about trying to get to some arbitrary standard that will still be too low. But that is only for those who put their trust completely in Jesus, repent, and follow him obediently.

Being netted is not a bad thing; in this case, it is a good thing. It means life, not death. When I net a good fish, it means death for the fish and food for me. The process for me goes like this. I pick a certain type

of **lure** or bait that I think will be of interest to the fish below. Then I try to offer this in an attractive manner for the fish to eat. When they do bite, I must **set the hook**. This is vital. If done well, and I **keep a tight line**, then there is a good chance that I will get the fish to the side of my kayak. If it is large, which I will know by the amount of pull, then I **reach behind me and grab my net**. Once netting, then I need to **separate the lure** and its hooks from the fish. While still in the net, I **put it on a stringer**, which is a piece of rope that goes through its gills and out of its mouth. This is tied to the kayak and the fish goes back in the water. At the end of my time on the water, the **fish goes into a cooler with ice**. At home, I get out the filet knife and **clean the fish**. They either go right into the cast iron skillet or they go into the fridge for tomorrow or the freezer for later.

The moral of the story is, when you get caught and netted, then you die.

To be captured by Jesus is to live, which is **the opposite** of what catching fish in a net would mean. **In their minds, to be caught is to die, cooked and eaten.**

The difference between what I do and what God does is this: Jesus is collecting what already belongs to him. He is not trying to trick someone into his net, which means death. He is taking the drag net and slowly bringing all the fish to the shore. They are all his creation, so he has the right to do it. The good fish can be recognized by the righteousness of Jesus that they carry.

Both kinds of fish are swimming in the same water together.

We will live in an environment contaminated by evil. This is because of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. They didn't want to have the one who created them to be too close. That would mean they wouldn't be able to direct their own lives as they saw fit. They could do as they pleased, making up their own rules and setting their own priorities and goals. They would define what life is about, not enjoy walking in the garden and talking with their loving father.

Sin or rebellion brought death into the world. Now the water we swim in is poisoned, causing us to trust ourselves and our view of the world instead of the creator's.

People who belong to Jesus, because of making him king, and those who are their own kings, which really means their slaves to this world, are both in the same water.

If I catch something out of bad water, I don't keep it; I return it to its polluted waters. It's just for my amusement or sport. Jesus keeps us, in spite of where we come from.

The kingdom now is this...good fish swim together with the others, God protects them in the bad water, God transforms them through Jesus, and they make the kingdom present for others.

We are not called out of the world during this time, but rather are left here to be ambassadors. The ambassador will eventually be brought home.

This is the heart of what we are at Eagle Ridge Church of God. ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" 2 Corinthian 5:17-21

An ambassador is a human bridge connected to the one who sent her with those people the sender wants to have a relationship with. Our purpose of Eagle Ridge Church of God is "Be a bridge, build a bridge." That means we are to swim amongst all the fish, representing Jesus who wants to be in relationship with them, restoring what it was like in the garden before sin and rebellion messed it all up. We are to be ambassadors or human bridges through which people can return to God and have their lives transformed in spite of the bad water they swim in. Then those people are to strategically build bridges into our culture, doing the hard work so people can come back to God.

This will be a time of judgment for some and rescue for others. We are rescued by being caught.

Right now is not the time for judgment, but for introduction and invitation!

I'm not to operate now like I'm the judge deciding who will ultimately be rescued. I can be easily fooled. And I don't know who appears to be a bad fish, but God is at his pace, transforming that person. I see the outside, God sees the heart, and knows what he's doing on the inside.

This demands a choice; one cannot remain neutral about Jesus or risk not being able to hear. These parables, or kingdom stories, are designed to force people to move closer, lean in, and listen or be repelled and walk away.

Here's the difference between good and bad fish. ⁶ Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one can come to the Father except through me.** ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. **From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"** John 14:6-7

Jesus is teaching about his kingdom. He came to **usher it in**. He taught **exclusively** about the kingdom of God the first couple of years of his ministry. **With his coming began the restoration of God's rule and reign over all things, which culminates in eternity with him where there are no effects of sin.**

Because it is his kingdom, Jesus is called Christ, which means promised messiah and king. It's not his last name. Jesus suffered and died on a cross, taking on the punishment or price tag for all our sin. And after three days, God raised him from the grave solidifying all that he had said and done as truth. These are the facts about Jesus.

Our response to that kind of king and that kind of kingdom is simple. Repent, meaning to move away from your own path of self-determination, and move toward Jesus. Believe, or better yet believe to the point that your actions demonstrate complete trust in Jesus, is The Way. And finally, obediently follow the path that Jesus is revealing to you.

Then on the Day of Judgment, where time is no more, you will not receive judgment, but rather you will be rescued in order to enter God's eternal Kingdom. What has been fully restored, continues forever and forever.

At the back, as you leave, we have the gospel written in a clear concise statement. I encourage you to pick one up and read it, even memorize it. This is the heart of what we are about.

Here's a prayer Jesus prays for those who are following him. ¹⁵ **I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.** ¹⁶ **They do not belong to this world any more than I do.** ¹⁷ **Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.** ¹⁸ **Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.** ¹⁹ **And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.** John 17:15-19

These are the promises to you if you follow Jesus...

- **I'm not going to take you out of the polluted water yet, but I will keep you safe.**
- **Use your truth that I make them holy, meaning pure, even though the water is polluted by sin.**
- **I will teach you everything you need to know.**
- **I am sending you like God sent me.**

Responding to Jesus Kingdom Story

Self check:

- **Do I know where I'm heading?**

Are you listening? Do you have ears that hear?

Do these parables upset you in some way? This whole idea of judgment sounds so harsh, but yet you know Jesus can be trusted and you know that you need him to rescue you.

Remember the danger of not listening is that we lose the ability to listen.

- **What about the other fish?**

Who is close to me in the net? Or where can I position myself to be near people who need to know Jesus.

Invitation to baptism the Sunday after Easter.