

Matthew – The King And His Kingdom
The Great Adventure
Notes For Session 13 – Chapter 13: Parables of the Kingdom

T1. Overview of the Chapter:

A. Jesus begins to teach in parables. If you ask people What is a Parable, most would say it is a nice way to tell stories to little children.

But when you understand the NT and OT and the rabbinic use of parables, you realize something quite different.

B. Chapter 13 begins the third discourse, where Jesus begins to teach in parables. In the OT parables were employed not just when you wanted to teach little children, but also when there was corrupt leadership. Examples: Judges 9 (parable of Jotham), 2 Samuel 12:1-12 Nathan's Parable concerning David inter actions with Bathsheba and her husband.

C. Parable has a way of bringing the listener into the story and in some cases snapping the trap. Bringing you into the story and then you realize this is aimed at me.

Parable is also way of getting across a point where you do not have to point the finger at someone and they get the picture.

D. In Chapter 13, Jesus tells a number of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. He tells parables about how the Kingdom operates.

Remember at the end of Chapter 12, the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus.

E. Parables are used 48 times in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Synoptic coming from the word "To See as One." Synoptic Gospels it was believed that they had some common source.

F. Parables give us earthly sketches of heavenly realities. We will look at several parables that describe the Kingdom. The overarching thought - the Kingdom is hidden. The Kingdom is hidden, just as Jesus was hidden in the 1st Century.

Jesus made His début in the 1st Century. He was one man who looked like everybody else, fit into society, He was hidden. From this one man, who was God, this Kingdom would grow and spread throughout the earth.

G. The first 7 parables He gives to the crowds and the second set of parables He gives to the disciples starting in verse 36, He takes the disciples away and talks to them privately.

One of the Themes Jesus teaches about is the Kingdom and the nature of the Kingdom is the idea of waiting, patience.

T2. The Purpose of Parables (Verses 1–3, 10-14)

"On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables ...

The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because 'they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.' Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: 'You shall indeed hear but not understand you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted, and I heal them.'

A. When they ask Him Why do you speak in parables, Jesus answers them with Isaiah 6:9-11

- 1) And he replied: Go and say to this people: Listen carefully, but you shall not understand! Look intently, but you shall know nothing! You are to make the heart of this people sluggish, to dull their ears and close their eyes; Else their eyes will see, their ears hear, their heart understand, and they will turn and be healed. "How long, O Lord?" I asked. And he replied: Until the cities are desolate, without inhabitants, Houses, without a man, and the earth is a desolate waste.
- 2) Isaiah was told by God to preach judgment to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, after the Northern 10 Tribes had been taken away into oblivion by the Assyrians. The two remaining Tribes in the South around the year 587 BC were taken away by the Babylonians. Isaiah prophesied to them in the South and was told by God to preach judgment to them because for their covenant infidelity.
- 3) Jesus is hinting that the current rulers and people are guilty of covenant infidelity.

B. The word hear in Hebrew is Shema (Deuteronomy 6). The word hear is not only hearing, but hearing and doing. Didn't you hear me? Why didn't you not obey?

- 1) Jesus is using parables to proclaim God's judgment on this faithless generation. They have eyes but don't see and they have ears but don't hear.
- 2) Jesus will speak of the things in the parables that are small. In the Kingdom of God small things matter. The small things will become great things.
- 3) When he quotes from Isaiah He speaks of something great which is going to happen, but not before the old regime falls – it is coming to an end.

T3. The Privilege of Discipleship (Verse 16-17):

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

T4. The Explanation of the Parable of the Sower (Verses 18-23):

"Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

A. He is talking about hearing the word of God. How many of us are guilty of when we hear the word of God, but we do not really

- 1) How many times do we come to Mass and 5 seconds after the Reading of the Gospel, we could not tell our neighbor what that Gospel reading was for the life of us. Why?
- 2) Worrying about the things that are happening in our lives. The cares of the world.
- 3) In our family we talk about the Gospel Reading on the way home.

B. Hearing the word of Jesus and those words becoming fruitful takes focus. Not thinking about anything else except for the Readings. That is easier said than done.

T5. The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat. (Verses 24-30):

"He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

A. Jesus is talking about sowing good seed, which grows into wheat, but somehow the enemy sows weeds. Historians tell us these weeds just maybe what is called the Darnel plant.

Darnel is a slightly poisonous plant resembling wheat particularly in its earliest stages. It looks almost identical to wheat. Cannot tell the difference between the Darnel and the Wheat until maturity and then it is obvious.

B. Disciples are saying that they have been called to a Weed-Pulling Ministry. Let me deal with this one – I will be sure that we have nothing, but perfect wheat.

C. Jesus answer is No. The Kingdom of God is not a group of people who all think perfectly – right in sync with one another.

- 1) We might have wheat and sitting right next to you on Sunday morning maybe Darnel.
- 2) We will be more open-minded about the Church – there are hurting people all around us and there maybe some weeds in our midst.
- 3) My job is not to be a Weed-Puller; my job is to be a Fertilizer!
- 4) At a very young age, you cannot tell the difference. You are not smart enough to tell the difference at the young age.

D. Jesus says I will call upon the reapers (harvesters) and they will take care of this. But our job is to love, to teach, our job is to be patient - this is the Kingdom of God; and it is one the hardest things for us to learn in the Kingdom of God.

E. My Kingdom takes time, My Kingdom grows slow, and at times, it is going to look like you have weeds.

- 1) But wouldn't be awful to bring the Weed- Wacker to a young Christian who is immature, making mistakes, and you pull them up, because you just didn't think they fit or that it wasn't right.
- 2) And it turns out they were just a tender plant, just a young one that in 3 or 4 years would make a difference. In ten years would become a different person and in fifty years would become someone everyone would talk about that I think we have a saint in our midst.
- 3) That's Jesus' job.

F. Why are we not be the Weed-Whacking Ministry?

- 1) Because this is not the way, God is toward you. He is patient, He is kind, and He is giving you every opportunity to grow.
- 2) If God looked at my life, in my immature state, even as I am today, I would fully expect to hear that Weed-Whacker startup at times because I am not worthy to be in the Church.
- 3) He is not that way to me and He is saying don't be that way to the other person. Let Me deal with it.

- G.** It is like growing up. You have your brother or your sister and they do something to you, and you want to take justice into your own hands. Instead, you go to your Mother or your Father and let them deal with it. Let your dad deal with this problem rather than you dealing with because then you are both going to be in trouble.

T6. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Verses (31-32):

He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches. '"

- A.** Mustard Seed is so small you could not even see it from where you are seated!
- B.** Mustard Seed is the smallest of all the seeds, but once you plant it and it starts to grow. It grows into quite a shrub in fact it is called a Tree. Trees in the OT have significance: Trees were used as a metaphor for great nations. Examples: Daniel 4:10-12, Ezekiel 17:22-24 – In these instances, birds landing in the Trees represent Gentile Nations.
- C.** Kingdom of God is the smallest of seed, but when it grows and matures, it will be able to take birds and the birds can make their nest and home in this Tree. In another words the Gentile Nations, the whole world, will find a resting place in the Kingdom of God.
- D.** This is the parable of the Mustard Seed, here Jesus is hinting at the spreading of the Kingdom to the Gentile Nations.

T7. The Parable of the Yeast (Leaven) (Verse 33):

"He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened."

- A.** Three measures of flour is about 50 lbs of flour.
- B.** This parable shows the disproportionate power of the Kingdom. That a little bit of leaven (yeast) in the 50 lb bag of flour in time will leaven the entire bag. That is the nature of the Kingdom of God.
- C.** Mother Theresa is a phenomenal example of this.

Mother Theresa goes to Calcutta from Albania. Even her Superior told her, you do not have the strength to start an order. She wanted to do something beautiful for Jesus.

So she went with just a few rubies, two saris, a Rosary, and a Bible, and a Prayer Book. She went into one of the worst places on earth in terms of disease, hopelessness, and there she started to sow the seed of the Kingdom. And she was faithful one month, one year, one decade, one lifetime, and at the end of that period what happens?

The world stands back and gives her the Nobel Peace Prize for doing what – what anyone of us could have done! But she was a living example, so was Blessed Pope John Paul II of the nature of the Kingdom of God.

- E.** That it isn't the big explosion, it is not the great big dynamic put on conference that changes the world; it is the individual lives being faithful in the Kingdom with their children. God changes the world like a mother, one diaper at a time. Mother's can change the world – one diaper at a time – so can fathers by the way.

- F. This teaches us the nature of the Kingdom with the Mustard Seed. The secret to living is to be Faithful in the little things and not pay attention to the criticism, not pay attention to the naysayers.
- G. Take the high ground; be faithful with what God has given you to do. Be faithful, be humble, walk in charity, and keep your eyes on the Kingdom. That is how it is going to grow, not fighting the way the world does, not arguments and cutting down people in anyway.

T8. The Use of Parables (Verses 34-35):

“All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation (of the world).” There He is quoting Psalm 78:2.

Now in Verse 36, Jesus starts to speak only to the disciples.

T9. The Explanation of the Parable of the Weed (Verses 36-43):

“Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He said in reply, “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned (up) with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

Jesus has sown good seed in the Kingdom. But the enemy can come in and sow bad seed to reek havoc. There is no perfect Church.

T10. Parables of Treasure in Field and Pearls (Verses 44-46):

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”

- A. Life gets cluttered with things. Priorities are out of whack. It is important to focus on the Kingdom. We have a pearl in the Kingdom of God that does not destroy.
- B. We are in search of fine pearls. We are looking for a better life, a better way to raise our kids, a better marriage, better way to spend out time and our money. We are looking for that American Dream.
- C. The Kingdom is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had, everything and bought that one pearl. That is the life that we want! Nothing else compares to this.
- D. True story about little girl named Jenny who was about six – seven years old.
 Jenny used her allowance to buy a pearl necklace made out of plastic. And Jenny loved that pearl necklace with everything in her life. She was so proud of it and she wore it everywhere – playing, school – she wore it everywhere – she wouldn’t take it off.

And her mother said to her, It's okay Jenny to wear your pearls, but in the shower you are going to have to take them off, because of the metal you are going to get green around your neck.

And Jenny's dad prayed with her every night and read a book each night. One night, Jenny's dad said to Jenny sitting up on daddy's lap, Jenny do you love daddy, and she said daddy you know that I love you. And he said, would you give me your pearls? And Jenny got this look on her face of kind of horror. And she said, Daddy this is my favorite toy, this is my favorite and I saved my money to get the pearls. But you can have my stuffed elephant that I got for Christmas last year that is my second favorite toy. You can have my elephant Dumbo. And her dad said that is okay that is alright.

A couple weeks went by and they were praying at night and dad brought the subject up again. And he said, Jenny do you love daddy? And she said, Daddy you know that I love you, you know that I love your daddy. And he said, would you give me the pearls? And she said, daddy these are my favorite toys and I can't give you my favorite toy. But you can have my doll that I got for my birthday, you can have my doll Judy, I will give my doll to you. And he no that is okay.

A few weeks went by and it was time for prayer at night, and little Jenny was sitting with her father praying and her dad had his hand in his left pocket. And Jenny turned to her dad and had tears in her eyes and her little bottom lip started to quiver. And she reach out her hand and said, here dad and she handed him the pearls. She said I love you. And at that moment her daddy reached into his other pocket and grab a little blue velvet box and he opened it up. And he handed her a set of real genuine pearls.

And he said, I have had these all these weeks sweetheart and I wanted to give them to you, but I couldn't give them to you until you were willing to give me what was of less value. Jenny looked at those pearls and her eyes just lit up and she said, daddy, and she put them on and they were real. 100% genuine pearls that she would have the rest of her life.

- E. The idea behind that story is that God is ready to give us the Pearl of great price if we will only give up what is of lesser value. What we are clinging to and what we think is valuable.
- F. He wants to give us so much more. He wants us to trust Him and He is saying to us – can I have that which you think is real real valuable? I have something for you that is even greater. The Pearl of Great Price!
 - 1) What am I holding onto that is so cheap, but I think there is a lot of value there, and what does God want to exchange it for in my life.
 - 2) Surrendering earthly attachments is required in the Kingdom of God.
 - 3) St. Irenaeus, the Church Father, said, there is an allegorical sense here (how it relates to Christ); Christ Himself is the great hidden treasure within the field of the OT Scriptures. Only in light of His Cross and Resurrection can the mysteries of the old can be fully understood to announce the advent of God's Son.

T11. The Parable of the Drag Net (Verses 47-50):

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth."

T12. The Demand for a Sign (Verses 51-53):

"Do you understand * all these things?" They answered, "Yes." And he replied, "Then every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

- A.** Like the fishermen who took out of their net, fish. The disciples know what is new, what is to keep. What is in the New Covenant and what is old to throw away. This speaks of the Old and New Covenant. What is worthless is what pertains to the old and must be dropped, because the new is here.
- B.** The Gospel brings together the two. The New is concealed in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New.

T13. Conclusion

- A.** This Chapter is filled with marvelous Parables that Jesus is teaching us about the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom is small, but grows into something big.
- B.** The Kingdom is valuable and it is worth selling out everything else. In modern days, Jesus might say, that the Kingdom is like a Pearl and when you find it, you EBay everything else, because you found the Pearl of Great Price.
- C.** So the challenge for us is to take inventory in our life.

- 1) What in our life is taking up our time?
- 2) What are we placing value on?

True story of guy who used to work at a hardware store as a kid. And a bunch of his friends came in during the middle of the night and switched all the price-tags. So they put 10 cents on a Lawn Mower and \$135 on a screwdriver. They thought it was going to be a real funny thing.

Then the guy came in next morning and found that all the price-tags had been changed.

- D.** That is the challenge in our life.

- 1) Has someone changed the price-tags in your life?
- 2) Has someone said or sold you a bill of goods that the things of this world are really valuable and expensive, when the things that are really valuable like your children, your wife, your husband, your friends, your Church, and most of all Jesus Christ are very cheap.
- 3) If so, let's change the price-tags around and then give ourselves completely to the Pearl of Great Price!