Jesus Unfiltered (Parables) **wk 1 – Living in Graceland**

**Jesus - perfect story teller. He gew He gave us the most famous stories in history. Christian or not you've probably heard them - good Samaritan or prodigal son - 2000 yr old stories that live on today**

**Number 1 way Jesus taught - parables. 1/3 of teachings - short stories / tell of heaven / hell / and how God views life. Want to know what the Kingdom's like? - ask Jesus – it’s unfiltered**

**One of Jesus most often stated phrases often referring to parables - Matthew 11:15 (ESV) - He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (Translation - Do you understand the words comin’ out of my mouth)**

**What we find is they don't always make sense –**

**We find God's kingdom is diff from ours - it's down is up**

**Through parables - Jesus, this strange King - talks about an even stranger Kingdom - He talked about something they never expected**

**Parables illustrate a big truths about the kingdom of God**.

* **What they expected: An earthly kingdom**

**Isaiah 9:6-7 / Luke 1:32-33/ Matthew 2:1-2/ 4:17-25**

**They expected a revolutionary to over throw Rome –**

**Just 150 yrs earlier they were convinced Judas Maccabee was the Messiah - led 7yr war on Roman culture - no kingdom (Hanukkah)**

**Even Jesus disciples didn't get it - until after the resurrection.**

**They were convinced and were looking for an earthly kingdom**

* **What they got: A spiritual kingdom**

**Matthew 5:3 & 10/ 19:14/ 20:20-28/ Luke 17:20-21**

**The diff: An earthly kingdom is acquired and maintained by force**

**That's how it has been done since the start of every civilization- control**

**People fear and resist that kind of authority**

**The diff: An spiritual kingdom is acquired and held by service and love**

**Serving others before yourself - loving those who hate and attack you**

**People follow that kind of authority**

**We tend to lean on power and politics to bring or extend the kingdom... But God's kingdom is upside down.**

**What is the deal with the kingdom? Is it now or is it future? Yes & yes**

* **The kingdom is a right now and – a not yet kingdom**

**Jesus said it is here right now - (Lu 17:20-21,11:20, Matt 12:28)**

**Jesus said it was something that will come in the future (Lu 19:11-12)**

**It's a mystery - the kingdom is in us and it is still to come. Parables are Jesus way of explaining it – unfiltered - but they left many confused**

**It's no wonder... check this out... Mark 4:10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, " 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" (uh? Isn't that the point...? That is weird.)**

**We know: He wants those who do not know him, to know him - our sin condemns us - He loves us so much he paid for our sin**

* **Parables were given to both conceal truth and reveal the truth**

**Those who are called to know and really want to know the truth - will find understanding in me... those who want stuff - will be confused**

**We are prone to seek the good stuff from God and ignore the tough stuff - Jesus often thinned the heard w/ unfiltered truth. It separated those who wanted a slice of God (feel good) and those who hungered after God (seeking after His kingdom and righteousness - Mt 6:33)**

**Two responses to the parables...**

**\* I heard a great story today (w/ their own meaning)**

**\* I kinda get it... tell me get more... Jesus help me out here...**

**Mark 4:33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.**

**Preachers are told to preach like Jesus - use stories. But he actually used stories so that few could understand.**

**Two things to understand about the Parables**

* **They're often mistreated and misapplied - We need to read them the way they would have heard them - from their view - we're not to pour our meaning into them, but pour God's meaning out.**
* **They're not intended to preach doctrine - they’re not allegories where every detail means something, but a big picture of kingdom**

**Some dissect them and create strange beliefs about God from them... Parables are snapshots of God's perspectives**

**They're meant to capture attention, connect, & transform our thinking**

**They reveal truth to those who are hungry for God and hide it from those who are not**

**So let's dive into a strange little parable... that talks about a place called Graceland - Graceland? Tenn. (Pic)**

**Matthew 19 - rich young man came to Jesus to join the group - Imagine disciples were yeah! God is proving $ - better budget!**

**Fortunately Jesus told him something he doesn't tell everyone... 19:21 Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (You can imagine the disciples were pretty confused by this... Whaa???)**

**They started to panic. What about us - who can ever be saved? Jesus responds - don't worry everyone who gives up anything for me will receive 100 times as much in eternity...**

**I imagine they started calculating what they gave up (boat, job)**

**But Jesus says - let me finish... 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. (confused? Let me explain and launches into a parable)**

**Matthew 20:1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. (6AM) 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. (A full day's wage - that is good money and a good job) 3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ (I'll take care of you... no set price - any works better than no work - so they go) 5 So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon (11 hours later - one hour left) he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ 7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ 8 “When evening came, (6PM - quittin' time) the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’**

**Line up a row of 5 people (6, 9, 12, 3, 5) It's pay day. Pay them**

**What would you expect to receive? If the first or last one there**

**9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. (woo hoo - for one hour - yeah!) 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. (They’re calculating what's coming their way... I'm getting a new chariot) But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ (come on - we deserve more!)**

**13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ (the key to this parable) 16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”**

**Jesus was giving his disciples - a picture of God's goodness & grace**

**\*This is not about last minute conversions... we get bummed out, not fair, I served God yrs and this guy on his death bed... get's the same? Unfair! (unless it's someone we love and care for... right?)**

**Funny how this reveals our sinful nature. If I get or someone I love gets a great deal, God's good - awesome! But them - Un-cool God.**

**(Notice - They accepted the offer as soon as they heard it, though late)**

**The parable is actually about Graceland- Jesus unfiltered view of Grace**

**Let me explain Grace: Grace is God’s unmerited favor**

**You don't deserve it, can't earn it, nor can you acquire it on merit**

**Ephesians 2:8 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Some feel that means we can "nod to God and live like hell") Thinking because it's by grace - its something for nothing - that's known as antinomianism - that is not it.**

**Eph 2:8 - tells us we can't take credit for this; it is God gracious offer -Grace is getting something far beyond value, worth & what we deserve**

**Jesus says I'll forgive you, adopt you, transform your life, you can spend eternity w/ me (but it's not a nod to God) Jesus asks for something... Your life (trust me w/ it - give it to me)**

**Imagine you're on death row - you deserve it - someone says I'll get you out of prison, give you health, wealth, & you'll live forever - all you got to do is trust and follow me the rest of your life - sound good?**

**That is unmerited favor... that is grace (Matt 16:24, 10:38, Luke 9:23, 14:27, Mark 8:34, John 21:22, 1 Peter 2:21) Jesus often asked - you want life – you want the kingdom? Die to yourself and follow me - that's what Jesus offers**

**Grace - getting God's unmerited favor and invite to receive something far beyond our value, worth and what we deserve.**

**This parable is about GRACELAND – The home of the king**

**(Titus 3:7, 2 Thess 2:16, 1 Peter 4:10, Heb 4:16, John 1:14, Ro 5:1-2, Eph 2:4-9)**

**Those who are respond to God's grace and are in the kingdom of God**

1. **In Graceland - Everyone gets more than they deserve**

**A worker who started at 6AM is still getting more than if he had no work at all. To get work that was Grace. To be invited to work that was grace**

**We are in Texas... Imagine God's kingdom is Hawaii - all we got to do is walk to the coast and swim there... Some will get farther than others - some to the Rockies, the desert - maybe a couple miles out to sea - But no matter how great an athlete - no one can do it, we will all fail. Some will get farther than others... but no one can do it. Some will get more help than others... but we all will need life saving help at some point.**

**Everyone of us have failed and fallen short of God's standard**

**Some more than others... so some of you know great grace.**

**But we all still fail miserably - and all perish in our sea of sin.**

**Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. (as Christ determines - he hands it out)**

**Don't know about you: I never got drunk, high, robbed a store, beat my wife, abused my kids, or took a life... but I am a wretched man - deeply in need of Grace - sinking out at sea. Thank God for grace**

**Amazing grace how sweet the sound... Unfiltered truth - some get more grace... but we all get an amazing amount of grace...**

1. **In Graceland - Some get an even better deal**

**This is where it get's hard - Remember it's grace land - not merit land**

* + **In merit land - you get what you earn / In grace land - we all get what we don't deserve and some get more**

**In John 21:15-23 - Peter do you love (3x) – Peter says, “yes, I like you” / Jesus tells (Peter's) his like will grow to a great love - to the point where he will die for Jesus. Just then John walks up - 21:21 When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” 22 Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”**

**We often do the same - When we get a sense of what God wants from us... we think - okay God - what about him/ Her? John definitely got a better deal than Peter - But in heaven Peter realized they both got a great deal of grace.**

1. **In Graceland - No one gets Shortchanged**

**He gave exactly what he said he would give the first guy**

**No one will be ever able to say to God - you ripped me off**

**God always does what He says - always keeps His word to you**

1. **You'll never discover grace land - infected with envy**

**Pro 14:30, 1 Peter 2:1, 1 Thess 5:18 , 1 Cor 10:1-11, Heb 12:15**

**Beware of the cancer of envy**

**Understand this - All envy is caused by comparison - Comparing our blessing to someone else's. It not because we got a bad deal, but because they got a better deal. Well God, what about that? I want it too**

**Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; (make sure no one misses this - that unmerited favor is handed out by God) that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled**

**Facebook Envy - depression – comparing, stalking & digging thru photos... when you have been bless with a great family.**

**There are times when we won't understand what's going on in life - that's not envy - that's frustration. Envy is (coke bottle vid)**

**Envy eats away at gratitude... (Pro 14:30 - envy rots the bones) we will never be free - we will never understand grace - without gratitude.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 - Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

**Some of you are battling this right now... families torn apart over an inheritance - lack of fairness at work - siblings at home - or your lot in life... comparing yourself does it...**

**This parable is not about the other guy - this is about us!**

**Jesus says – salvation / the kingdom is about grace land not merit land**

**Grace is found / the kingdom is found / true life is found when we surrender this life - when we die to our self and surrender**

**Surrender - what are you holding on to?**

* **My stuff (things) - My status (what people think) -**
* **My sin (habits, temptations) - My self (your life your future)**

**Jesus unfiltered - Luke 9: 23 Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?**

**Prayer - God's grace is here for you... to forgive, to adopt, to transform... but one condition... give me your life.**