



Secrets of the Kingdom 2 (14:13 – 15:28)

Matthew 14: 13 – 36

We must fix our eyes on Jesus making him our first priority and nothing else. Satan wants to divert our attention and defeat us through distraction.

1. *Easy to fix our eyes on our own priorities.*

- Disciples urged Jesus to send people away – Matthew 14:15; 15:23.
- It's a reasonable suggestion but growth comes through unreasonable compassion.
- If we fix our eyes on our own plans each day we will never see daily Kingdom victories that God has laid out for us.
- Jesus both demonstrates and preaches the Kingdom message, authenticating it with breathtaking miracles.

- In verse 25, the 4th watch was from 3am to 6am, so Jesus had been praying for nine hours since he dismissed the crowd at nightfall. Yet in the morning he served the needs of another crowd.

- Chapter-13 growth only comes through in chapter-14 love and compassion.
 - ❖ Don't be distracted by self needs.

2. *Easy to fix our eyes on smallness of our own resources.*

- Satan makes you complain rather than for you to offer your weakness to Christ and let him turn it into strength.
 - ❖ Faith must triumph over logic if we are to see Kingdom growth.
- Jesus made disciples hand out bread and then gather it, to build their faith.
- If we focus on our slender recourses, Satan will take millions down to hell.

3. *Easy to fix our eyes on adverse circumstances which assault us.*

- When Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus he walked across the water but when he looks at the wind and water he began to sink and drown.
- Jesus rebukes him for having little faith and asks a disappointed question which literally means 'why did you look in two places?' → Jesus wants us to look to Him alone.
- We are in awe at Peter's faith but Jesus is appalled that he should ever do anything less.

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus means growth, success, and victory.
- When we keep our eyes on Jesus, our efforts to spread the Gospel will be utterly unstoppable.

Let's fix our eyes on Jesus, confident that his love, his strength and his power can always bear us on to victory.

The God Who Offends

Matthew 15: 1 – 20

The disciples wanted Jesus to become less offensive and insensitive in order that he might attract bigger crowds (vs.12). Jesus however knows they would be offended but that is what the messengers of God are called to do. The Gospel needs to be offensive as it doesn't work any other way.

The Gospel needs to offend people because of:-

1. *Parable of the Net – 13:47*

- Every congregation contains both good and rotten fish, and the rotten ones can spoil the whole catch.
- Therefore, since *'every plant that my Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots'*, we preach such a counter-cultural message that only those truly planted by God will want to remain.
- Don't humour modern-day Pharisees and scribes for fear of losing them. Left unchallenged they will not only lose their own lives but infect true believers and convince non-Christian onlookers that the Kingdom message is dead.
- Jesus deliberately whittled down the size of his crowds, preaching so offensively that people either got saved or left.
- The more Jesus attacked the hypocrisy of the elite, the more the common people loved him.

2. *Parable of the Sower – 13:3*

- It is tempting to offer people a discount on discipleship in the hope that their commitment will deepen along the way, but Jesus taught a different way.
- Seed planted in rocky, thorny soil will be scorched and throttled, so we must thoroughly prepare the ground before planting the seed.
- Jesus thoroughly ploughed peoples' hearts to see a few truly saved instead of false converts.

3. *Parable of the Mustard Seed – 13:31*

- *'...when it has once been sown, it is scarcely possible to get the place free of it.'* – Pliny the Elder wrote this in the 70s AD.
- The disciples underestimated the power of the Gospel message to break stubborn hearts and to grow in unlikely place.
- Conversion is mass change → but only happens when Father breathes His Holy Spirit into someone's heart in the miracle of rebirth.

4. *Parable of Buried Treasure – 13:44*

- We preach the message of Jesus Christ who laid down his life and we must not sell cheaply what he bought so dearly.
- He gave up his life to save the lost and he calls them to give up their own lives to receive salvation.
- The Gospel is free, but it is not cheap it is the most expensive gift in history.
- Jesus knew that nothing attracts unbelievers more than the raw truth and beauty of the offensive Gospel message.

**The God-Who-Offends is looking for a bold army of messengers.
Let's do it his way. It's the only way that works!**

When God is Silent
Matthew 15:21 – 28

Every great work of God can be traced back to praying men and women. Praying is very powerful and we sometimes don't regularly do it, probably because the devil is acutely aware of its devastating power. Frustration builds up when prayers go unanswered and we are tempted to neglect it altogether.

- The story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman prepares us for the moments when heaven falls silent.
- Charles Spurgeon, for example, learned to endure and even enjoy the rich training ground of unanswered prayer.

If God answered our prayers immediately;-

1. *We would never learn true humility.*

- Proud people pray little and when they do they rely on prayer plus self-help.
- Unanswered prayer forces us to admit that only God can help us and so humbles us.
- The Canaanite woman was so desperate when she found Jesus and she grew humbler still when he refused her requests.

"True prayer is an inventory of needs, a catalogue of necessities, an exposure of secret wounds, a revelation of hidden poverty." Charles Spurgeon

- The Canaanite woman grew more and more reliant on Jesus and eventually she displayed the poverty which God cannot ignore.

2. *We wouldn't see the fruit of true persistence.*

- Jesus keeps silent in order that we lay hold of him with dogged determination.
- He is training us to rule with Him in the age to come, and so forces us into prayer preparing us for that day.
- In 7:7 we are commanded to '*go on asking... go on seeking... go on knocking*', because princes must learn to be kings before they can be entrusted with a throne.
- No one will complain in heaven that God took too long to answer prayers but we will be busy praising him that he subjected us to frustrations in order to train us for eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17).
- The Canaanite woman's story is sandwiched between two miracles with bread.
- Matthew wants us to grasp that this woman came to Jesus for deliverance and learned through persistence that her need was far greater.
- Proud Jewish leaders refused to swallow the bread of God's Kingdom message yet this woman is willing to lick up even the little crumbs falling of the Jewish table.
- Unanswered prayer doesn't mean God refuses our request but that he has something far greater to give us while we wait!

3. *We would never develop true faith.*

- 1 Peter 1:6-7 = trials test our faith to prove if genuine = result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- It was only when the Canaanite woman had fought her way through delay and disappointment that Jesus praised her great faith and granted her request.
- No matter what you need, Jesus promises to answer your fervent prayers, even when he appears silent or seems to refuse your requests; he is simply teaching you humility, persistence and faith.

"We cannot all argue, but we can all pray; we cannot all be leaders but we can all be pleaders; we cannot all be mighty in rhetoric, but we can all be prevalent in prayer."

Charles Spurgeon