

What are some things that happen so **gradually** we might miss it?

- Trees growing
- We might not notice it is happening

What are some things that happen so **suddenly** we can't react?

- Car crash
- Once it starts happening, we can't do anything about it

Sometimes God's work is **gradual**

→ Might we be missing it?

Sometimes God's work is **sudden!**

→ Are we ready for it?

Prayer: Help us see God's work and join in it

1

Gradually and Suddenly

Luke 17:20–37



bib.ly/Lu17.NIV

tiny.cc/cmchandouts

2

A Brief History of Time

Creation: a very good world

Fall: **Kingdom of this world** (separate from God, so it is dying)

Redemption: **Kingdom of God** (a perfect and more glorious world)

- **Promise & preparation:** The Old Testament

- **Gradually:** Mustard seed, yeast in dough

- Jesus: obscure, ordinary, suffering & death
- Church (Jesus' body): small, ordinary, with trouble

- **Suddenly:** Radical displacement by Jesus' Kingdom

- The Son of Man's return (Jesus)
- Life with God in unhindered beauty and flourishing
- Or judgment

3

Gradually

Luke 17:20-21 Perhaps an accusation

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

like a mustard seed buried in the ground

like yeast hidden in the dough

Luke 13:18-21

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Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing

- Yet easily overlooked
 - Jesus was overlooked...
 - born as an **ordinary** infant
 - who grew up as an **ordinary** boy
 - in an **ordinary** family
 - in an **ordinary** town
 - died a **horrible** death, without public victory
 - We can overlook the Kingdom of God...

22-25: • amid the joys and challenges of life

26-29: • **a temptation for those who have much to enjoy**

30-37: **in life is not to even look for it**

5

Suddenly*Luke 17:22-25*

Then he said to his **disciples**, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be **like the lightning**, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. **But first** he must **suffer** many things and **be rejected** by this generation.

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Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing

22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly

- It won't be possible to miss it when it happens!
- Before then, there will be trouble
 - The Son of Man must suffer
 - For disciples too—at different times in different ways... (you'll long for His return but won't see it)
- Don't be deceived
 - You won't need to go someplace or to some special people or teacher to find it

26-29: • **A temptation especially for those**

30-37: **who have much trouble in life**

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Luke 17:26-29

“Just as it was in the days of **Noah**, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

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The Days of Noah

The people were very evil (“every inclination of their thoughts”)

- “So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created...’” *Genesis 6:5-8*

God called Noah to be rescued

- “So God said to Noah, ‘Make yourself an ark ...’ Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” *Genesis 6:13-22*

Noah told the people to turn to God (for 50-75 years)

- God “protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness” *2 Peter 2:5*

The day came when the door was shut and they were judged

- “Then the Lord shut him in the ark.... Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind.” *Genesis 7:13-21*

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Luke 17:26-29

“Just as it was in the days of **Noah**, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

Their problem:

- **Jesus didn't speak of their evil**
- **Rather: They focused on good pleasures and good relationships instead of hearing God's warning to prepare for the radical change that was coming**

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Luke 17:26-29

“It was the same in the days of **Lot**. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

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The Days of Lot**The people were very evil**

- Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous...” Genesis 18:20-21

God called Lot to be rescued

- “Get them out of here...we are going to destroy this place” Genesis 19:12-13

Lot told the people to be rescued

- “Lot said, ‘Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!’ But they thought he was joking.” Genesis 19:14

Destruction came suddenly, including Lot’s wife

- “Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah.... But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” Genesis 19:24-25

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Luke 17:26-29

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Their problem:

- **Jesus didn't speak of their evil**
- **Rather: They focused on good pleasures and good productivity instead of hearing God's warning to prepare for the radical change that was coming**

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Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing

22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly

26-29: Final Judgment will come suddenly

- Jesus didn't talk (here) about people's evil
- He warned about their **focus on the normal and good things of life instead of hearing God's warning** about the radical change that would come suddenly

30-37:

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Luke 17:30-37

“It will be just like this on **the day the Son of Man** is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot’s wife! **Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.** I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left.” [36]

“Where, Lord?” they asked. He replied, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.”

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Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God’s Kingdom is already present and growing

22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly

26-29: Final judgment will come suddenly

30-37: The choice we all make: which kingdom is our focus?

- **Looking back** (kingdom of this world)
or **looking forward** (Kingdom of God)
- We either have a life that is...
 - focused on **the existing world**
 - or focused on **the coming Kingdom of God**
 - “If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.”

Hebrews 11:15

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Luke 17:20-37

20-21: God's Kingdom is already present and growing

22-25: The Son of Man will come suddenly and boldly

26-29: Final judgment will come suddenly

30-37: The choice we all make: which kingdom is our focus?

- Only the Kingdom of God will continue and thrive
- **Because there will be no ruler except God**
- What we have chosen will be final in that day

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30-37: The choice we all make: which kingdom is our focus?

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The Big Idea

Christ's Kingdom is already here
growing **gradually**
hidden in ordinariness and trouble
and will come **suddenly**, completely, and irresistibly
with judgment or blessing forever

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When things grow gradually...
we can easily stop
paying attention

Especially when we have
pleasure, peace, power, and
other advantages, ...

“The hour has already
come for you to **wake up**
from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now
than when we first believed.” *Romans 13:11*



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When things happen suddenly...
there is no time to react!

We are at risk of being caught
unprepared



“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that
this day should **surprise you like a thief.**” *1 Thessalonians 5:4*

21

The Big Idea

Christ's Kingdom is already here
growing gradually
hidden in ordinariness and trouble
and will come suddenly, completely, and irresistibly
with judgment or blessing forever

Jesus warned:

We can so easily miss the gradual growth
and we are at risk of missing His sudden arrival

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Application for the Kingdom of God

*How are we to live well during its gradual growth
and to be ready for its sudden arrival...*

**Treasure the Kingdom of God every day
even while we live well in the kingdom of the world**

- **Don't "set your heart" on things in this world** from Luke 12:22-31
 - Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.... And **do not set your heart on [them]; do not worry about it.** For the pagan world runs after all such things, and **your Father knows that you need them.** But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

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Application for the Kingdom of God

*How are we to live well during its gradual growth
and to be ready for its sudden arrival...*

**Treasure the Kingdom of God every day
even while we live well in the kingdom of the world**

- **Don't "set your heart" on things in this world**
- **It doesn't mean:**
 - Live foolishly, don't plan, ignore the joys and concerns of this world, ...
- **It does mean:**
 - Don't let them be the focus of your life

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Application for the Kingdom of God

*How are we to live well during its gradual growth
and to be ready for its sudden arrival...*

**Treasure the Kingdom of God every day
even while we live well in the kingdom of the world**

- **Set your heart on the Kingdom of God**

from Luke 12:22-31

- Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear.... And do not set your heart on [them]; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. **But seek his kingdom,** and these things will be given to you as well.

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Application for the Kingdom of God

*How are we to live well during its gradual growth
and to be ready for its sudden arrival...*

**Treasure the Kingdom of God every day
even while we live well in the kingdom of the world**

- **Set your heart on the Kingdom of God**

- **It doesn't mean:**

- Ignore things in this world as you focus on heaven

- **It does mean:**

- Be most concerned about the things that concern God most
- Jesus is a perfect model!

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How do we know what our heart is set on?

- **What do you treasure?**
 - What are our biggest worries and fears and cause for anger?
 - What do we put most of our 'disposable' time, money, and attention?
 - This is probably what our heart is set on
- **Jesus warned: good things in this life took people away from seeking His Kingdom**
 - Life's necessities and pleasures: food and drink
 - Relationships: friendship, family, marriage
 - Career and possessions: buying, selling, farming
 - People's opinion of us
 - Visible success
 - Being treated well or justly or fairly

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How do we know what our heart is set on?

- **WHOM do you treasure? WHO is your King?**
 - Whose opinion of you means most?
 - To whom do you turn in trouble or pain or grief or loss?
 - To whom do you turn in joy?
 - Whose guidance and teaching means most to you?
- **Other answers we often give...**
 - Ourselves: find strength, guidance, comfort, hope within
 - Someone else: parent, spouse, mentor, ...
 - Something else: success, money, philosophy, politics, science, pleasure, work, substance, bitterness, grief, ...

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Application for the Kingdom of God

- **Treasure our new King: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**
 - Daily follow Him
 - While the Kingdom is growing gradually
 - So we will be fully prepared when the Kingdom appears suddenly
- **Jesus warns us...**
 - we can so easily have our hearts focused on the things of this life
 - that we will miss both the gradual growing and the sudden arrival of the Kingdom of God to our great loss
- **Jesus invites everyone to enter His Kingdom today through Him**

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And this is the King we worship...

For *God the Father*

has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14

**Let us worship and love and follow our King
while His Kingdom is growing gradually
until the day it appears suddenly and with great joy!**

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