

“Wow, You Really Think to High Heaven!”:
Exploring the Secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven

By Rev. Elana Keppel Levy
2019

Cast of Characters

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| - Pastor Lucas | - Camelina | - King's Servant |
| - Alex (Treasure) | - Camelo | - Humblest Child |
| - Jordan (Food) | - Baker | - Children |
| - Casey (Literal) | - Baker's Helpers | - Devil |
| - Treasure Hunter | - King of Wedding | - Jesus |
| - Sports announcer | Banquet | |

(Enter Alex, Jordan, and Casey)

Casey: It's time for Sunday School already. Where's our teacher?

Jordan: I dunno. Who cares? Did you see all the donuts and cookies downstairs? *(eats noisily)*

Alex: Jordan! You are not the Cookie Monster! Chew your food, would ya?

Jordan: *(overly polite)* Oh, Alex! Have I offended thee? Let me take wee, dainty bites...*(nibbles)*

Casey: Knock it off! Someone's coming...

(Enter Pastor Lucas)

Alex: Give me some of that! *(Grabs a donut)*

Lucas: Alright, enough of that. There's plenty of donuts for everybody.

Alex: *(at Casey)* Arrr...

Lucas: Today we're going to talk about the "Kingdom of Heaven," which is sometimes called the "Kingdom of God" in the Bible. Jesus sent all his apostles out, "to proclaim the kingdom of God."¹ And every time we pray the Lord's prayer, we pray, "your kingdom come. Your will be done."²

Casey: So, what are we doing this morning?

Lucas: I want you to get into the Bible – really dive in there! Find out everything you can about the Kingdom of Heaven and the background and the hope and the expectation. You know...there's a lot you can learn if you remember to ask questions. And the world of the New Testament is filled with fascinating things. Did you know that the Ancient Romans ate weird food like stork, roast parrot, and flamingo?³ They were great builders, too. Some of the bridges that they built 2.000 years ago are still in use today!⁴ ... And did you know that sometimes the Romans would flood the whole Colosseum so that they could bring in boats and have an audience watch a ship battle – on land!⁵ AND...*(continues to speak softly and very animated)*

Jordan: *(softly, to the other classmates)* Uh oh...this sounds like a long one.

Casey: We never should've let him get started about Rome. Now he'll never stop!

Jordan: What do we do?

Casey: He's a pastor – we have to be polite. Everybody – smile and nod, smile and nod. *(Jordan and Casey smile and nod)*

Alex: *(to Lucas)* Excuse me!

Lucas: *(stops abruptly)* Oh, yes? What?

Alex: We were talking about the Kingdom of Heaven – not Rome.

Lucas: Well, you know what they say “all roads lead to Rome.”

Jordan: *(sighs loudly)* And we kinda need to get started on this...

Lucas: Right. I'll leave you all alone. I trust that you won't just read the Bible – you'll listen to it, too. Toodles! *(Lucas exits.)*

Casey: Listen to the Bible? What was he even talking about?

Jordan: Who knows? Let's just see what we can find out.

Lucas: *(pops his head in the door)* Don't forget to use the concordance to help you get started! *(Lucas exits)*

Alex: What's a concordance?

Casey: It's a big, fat book that tells you where to find words in the Bible.

Jordan: What? Isn't there an app for that?

Casey: I dunno...probably. Let's just look up “kingdom.” I mean, how many times could that be in the New Testament anyhow? *(flips open concordance. The all gaze into it together and are shocked and upset.)*

Alex: 163 times? 163 times?! We are not looking up 163 different verses for Sunday School. I wouldn't even do that for regular school!

Jordan: Well, we probably don't have to look up all of them. Just enough so we get a good idea of what the Bible says.

Alex: Alright, I'll go first. (*walks over to the pulpit*) Matthew 13:44, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field..."⁶

(*Treasure Hunter enters*)

Treasure Hunter: Who be ye?

Casey: Who be we? We be Jordan, Casey, and Alex (*points to each one*). Who be ye...I mean, who are you? Where did you come from?

Treasure Hunter: I be searchin' for buried treasure. I'd give me left eye for treasure beyond measure.

Jordan: (*points to his eye patch*) Um...so you still have an eye under your eye patch?

Treasure Hunter: Aye, there's an eye. I just thought it made me look tough.

Alex: Oh, you look plenty tough. Guys, do you realize who this guy is? It's a pirate! The kingdom of heaven is like a pirate hunting for treasure. That's so awesome! (*grabs a sword from the treasure hunter and points it at Jordan*) Arr! Give me your lunch money, ya lousy landlubber!

Casey: That...doesn't sound right to me. Isn't this a parable from Jesus? Let me see what else it says. (*Goes over to the pulpit.*) "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."⁷

Treasure Hunter: The greatest treasure in the world is mine, but ye have to go hunting to find it.

Jordan: So, Jesus says we should be chasing after gold and jewels?

Alex: (*pushes Casey out of the pulpit*) Yeah, see! In the very next verse it says "the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."⁸

Treasure Hunter: This pearl means more to me than anything. Mind you don't lose your treasure map. (*Treasure Hunter exits*)

Jordan: So the Bible is pointing us to buried treasure? We'll be rich! Keep reading! Keep reading!

Alex: Guys, I have always wanted to be a pirate and take what I want and swim through my riches like Scrooge McDuck.

Casey: But look! Over here, Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God."⁹

Jordan: (*groans*) Does it really say, “poor”?

Casey: (*points*) Yep, right here.

Alex: Well, I don’t believe you. Besides, I had two verses and you only have one. Plus, someone magically came out of the scriptures to tell me I was right. What do you have? (*Alex and Jordan look accusingly at Casey*)

Casey: (*moves back into the pulpit*) Look right here in Matthew 19, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”¹⁰

(*Camelina and Camelo come to the center of the chancel and the Sports Announcer stands to the side.*)

Sports Announcer: Well, ladies and gentlemen, it’s a beautiful day in Judea for the annual camel competition. We have two fine contenders and it oughta be a pretty exciting match. Let’s go meet them. Camelina, you are our returning champion. How does it feel to compete with your championship belt on the table?

Camelina: (*stretching*) Oh, don’t worry about my pants falling down. I’m wearing my belt.

Sports Announcer: Do you think you have anything to worry about from Camelo over there?

Camelina: No, I just take it one game at a time; try to make my parents proud. Hi, Momma!

Sports Announcer: Well, that’s nice. Now, let’s meet the challenger, Camelo.

Camelo: (*grabs the mic*) What can I say? I’m in it to win it! Go big or go home! Camelina, I’m coming for you!

Camelina: (*grabs the mic*) You’re on, bumpy!

Sports Announcer: (*grabs back the mic*) And this belongs to me...Okay, you two. Save it for the match. (*Sports Announcer goes back to the side.*) Yes, I believe we’re about to get started here, the field is almost set up. (*Helpers hold two narrow arches in front of Camelina and Camelo. Camelina and Camelo pick up many large bags.*) Now they’re strapping on every one of their earthly possessions to see if they can take it with them. And the starter says 3, 2, 1 – they’re off!

(*Camelina and Camelo try to move through the archways but cannot. They struggle and stare at each other competitively.*)

Jordan: Okay, what exactly are we looking at here?

Casey: Well, I think the camels are trying to get through the eye of the needle.

Alex: Push ‘em back, push ‘em back, wayyyy back!

Jordan: (*Hold up letter “D” and a fence*) Defense! Defense! Defense

Casey: I’m not sure that advice is gonna help either one of them.

Alex: Come on! Where’s your team spirit? Go Camelo!

Jordan: Are you nuts? Camelina all the way!

Casey: (*walks over to the camels*) Excuse me!

Sports Announcer: What is happening? A strange person wearing ridiculous clothes has appeared out of nowhere and seems to be hassling the competitors. In all my years as an announcer, I’ve never seen anything like this!

Casey: Why don’t you just put the bags down? You’d both make it through so easily!

Camelino and Camelo: (*look at each other competitively for a moment*) Never!

Camelo: This is my stuff, mine!

Camelina: You’re just trying to fool me. Begone, demon!

(*Sports Announcer, Camelo, and Camelina exit*)

Casey: Wow, those camels did not want to let go of their stuff!

Alex: Does that mean that I have to be dirt poor to get into heaven? Do I have to *gasp* give up my dreams of sparkling gems and swimming in gold coins?

Jordan: (*to Alex*) Ooh, are the gold coins made of chocolate?

Alex: (*to Jordan*) No, they’re made of gold.

Jordan: Oh, well who cares about that...

Casey: I don’t think you have to be rich or poor. Right after that story about the camels, the disciples were really shocked and worried. They asked Jesus, ““Then who can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.””¹¹

Jordan: So, it’s more like God’s grace that helps us grow – what’s inside that counts.

Alex: *(a little defeated)* As long as I can maybe have treasure...

Casey: *(snarkily)* As long as you can maybe let go of it sometimes...

Jordan: Guys, I think I've figured it out. It's what's inside that counts. Listen to this verse! "Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour...'"¹²

(Enter Baker quickly, followed by kitchen helpers carrying bags of flour)

Baker: Oh, yes, bread! Beautiful bread! Bread is love! Bread is life! The bread must flow!

Jordan: *(walks over to the baker)* Look at all that flour! How much flour is it?

Baker: Not enough! Oh, dear child! We could always use more flour so that we could make more bread!

Alex: *(calls over to Jordan)* The Bible says "three measures"!

Casey: *(to Alex)* What is that in regular measurements?

Alex: Look, there's a little note here...*(calls over to Jordan)* It says 60 pounds of flour!

Jordan: 60 pounds! You could make *(pauses to make calculation)* what, 200 loaves of bread with that much flour? Hey, lady! What're you making all this bread for?

Baker: What am I making all this bread for? For hungry bellies! Every person you meet gets hungry – every person who's ever been born. And you know who's always ready for them? Me and my bread. You want a little muffin? Maybe a cupcake?

Jordan: Yes, please!

Baker: Full bellies make nicer people. Take, eat, and share the love!

(Baker and her helpers exit)

Casey: That is incredible!

Alex: *(to Jordan)* How do you always end up with food?

Jordan: I guess I'm just charmed. But it makes so much sense – food is heaven! It's how we get there and it's what the kingdom is like, too.

Alex: Well, they don't call it "fat and happy" for nothing...

Casey: I dunno guys...

Jordan: Here's another one PROVING that I'm right, "One of the dinner guests said to Jesus, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.' Eh? See? It goes on. Jesus talks about fancy meals a lot. Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son..."¹³

(Enter King of the Banquet and servant)

King of the Banquet: Oh, my boy! I'm going to throw you the biggest, fanciest best ever feast that's ever been! Servant!

Servant: Sire, I have a name.

King of the Banquet: *(pats servant on the head)* Yes, I'm sure you do. How's it going for the dinner? I think everything's ready, isn't it?

Servant: It is ready, but a lot of people responded "maybe" to the Facebook invite.

King of the Banquet: "Maybe"? What does that mean?

Servant: Umm...it means they're not coming. Let's see...One guy just bought some land, somebody else got new oxen, and one lady just got married so she wants to...you know, go on her honeymoon, maybe?

King of the Banquet: So no one wants to come to this amazing, beautiful, luscious tasty feast that I've prepared?! Then go in the streets and the lanes: find the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. The doors are open for all the world as long as there's room! And there's plenty more room. *(winks)*

(King of the Banquet and Servant exit)

Jordan: See? The kingdom of heaven is one big party of food and fun and everybody's invited!

Alex: Awesome!

Casey: Umm, I hate to burst your bubble, but I just found this verse in Romans, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

Jordan: It's not food?

Alex: I guess not.

Jordan: Then where does that leave us?

Casey: Hmm...what about this? Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁵

(Children enter)

Alex: Oh, like that song we sing every Sunday, “Let the children come to me and do not stop them...”

Jordan: ...for it’s to such as these that God’s kingdom belongs.”¹⁶

Casey: So, scientifically speaking, we just need to find that one right child who is humble and do everything that they tell us to.

Alex: Sounds fool proof to me!

Jordan: I’m in!

(Casey, Alex, and Jordan ask all the children, “Are you the most humble child that has ever lived?” Children can respond however they like.)

Casey: Out of all the children, I think this one was the most humble.

(Jordan, Casey, and Alex stare at the Humblest Child)

Humblest Child: Ummm...hi.

Alex: Hello there!

Humblest Child: Can I help you?

Jordan: We wanna be like you.

Casey: Apparently, you’re our ticket into heaven!

Humblest Child: D’ya think so?

Casey, Jordan, and Alex: *(look at each other, then pause)*: Yes!

Humblest Child: So you’ll do whatever I say?

Jordan: *(a little cautiously)* Yeaaaaaah...

Humblest Child: Jesus says stand on one foot. *(they all obey.)* Jesus says hop up and down. *(they all obey.)* Jesus says bark like a dog *(they all obey.)* Jesus says howl like a wolf *(they all*

obey.) Stand still! (*Alex obeys, but no one else does.*) You're out, Alex! I didn't say, "Jesus says"!

Alex: Somehow, I don't think this is getting us into heaven.

Casey: (*stops jumping up and down*) And I'm starting to doubt that this really is the humblest child...

Humblest Child: Oh, come on! It was too easy. You guys walked right into that one. Later days!

(Humblest Child exits)

Jordan: Here's another verse: Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."¹⁷ So maybe we don't have to be so nervous about nailing down the specifics. God has already made room for us in heaven if we have faith!

Alex: Yeah, I found another verse from Matthew that totally backs that up: "He took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor..."¹⁸

(Enter the Devil)

Devil: Jordan, Casey, Alex – I will give you all the kingdoms of the world if you will fall down and worship me.¹⁹

Jordan: Who is that?

Alex: Is it Jesus? I know we're supposed to worship Jesus...is that Jesus?

Casey: (*goes to the side with Jordan and Alex*) Group meeting! Group meeting! Guys, we've been all over the New Testament this morning and nothing that we've learned so far makes me think that Jesus promises wealth, power, or comfort.

Alex: Yeah, what about the poor – Jesus called them blessed!

Jordan: And the people who don't get invited to parties – God wants them in heaven, too.

Devil: Now hold on just a minute. I can give you glory and authority and fame.²⁰

Casey: Not today, Satan! Get behind me!²¹

Devil: (*moving behind Casey*) Okay, I'd be happy to tempt and torment you from here. Makes no difference to me.

Jordan: He means get out!

Alex: And stay out.

(The Devil exits. Jesus enters.)

Jesus: Hello!

Casey: Where did you come from?

Jordan: We haven't read a Bible verse yet.

Alex: Usually, people don't show up until we try to prove a point using scripture.

Jesus: The scriptures are alive if you truly listen. But you all seem so lost – I thought I might offer some guidance.

Jordan: We'll take any help we can get – Pastor Lucas will be back any minute.

Jesus: Someone once asked me what is the greatest commandment. I told him, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all our soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength." But the second to that one is this, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The man who asked me this recognized that this is the heart of our faith. So I told him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And the crowd grew silent. Remember this and let your heart be at peace.

(Jesus exits)

Alex: Umm...what was that?

Casey: Who was that?

Jordan: Was that...?

(Pastor Lucas enters)

Lucas: Alright everybody. What did you learn? What can you tell me about the kingdom of God?

Alex: The kingdom of heaven is like a pirate treasure hunter who will stop at nothing to be in the kingdom – but it's also not like that at all.

Jordan: It's like a pearl that's more valuable than anything except that compared to the kingdom pearls have no value at all.

Casey: It's about letting go of your riches and picking up first prize in the door walking championship.

Jordan: The kingdom is pouring your love into your work and baking and baking even if it's an insane amount of food because that's not the point.

Alex: It's like a party that you don't have to show up to first or last or best or brightest. You just have to realize you're being called and go!

Casey: It's being like a child um...but not like when children are super jerks.

(Humblest Child pops head in)

Humblest Child: Geez, it was a joke, guys! *(Humblest Child exits.)*

Jordan: *(walks over to the pulpit)* I found this other verse in the book of Revelation, "Jesus made us to be a kingdom, serving God."²² The kingdom is us – as we are, striving to be better, making mistakes, and then lifted up to heaven when God calls us home.

Alex: We don't have to pretend to be someone else or find somebody to hate. If we love God and serve our neighbor, we'll be alright – no matter what heaven is really like.

Casey: And you know what?

Lucus: What?

Casey: I'm pretty sure we met Jesus after we'd been running around scripture for a while.

Lucus: I had a feeling you might. Jesus has a tendency to show up when he finds you looking.

Jordan: We wouldn't have gotten there without all our helpers.

(The rest of the cast comes onto the chancel.)

Lucus: What? Who are all these people? Where did they come from?

Alex: Oh, never mind. *(cast bow)* Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Amen.

¹ Lk 9:2

² Mt 6:10; Lk 11:12

³ <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/romans/10-facts-about-the-ancient-romans/>

⁴ <https://www.historyhit.com/facts-about-ancient-rome-and-the-romans/>

⁵ <https://www.eatingeurope.com/ancient-rome-for-kids/>

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- ⁶ Mt 13:44
⁷ Mt 13:44
⁸ Mt 13:45-46
⁹ Lk 6:20
¹⁰ Mt 19:23-24
¹¹ Mt 19:25-26
¹² Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20
¹³ Lk 14:15-16; Mt 22:1-14
¹⁴ Rom 14:17
¹⁵ Mt 18:3-4
¹⁶ Mt 19:14; Mk 10:14-15; Lk 18:16-17
¹⁷ Lk 12:32
¹⁸ Mt 4:8
¹⁹ Mt 4:9
²⁰ Lk 4:6
²¹ Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33
²² Rev 1:6