

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

February 23, 2025

I. Introduction

A. Today, we will finish **Matthew 12** and look at chapter **13:10-17**. This last portion of **chapter 12** reminds us that it is those who do the will of God who are in the family of God. **Chapter 13** begins the first of Jesus' parables – with the first one being the parable of sower.

1. After that parable, Jesus tells six more parables in which He uses examples from life to describe the Kingdom of Heaven.
2. For example, the six parables compare the kingdom of heaven to (1) a field of wheat that has tares sown among the wheat, (2) a mustard seed that sprouts and grows, (3) leaven in flour, (4) finding a treasure that was hidden in a field, (5) seeking fine pearls and finding one of great value, and (6) fishing with a dragnet.
3. Between the parable of the sower and His explanation of the parable, Jesus explains why He told parables – and that is the part of **chapter 13** that we will look at today.

B. Pray

II. Those who do the will of God are in the family of God

A. **Matthew 12:46-50**, While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. [47] Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." [48] But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" [49] And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! [50] For **whoever does the will of My Father** who is in heaven, **he is My** brother and sister and mother."

B. **Vs 46-49** present the situation. **Vs 50** tells us what we need to know concerning God's family and who He includes in it by graciously granting to them the gift of eternal life. Therefore, there are only two points I want to make in relation to **vs 50**.

C. **First**, being included in the family of God (*being given the gift of eternal life*) is not based on recognizing that God exists, or on consistently performing certain religious practices – such as church attendance, Bible reading, meal-time prayers, and the like, or on a faith in God that is narrowly focused on the saving work of Jesus Christ. Being included in

the family of God is based on **doing the will of God** – not because doing the will of God earns you salvation, but because it is those who do the will of God who are given God’s gift of salvation.

1. In other words, to be included in the family of God requires a practical, daily obedience to the will of God. And when I say the will of God, I am not referring to some specific will for a specific task (*Gideon*) or a specific way of life that God wills for you (*missionary, pastor, successful businessman who uses his wealth for God’s kingdom*). I am speaking of the universal will of God that is given to us throughout the word of God and applies to how we live every day.
2. Without question, some Christians are called by God to specific tasks or ways of life – and those called in this way are to obey.
 - a. Yet it is also true that God has revealed His will for how we are to live, day by day, as Christ-ones living in a sinful world, and as members in a local body of believers.
 - b. If we are unwilling to live according to what I am calling God’s common will, then living according to some specific will of God will be of little value to God, His kingdom, and those we influence.
 - c. And should we try to live according to some specific will while neglecting to live according to God’s general will, the most likely outcome will be like those who prophesied, and cast out demons, and performed many miracles in Jesus’ name, YET were excluded from God’s family because they practiced lawlessness – that is, they did not do the will of God in the day-to-day affairs of life.
 - d. Therefore, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven **will enter**” (**Matthew 7:21-23**).
3. The word of God affirms this requirement to do God’s will in –
 - a. **Matthew 19:17b-19**, And [Jesus] said to [the rich, young ruler], “**If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments** (*do the will of God*)” [18] Then he said to [Jesus], “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; [19] honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (**Notice**: God’s will is practical in that it promotes and protects good relations with those around us).
 - b. **1 Thessalonians 4:3**, For **this is the will of God, your sanctification**; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.
 - c. **1 John 2:17**, The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but **the one who does the will of God lives forever**.

- d. **Romans 2:13**, For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.
- e. **Hebrews 10:35-36**, Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. [36] For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God (*in the face of trials and/or persecution*), you may receive what was promised.
- 4. Without question, there is only salvation in and through Jesus Christ, **and** it is graciously given to us as an unearned gift. Yet, that gracious, undeserved gift of salvation is given on the condition that we trust in Christ's saving work **and** we do the will of God according to the word of God in our daily life.
- D. **Second Point:** when our family of origin fails to love and care for us as they ought, or when they no longer accept us because we have put our faith in God and are living according to God's will, or when we want a place to call home because no place feels like home, we have a family and a home in the family of God – and we cannot be any more at home then when we are with them.
 - 1. Though this may not be true in every church or gathering of believers, may it be true within our small group for everyone in the group, and for anyone who joins us – be it for one meeting or any other length of time.

III. The reason Jesus told parables

- A. **Matthew 13:10-17**, And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" [11] Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. [12] For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. [13] Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. [14] In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled (**Isaiah 6:9**), which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; [15] [because] the **heart** of this people **has become dull**, with their **ears they scarcely hear**, and they have **closed their eyes**, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.' [16] But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. [17] For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

- B. The first thing I want to point out about Jesus' explanation as to why He told parables is that He references **Isaiah 6:9** – thus providing a God-given example that some OT prophecies which applied to OT times, also point to NT events. Let us read the OT this way, too.
- C. The second thing I want to talk about is, Jesus' use of parables. In our day, most use parables to illustrate a point or truth in order to make it more understandable. And some use parables or stories to keep the listener or reader's attention.
 - 1. Unlike today, Jesus was not using parables to illustrate a truth so it could be easily understood. He was conveying truth in a way that required careful listening and thoughtful consideration. And He did this to separate those who were hungry for the truth from those who had no interest in, or were resistant to, or even hostile to the truth.
 - 2. The reality is, those who were open and interested in the truth could respond to His parables by thinking about them and asking Him questions in order to understand the truth contained in them.
 - 3. Those who were not interested in the truth would most likely respond to His parables by going on with life as if they hadn't heard anything important or worthy of their consideration.
 - 4. And those who were resistant or even hostile to the truth were so closed to the truth that it is probable they treated the parables as nonsense.
 - 5. Why would Jesus use a form of communication that made those interested work harder to discover the truth while further pushing away those disinterested and resistant? The answer is found in Jesus' explanation.
- D. Jesus begins His explanation by telling the disciples that they have been given the ability to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but the disinterested and resistant have not. He goes on to say that "whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."
 - 1. There are several important facts to keep in mind when considering what Jesus means with these two statements.
 - 2. **First**, God has acted first and continues to act in providing a sufficient amount of truth to everyone in order for all of us to believe and live accordingly.
 - a. For example, He made us in His image, He put an awareness of His existence within us, He reveals much about Himself through creation, He has given us the Law, the Prophets, the OT and NT, and He has assigned the Holy Spirit the task of convicting the

world of sin, righteousness, and a coming judgement when we will have to answer for how we have lived in this world.

- b. However, God only gives the ability to understand the truth He has revealed to those who want it, and who prove their wanting by asking, seeking, knocking, and hungering until they gain the truth they seek. This is expressed in **Psalm 25:14**, The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant.
3. **Second**, Jesus was speaking to Jews, whose history included God's miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt, God's empowerment for taking the Promised Land, the OT law and prophets, the Temple, synagogues, and Rabbis. In other words, they knew about God, lived in the Land given to them by God, had the word of God, participated in the worship of God, and had local places of learning and Rabbis to teach them about God. They were without excuse for being so hard-hearted, deaf, and blind to the truth.
4. **Third**, like Israel in Isaiah's day, the Jews in Jesus' day were facing a coming judgment for being religious hypocrites who had – for way to long – turned a deaf ear and blind eye to the truth they had. Jesus prophesied this coming judgment in **Matthew 23:37-38**, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!”
5. The point of all this is that God enabled those who were open and interested in the truth to understand the truths in the parables, while leaving those who were disinterested and closed to the truth in their self-imposed hard-heartedness, deafness, and blindness.
 - a. It is in this way that the Jews of Jesus' day – and those in our day who seek truth – are given more truth, while those who ignore or resist the truth lose the truth they have and the intended effects of the truth they are currently being exposed to.
 - b. Does this mean God chooses who will seek and understand, and who will ignore and go on in their blindness. NO! It means God deals with us according to what we have done with the truth we already have, and are doing with the truth being given to us.
6. A physical-world example of the spiritual reality of being given more or losing what we have, is Israel and the ungodly inhabitants of the Promised Land. When Israel first entered the Promised Land, they had nothing in the way of land, homes, barns, and crops. However,

the people in the Promised Land had of all these things. In doing the work of taking the Promised Land, God gave Israel the possessions that once belonged to the people in the Promised Land – so that Israel had an abundance, and God took away what the people in the Promised Land had – so that they had nothing.

- E. Did Jesus only speak to the crowds with parables? No. The Sermon on the Mount is an example that contained no parables. Yet when Jesus did use parables, He was telling His listeners the truth just as much as when He did not speak in parables. However, only those who wanted to know the truth and put forth the effort to learn the truth were enabled by God to understand the meaning of the parables and how to apply them to their lives.

IV. Some concluding thoughts

- A. It is through our own ungodly choices and behavior that we harden our hearts, stick our fingers in our ears, and hold our hands over our eyes. No one does this to us or for us. Ignorance of God, the truths of God, and godly living are self-imposed – to the degree that such truth is available.
- B. As in Isaiah's day, so in Jesus' day and in our day, anyone – even those resistant or hostile to God and the truth – **can** start thinking, asking questions, pursuing truth, and in so doing, reopen themselves to God and the truth. And if anyone does, God is right there to enable them to understand the truth available to them.
- C. Though we must ask, seek, and knock in pursuit of God and His truth, understanding Him, His ways, and His word is the result of **God speaking and enabling** us to hear and understand. Those who choose not to ask, seek, and knock grow harder of heart and sink deeper into spiritual deafness and blindness. Though their loss is a tragic loss, it is of their own doing. Remember, God doesn't want anyone to die in their sin, but rather for all to come to repentance.
- D. May we, as those who hunger and thirst, pursue a spiritually healthy knowledge of God, an intimate relationship with God, and a sensible understanding and practical application of the word of God. And may we thoughtfully and perseveringly apply what we know and understand to what is in our heart, to what and how we think, and to how we live day-by-day in our homes and in the world around us.