

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

March 02, 2025

I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 13:1-3a**, That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. [2] And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. [3] And He spoke many things to them in parables . . .
- B. As you may recall from last Sunday, Jesus told parables, not to clarify or illustrate what He was teaching, but to prod those listening to think, knowing that those who were open and interested in the truth – would, and those disinterested or closed to the truth – wouldn't. It was in this way that He separated those who wanted to learn, wanted to be saved, and wanted to grow in godliness from those who – either willfully or mindlessly – continued going their own selfish and sinful way.
- C. Pray

II. Seven Parables Explained

- A. Parable of the Sower (**Matthew 13:3-9**)
 - 1. **Matthew 13:18-23**, “Hear then the parable of the sower. [19] When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. [20] The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. [22] And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [23] And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”
 - 2. This parable is about two main things.
 - a. **First**, it's about sowing the “word of the kingdom,” as Jesus calls it – or as we might say, sowing the gospel, or the truth about God and godliness. Within this first point there is the inference that the sower is to sow truth in whomever will listen – without getting discouraged or deterred by the results.

- b. **Second**, Jesus presents four different responses to the sower's message. With this, He makes it clear that regardless of the accuracy and consistency of the message, responses will vary. He also makes it clear that more will reject the truth than put the effort in to understand it and persevere in living accordingly.
3. **HARD SOIL: [18]** When anyone hears **the word of the kingdom** and does not understand it (*does not make sense of it, comprehend it*), the evil one comes and snatches away what has been **sown in his heart**. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.
- a. The truth about God and godly living makes no sense to those who are committed to selfishness and the ways of the world, or who abhor God and all He represents, or who calm their fears and gratify their desires with whatever they can find to do so in this world. And yet, the message has the power to go beyond their eyes and ears, and touch their heart (*beliefs, values, fears, hopes*).
 - b. Therefore, they are not just rejecting God and truth on an intellectual level, they are also doing it on a heart level – even though the truth has penetrated that deeply (*sown in the heart*).
 - c. It is this kind of rejection that makes them easy prey for the devil to snatch away any truth that touches their heart so that it cannot lay there for future consideration.
4. **ROCKY SOIL: [20]** The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it **with joy**; [21] yet he has **no firm root in himself**, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.
- a. Having **no firm root** refers to people who lack depth of character, self-discipline, and decisiveness. Being controlled more by their feelings and emotions than their intellect, they are easily swayed by whatever stirs their feelings and emotions at the moment.
 - b. Therefore, when their current interest loses interest, or becomes a burden, or costs too much, they move on to the next thing that attracts their attention with the promise of giving them what they think they need.
 - c. Within the church they are like teenagers – unsettled, easily influenced, having a short attention span, and just as excited about the next big thing as they were the last.
 - d. For example, when Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, crowds of Jews shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!” Yet less

than a week later, the crowds were persuaded by the chief priests to ask for the release of Barabbas and the death of Jesus.

- e. The point is, joy over the gospel of the kingdom coupled with zeal in its pursuit is only meaningful if it lasts. Finishing well is as important as starting well, for as Jesus said, those who endure to the end will be saved (**Matthew 24:11**).
5. **THORNY SOIL: [22]** And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the **worry (cares) of the world** and the **deceitfulness of wealth CHOKE** the word (*strangles the word – cutting off what it needs to grow and bear fruit*), and it becomes unfruitful.
- a. When we allow the worries and cares of the world to put us into survival mode – we take on a view of life and way of thinking that is so focused on protecting us from what we don't want or getting what we do want that we stop thinking about God and godly living. When this happens, we become the most important person in our life, and our earthly well-being becomes our most pressing concern.
 - b. Wealth also pushes God and godliness to the background, but in a different way. Wealth deceives us into believing that it is equal to or better than God in enabling us to obtain what we want or protect us from what we don't want. Plus, the rewards of wealth are available to everyone regardless of their spiritual condition.
 - c. However, Israel's OT history and our own nation today teach us that to lose God and the rewards of godly living is to lose far more than money can buy or supply or restore.
 - d. Therefore, those caught up in the self-survival mode and those deceived by the empty promises of wealth choke whatever truth has been or is being sown in them so that it has no effect on them.
6. **GOOD SOIL: [23]** And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man **who hears the word and understands it**; who indeed **bears fruit** and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." I want to focus on three truths conveyed in the description of this fourth soil.
- a. **First**, Jesus places the responsibility for responding to what is heard and understood on the person hearing and understanding.
 - b. **Second**, to understand the gospel of the kingdom is to understand that it is intended to produce fruit in us, that is, change us, inside and out.
 - c. **Third**, there are natural differences in understanding and responding to any information, and that includes the gospel of the

kingdom. For example, there are differences in intellectual ability and ways of viewing the world. There are differences in maturity, including spiritual maturity. There are differences in natural abilities and spiritual gifts. All these differences are natural, and therefore acceptable. What is unnatural and unacceptable is failing to intentionally use what you have been given to grow and mature mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

B. Parable of the Wheat and Tares (**Matthew 13:24-30**)

1. **Matthew 13:36-43**, Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” [37] And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, [38] and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; [39] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. [40] So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. [41] The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, [42] and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.
2. Though Jesus’ explanation is enough, I want to point out three specific things in this parable.
 - a. **First**, the kingdom of heaven is both here and now **and** future and eternal.
 - (1) And though Satan is referred to as the ruler of this world (**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**), the god of this world (**2 Corinthians 4:4**), and the prince of the power of the air (**Ephesians 2:2**), his realm neither surrounds nor is superior to God and God’s kingdom, but is surrounded by and inferior to God and God’s kingdom – which is why we can say that the One who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (**1 John 4:4**).
 - (2) In His parable about fishing with a dragnet, Jesus confirms that the kingdom of heaven includes the earth – past, present, and future.
 - b. **Second**, Jesus confirms the reality of eternal suffering for living a godless, lawless life, and for leading or causing others to turn away from God and live a self-serving, sinful, lawless life.

- c. **Third**, in this parable, Jesus mentions only two reasons for being thrown into the furnace of fire – being a stumbling-block and committing lawlessness. Interestingly, both represent choices and behaviors that are self-activated. In other words, no one makes us behave this way, we choose this way of life. And because this way of life is harmful and destructive – to ourselves **and** to everyone effected by our choices and behavior – it makes eternal punishment a just and reasonable response on God’s part.
- C. The next two parables explain what the kingdom of heaven is like.
 1. Parable of the Mustard Seed
 - a. **Matthew 13:31-32**, He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; [32] and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”
 - b. Though the kingdom of heaven may seem small and insignificant in its early stages, it is bigger and better, safer and more secure, and more comfortable than whatever the world has to offer. This is true in us individually, as a local body of believers, and as a universal and eternal kingdom.
 2. Parable of the Leaven
 - a. **Matthew 13:33**, He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”
 - b. The kingdom of heaven’s influence on all that is around it cannot be stopped any more than you can stop the influence of leaven when added to dough.
 - c. If we will cooperate, this will be true of us individually in relation to growing into Christ-likeness, it will be true in the church, and it will be true in the new heavens and earth where only righteousness will dwell, only love will rule, and God will be all in all.
- D. The next two parables present two different kinds of people and how they find the entrance to the kingdom of heaven.
 1. Parable of the Treasure in the Field
 - a. **Matthew 13:44**, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

- b. This represents those who are not searching for God and truth, yet have enough awareness of their value that when they happen upon them, recognize them as an incalculable treasure that is worth giving up all else to obtain.
- 2. Parable of the Costly Pearl
 - a. **Matthew 13:45-46**, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, [46] and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”
 - b. This represents those who are searching for God and truth, and have a sense that there is a way of living that is both contrary to and better than the ways of the world, and upon finding them, they give up all else to obtain the incalculable treasure they have been seeking.
 - c. The point of these two parables is that some are seeking and some are not seeking, but both are open and aware that something better is available. Upon finding God and truth, both recognize their surpassing value, and both respond accordingly.

E. Parable of the Dragnet

- 1. **Matthew 13:47-52**, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; [48] and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. [49] So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, [50] and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - a. Again, Jesus affirms that the kingdom of heaven is here and now, and future and eternal. And He affirms the reality of eternal punishment for those who have rejected God and godliness and lived a lawless, godless life.

III. Conclusion

- A. **Matthew 13: 51-52**, “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes.” [52] And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new (*Jesus’ teaching*) and old (*OT law and prophets*).”