

## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

In Luke there are 44 references to the Kingdom, demonstrating that this is a powerful theme in the Gospel. As we review our understanding of God's approachability, His healing and reassuring presence, and His patience in changing our character and our thinking on our journey together, we then begin to understand Him as King.

He is not a **King** that lords it over His subjects, rather He provides a free space where He **cares** for us. First we must acknowledge our lostness without Him. We need to come to Him as a rebellious son returning home. This Kingdom is very different from any contentious political system we have known. Rather, it is a place where the **weak** have priority. The prodigal son, the naïve about money, the beggars, the ill, the widows and oppressed, the less than respectable, the children, the poor, the blind, and social outcasts—they are the ones who populate the Kingdom. It is not the perfect or the powerful or even the seemingly spiritual that are the guaranteed members of the Kingdom, it is the poor and weak. This should reassure us greatly that we can take shelter in this place of God's love.

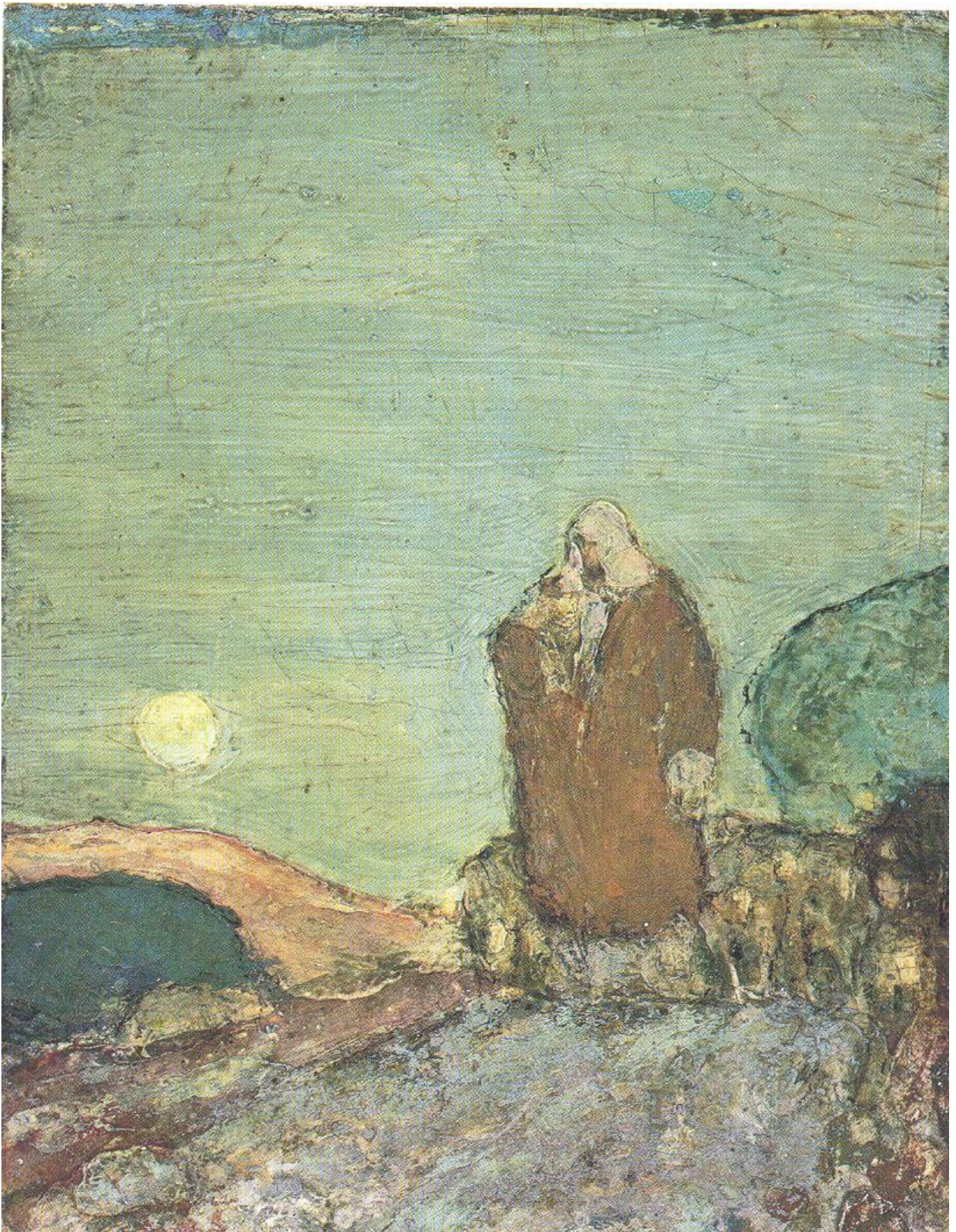
In this section there are nine references to the Kingdom and they help give us Jesus' vision of the characteristics of His Kingdom. Jesus identifies John the Baptist's preaching as the turning point when the Kingdom was announced. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom is with us, but it is not something visible. He says that the Kingdom belongs to children. In fact, to be part of the Kingdom, we must have child-like faith. In contrast, the rich have a much harder time entering the Kingdom. Those who choose poverty or are willing to sacrifice their personal relationships will be rewarded for these choices to advance the Kingdom.

From early in Scripture God shows preference for the weak. He acts on behalf of the Israelite slaves, and liberates them. This Exodus creates a fundamental motif that is brought to a complete conclusion in Christ's death and resurrection. Christ acts on behalf of all who are weak and liberates us. And we, just as the Israelites, are given the opportunity to create an alternative society, one where God and His justice rule. In this the boundaries between rich and poor, weak and strong, and privileged and oppressed are blurred, evened out and eliminated. **Justice and equality** rule.

By extension we, too, become not only the weak who are cared for, we also become those who reach out to care for the weak. Rather than scrambling to become powerful so that we can help rule the world properly, we do as Christ did—we welcome the marginalized into our lives. This Kingdom of the broken becomes the Kingdom of the healing. We continue to hope for the day when it is the Kingdom of the whole.



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Gazing at Christ: Meditations on the Gospel of Luke ~ Elaine Elliott



## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

### Chapter 15: At Home in the Kingdom

**15:1-7**      **At Home in the Kingdom: the sheep found**  
*The Kingdom means we are found by God.*

Classy people wonder why  
But Jesus loves me, this I know  
He doesn't care what's wrong with me,  
For the Bible tells me so.

When I was lost and all alone  
He looked until he found me  
And picked me up to take me home  
And kept me safe as I can be.

*Free Verse*

**15:8-10**      **At Home in the Kingdom: the coin found**  
*The Kingdom is something for us to seek and find.*

When I was lost and all alone  
He carefully looked throughout the dark  
And found me with His light  
And put on me His owner's mark.

*Free Verse*

**15:11-32**      **At Home in the Kingdom: the son found**  
*The Kingdom is like a father receiving back a wayward son.*

When I was lost and all alone  
He saw me struggling home  
And rushed right out to meet me  
So I no longer need to roam.

*Free Verse*

## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

### Chapter 16: Holiness in the Kingdom

#### 16:1-18 **Holiness in the Kingdom: Freed from sin**

*We must be responsible in small things  
to be entrusted with greater ones.*

Two opposing views on money  
Either “it’s all about me”  
Or “it’s about God”  
Either shady dealings  
Or transparent and wise use of funds  
Either competition to get the most  
Or eagerness to give as much as possible

I’m amazed about billions stolen or mismanaged  
Enron  
World Com  
Tyco  
Iraqi reconstruction  
San Diego pension funds

But aren’t we tempted to awe and wonder  
On how they pulled this off?

Jesus gives us a portrait of a shady character  
And the boss who admires how cleverly he was swindled  
But he tells us as Kingdom people  
That we need two things in our use of money:  
Integrity and generosity

*Free Verse*

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**16:19-31**     **Holiness in the Kingdom: Freed from selfishness**  
*We must share God's love for the poor to be like Him.*

Context is everything.  
The best reading of  
"The Rich Man and Lazarus"  
I've ever heard  
Was on the Mexican side of the border.  
We stood where the metal fence  
    Goes into the Pacific Ocean.  
San Diego can be seen in the distance.  
    "Remember that in your lifetime  
    you had everything you wanted,  
    and he had nothing."  
Implied—you didn't hate him, you didn't intend any harm  
You were just indifferent

They say it's the only land border  
Where the first world and third world meet.  
Some call it a raw and open wound.  
Over 3,000 have died trying to cross from '94 to '04.  
    "There is a great chasm separating us.  
    Anyone who wanted to cross over to you  
    From here is stopped at its edge,  
    And no one there can cross over to us."  
That's certainly the theory of US/Mexican relationships today.  
But read the story.  
It might be unpleasant to be  
    At an uncrossable border  
    In the afterlife.

*Free Verse*

## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

### Chapter 17: Healed in the Kingdom

#### 17:1-10 **Healed in the Kingdom: Peaceful hearts**

*Jesus teaches on forgiveness and faith.*

Florescent breakers—  
Ocean waves sparkling  
Flashes of bright green and blue.

Apples picked today  
Crushed into cider—  
Warm and satisfying drink.

A light in the snow  
Green pines standing tall—  
Wood burning in a cabin.

Fields of lavender  
Delicate oil flasks—  
Distilled essence of healing scent.

Everyday nature  
Opens my blind eyes—  
Teaches faith, humility.

*Hokku*

#### 17:11-19 **Healed in the Kingdom: Purified hearts**

*Jesus heals ten men with leprosy.*

The people of Jesus' day had high expectations  
But He didn't disappoint.  
He didn't just purify water, He turned it to wine.  
He didn't just multiply oil, He fed four and five thousand  
    With multiplied bread and fishes.  
He didn't just cause iron to float, He walked on water.  
He didn't just raise a child to life,  
    He raised a boy, a girl, and a man.  
And He didn't just heal one leper, He healed ten!

*Free Verse*

## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

**17:20-37**    **Healed in the Kingdom: Prepared hearts**  
*Jesus warns of suffering at the judgment.*

Men live in peace of mind on the open pastures  
And sleep in the woods. And our King so tall  
Stands at the gate, receiving to His feast,  
Eyes flashing joyfully at all.  
His robe has a golden sash across His chest.  
His hair flashes golden in the sun  
A beautiful bride now stands next to Him,  
Their long waiting time now finally done.  
Her grace and delicacy as she smiles  
At each one, remind them of His strength.  
His walk with her is stately and slow  
As He strides the long hall's length.  
The glory of the King is flashing bright.  
And His bride shines silver in His light.

*Sonnet*

## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

### Chapter 18: Habits of the Kingdom

#### 18:1-8 Habits of the Kingdom: Faith

*A story to encourage us that God answers prayer.*

I know godless people who  
Are self-centered  
Above it all, looking down and  
Have contempt for everyone.

I know widows  
Who appeal for justice  
Against those who killed their husbands  
Stole their property  
And violated them

I know justice systems  
Where you're guilty until proven innocent  
Where you can't get on the docket  
Where people know bribes and false witnesses  
Will affect the outcome  
Where the judges have to flee the country  
When their lives are threatened

But I know God  
Who hears the cry of the oppressed  
Who will bring justice  
To those who plead with him

I see an injustice—  
I ask you, God, to set it to right.  
You have told us to trust you  
As a perfectly righteous judge.  
We can't know the perfectly fair outcome.  
But we can trust you.

I've seen God act  
To demote someone who acted unfairly  
To humble the proud  
To allow suffering for one who caused others to suffer  
To strip away the image and expose the truth  
To exalt the humble.

*Free Verse*



## The Covert Kingdom: Luke 15-18

### 18:9-14 Habits of the Kingdom: Forgiveness

*A story of the proud Pharisee and a penitent tax collector.*

A wealthy businessman was praying and thanking God that he was honest, respectable, and a pillar in his church. He was particularly grateful not to be like the tax lawyer implicated in a recent corporate scandal, praying nearby at church. But in God's eyes it was the lawyer who went home justified, not the pillar of the church.

### 18:15-17 Habits of the Kingdom: Fellowship

*Our faith should be that of small children.*

Jesus said

Jesus spoke

“Let the children come to me

Let the little ones now come

Don't stop them!

Don't prevent them!

For in the world where I am King

In the Kingdom of our God

These little ones will own it all

These little ones are strong

I tell you

I assure you

Anyone who lacks their faith

All who lack their kind of faith

Will never manage to get in

Will never find a way to enter

My world of love

The Kingdom of our God.”

*Mayan Couplets*

### 18:18-30 Habits of the Kingdom: Freedom

*We must set aside our desire for wealth to enter the Kingdom.*

“We want justice for the poor, not charity.” – Bono

JUSTICE

Just rights and responsibilities

Unity in families and communities

Solidarity with the suffering

Treating the poor and vulnerable well

Intrinsic worth of each person

Care of creation

Economies serving people

“...an historic pact for compassion and justice...” –ONE campaign

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### PARTNERS

Poverty eradicated  
Aids and malaria combated  
Reproductive health  
Trade justice  
No gender (or race) bias  
Education for all  
Reduced child mortality  
Sustainable environment

Lord, we ask for your charity for our failure to act.  
Spare us your justice.

*Acrostic*

**18:31-34**

### **Habits of the Kingdom: Faithfulness**

*Jesus warns his friends of his impending death.*

The disciples couldn't seem to grasp  
That Jesus would die  
Much less that they would die  
Peter upside-down on a cross  
James beheaded by Herod  
Simon sawed in two  
Thaddeus clubbed to death  
Bartholomew flayed  
Matthew crucified and his head severed  
Thomas stoned  
They went all out on James the son of Alphaeus:  
Pushed off the temple  
Stoned  
Beaten with a bat  
AND cut in half  
Philip scourged, stoned, crucified  
And run through with a spear  
John was the only one who died a natural death  
Thanks to several miracles.  
I wonder if I'm the only one who doesn't appreciate them enough?

*Free Verse*

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**18:35-43**    **Habits of the Kingdom: Fantastic gifts!**  
*Jesus heals a blind beggar.*

When I first understood  
    Jesus heals today, I was excited  
And since he did say  
    “Your faith has healed you.”  
    I had faith that he’d heal my sight.  
In fact, I quit wearing my contact lenses for a while.  
I’m sure God was wise NOT to answer my request for 20/20 vision  
I would have taken pride in the efficacy of my faith  
Or worse, imagined I controlled things.  
So besides preventing me from becoming even more vain and silly  
God let me know that he’s in charge  
    Of invention, creativity, innovation.  
As far as He was concerned,  
    My glasses and contacts  
    Were a perfectly acceptable answer.  
Pretty self-centered when there are people  
    Who would be delighted to get donated glasses.  
The creative, gifted minds who have made these things  
    had already shown faith.

*Free Verse*