

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

“The kingdom of heaven” stands for the good and truth present with a person, and so for heaven present with him (*Arcana Coelestia* 5886:4).

The Lord created us with the hope that we will all become angels in heaven. Looking at the kingdom of heaven parables can help us understand the process by which He leads us toward heaven.

READ: “The Kingdom of Heaven” by the Rev. Nathan Gladish

“The kingdom of heaven is not so much a set of doctrines or traditions as it is an experience of the Lord in and among people.... The way to build the kingdom of heaven within your mind and heart is to do the activities that are represented in these parables on a day-by-day basis.”

READ: “An Invisible Kingdom” by the Rev. Morley Rich

“The kingdom is a very personal and individual thing, something in each person which does not appear in the physical world, except clothed in the garments of outward charity and truth.”

ACTIVITY: Kingdom of Heaven Talk About Picture (*ages 3-8*)

This color picture illustrates the kingdom of heaven parables given in Matthew 13. This can be a useful visual aid for younger children as you discuss these parables and how they help us follow the Lord.

PROJECT: Kingdom of Heaven Mural (*ages 6-12*)

Make a mural of pictures showing the various ways the Lord describes the kingdom of heaven. Each of these parables tells us something different about what we can do to prepare for life in heaven.

ACTIVITY: Kingdom of Heaven Cards (*ages 12 and up*)

Match each picture card with a card supplying a quote from the New Testament and another card summarizing the spiritual meaning.

SING: “The Kingdom of Heaven” by Lori Odhner

PROJECT: Kingdom of Heaven Collage (*ages 3-8*)

Make a collage of things mentioned in the kingdom of heaven parables, such as (fake) pearls, mustard seeds, wheat stalks, dried weeds, netting, scraps of fabric or paper to make fish for the net, *etc.*

SPIRITUAL TASK: The Kingdom of Heaven by Rev. George D. McCurdy

JOURNAL PAGE: Thine Is the Kingdom

In the New Testament, the Lord gives us a prayer that includes these words: “Thy kingdom come.” These words are actually a prayer that truth may be received (see *AE* 48:3). Receiving truths from the Lord is an essential step in our preparation for heaven. Reflect on steps that you can take to help the Lord give you the truths you need.

ETERNAL LIFE

After death a person is immediately in the other life, and his life in this world is continued there, and is of the same quality as it had been in this world.

(see *Arcana Coelestia* 5006:4)

Life is an eternal, never-ending gift from the Lord. Death is but a bridge to life in the spiritual world.

READ: “Where Heaven Is” a family talk by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

“It is the Lord’s love that makes heaven. Wherever that love is felt, that is where heaven is.”

READ: “What Heaven Is Like”

A simple talk for preschoolers from the Early Childhood Religion Program.

READ: “Is Heaven a Place?” by the Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz

“The living presence of the Lord in a person’s heart makes heaven in him.”

PROJECT: Paper Conical Angel (*ages 5-9*)

ACTIVITY: Lifeline (*teens and up*)

Have you ever made a timeline showing your life? This is a variation to illustrate the way your life will extend to eternity!

PROJECT: Easy Angel Snowflake

Fold and cut to produce a beautiful snowflake of angels.

SING: How Wondrous Is the Sun of Heaven

COLORING PAGE: Guardian Angels by Marguerite L. Acton

Pictures a person with two guardian angels to show one of the ways the Lord leads us toward heaven.

SING: Becoming an Angel by Lori Odhner

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

“Let both grow together until the harvest.”

(Matthew 13:24-30)

While we are living here on earth, we have many opportunities to choose between good and evil. Sometimes we choose what is good and true. And sometimes we let selfish feelings guide our choices. The Lord is like the man who sows the good seed within the fields that symbolize our hearts and minds. The evil spirits are the enemy who comes and sows tares while we are spiritually asleep or unaware. Because the Lord wants to lead us gently toward heaven, He allows these conflicting feelings to coexist while we live in the natural world. When we go to live in the spiritual world, He will help us separate the good and the evil within us as we choose our spiritual home.

READ: “The Parable of the Tares” by the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

“Good and evil uncomfortably coexisting is the reality of life. And this story describes how we are to deal with certain evils in our lives.”

ACTIVITY: Separating the Wheat from the Tares (*ages 8-12*)

The wheat is like good parts of our lives that help us become angels and the tares are evils that get in our way. Here is a list of words, some of which describe things of heaven and some of which describe things of hell. Cut them apart and separate heavenly things from hellish things.

ACTIVITY: The Meaning of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

Look at this list of possible interpretations of this parable and check all that you think apply.

THE MUSTARD SEED

If a person by means of combat against evils as sins
has acquired anything spiritual in the world, be it ever so small,
he is saved, and...his uses grow like a grain of mustard seed into a tree.
(*Divine Love 17:5*)

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church teaches that everyone has the potential to go to heaven. If a person applies whatever truth he has to life, he begins his spiritual development. Just as a mustard seed can grow into a tree, the Lord can use this beginning and help it grow.

READ: “The Grain of Mustard Seed” by the Rev. Douglas M. Taylor

“The Lord told the disciples the parable of the mustard seed in order to encourage them. He tells it to us, too, so that we won’t become discouraged.”

PROJECT: The Mustard Seed

Show the children tiny mustard seeds. Then use them in a project illustrating the way the Lord helps our faith grow.

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Gives the Parable of the Mustard Seed

PROJECT: One Tiny Seed (*ages 6-9*)

Use a pencil and folded paper to draw a tiny seed growing into a tree (from a Family Lesson).

ACTIVITY: Parables (*ages 10-14*)

Answer questions to explore the meaning of three parables relating to seeds—the parable of the Sower, the parable of the seed growing secretly, and the parable of the mustard seed.

ACTIVITY: Little Things Have Big Consequences (*teens and up*)

Reflect on the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed with an activity from a Family Lesson.

THE LEAVEN

Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”
(Matthew 13:33)

In Old Testament times, people saved a portion of bread dough (unbaked) and used it to leaven the next batch of bread. This is the leaven that the woman hid in the meal until it was all leavened. This parable pictures the way that spiritual struggles can help us grow spiritually.

ACTIVITY: Leaven

If you bake sourdough bread and keep some of the “starter” on hand, show this to your children and compare it to the leaven mentioned in this parable. An alternative way to illustrate the concept is to sprinkle dry yeast on lukewarm water. When the yeast starts to grow and create bubbles, you can talk about the way our evils or bad habits tend to “bubble up” so that we have an opportunity to recognize them and work on overcoming them. This “work” is pictured by the woman mixing the leaven in the three measures of meal.

COLORING PAGE: The Parable of Leaven

THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD

The “treasure” [hidden in a field] symbolizes the Divine truth that is in the Word....
“To sell all things whatsoever that he had and buy the field” symbolizes to set aside what is one’s own and to acquire for oneself the Divine truth.
(see *Apocalypse Explained* 840:10)

We take our spiritual treasures with us—all the goods and truths that have become an integral part of our lives. That is why the Lord tells us to focus on spiritual treasures rather than worldly treasures. This parable pictures a person who finds the precious truths of the Word and recognizes that these are what are truly valuable!

PROJECT: Treasures in Heaven (ages 6-10)

On one chest, write what you would put in a treasure box for life here on earth. In the other treasure chest, write what you would want to pack in a treasure box for heaven.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Earthly vs. Heavenly Treasures by the Rev. David Roth

PROJECT: The Word Is Like a Mine of Gold and Silver (ages 10-14)

How is the Word like a mine with gold and silver within? Or like a treasure chest filled with precious gems? Here are 2 projects which illustrate this concept.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

The “one precious pearl” symbolizes the acknowledgment of the Lord.
(*Apocalypse Explained* 863)

Like the pearl of great price, acknowledging the Lord and understanding His ways is the most precious and beautiful thing in our lives.

LISTEN TO: “The Pearl of Great Price” by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

READ: “Like a Merchant Seeking Pearls” by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

“We have to be able to recognize the pearl of great price when we find it and be willing to forsake all else for its sake. To know the source of happiness is a great thing; to be willing to sacrifice all else in the quest for it is even greater.”

COLORING PAGE: The Pearl of Great Price

FOR REFLECTION: The One Pearl of Great Price (*teens and adults*)

How does a pearl help us think about the oneness of God?

THE DRAGNET

“The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea
and gathered some of every kind...” (Matthew 13”47).

The Lord wants to gather us all into heaven. He sees each and every one of us as a potential angel. But He gives us the choice of living in heaven or hell. The fish that are gathered into containers are like the people who allow Him to lead them to heaven.

COLORING PAGE: The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like a Net

PROJECT: The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like a Dragnet

Here are two projects illustrating this concept. One is a net filled with fish to picture the way the Lord wants to gather us all into heaven. The other (more advanced) project illustrates another meaning for this parable—the idea that a person is a mixture of good and bad qualities and habits. This project involves writing good qualities or habits on some fish and bad qualities or habits on the others and then putting the good fish into containers.