

Lesson 12: Chapter 13 “The 7 Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_13.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Matthew 12 focuses on Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees over Sabbath laws and his claims to authority. It highlights Jesus' actions and teachings that challenge the Pharisees' legalistic interpretations and demonstrate his divine authority as the Lord of the Sabbath. The chapter also includes Jesus casting out demons, his rebukes of the Pharisees, and his declaration of his family as those who do his Father's will.

Memory Verse:

13:16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.

Lesson Opener:

[Science experiment]

You get 3 jars: Fill the 1st with some water and salt, fill the 2nd with water, salt and baking soda, and the 3rd with water and baking soda. [salt represents Satan and baking soda represents our hearts]

- ❖ Add to the 1st cup some vinegar [vinegar represents the word of God], nothing will happen
- ❖ Add to the 2nd cup some vinegar, you will notice a slight chemical reaction
- ❖ Add to the 3rd cup some vinegar, a huge amount of foam is formed.

When we hear the word of God and don't accept it, we are like the first cup, Satan took it away and no reaction occurred. When we hear the word but get distracted with this world, a slight reaction occurs because we don't pay full attention to it. But when we hear it and act on it, we are like the 3rd cup where a huge chemical reaction took place since no Satan [salt] was allowed.



Lesson Goal:

This lesson encourages us to reflect on our own hearts, consider how we respond to God's Word, and strive to be fruitful in our lives.

Lesson Body:

The Lord Jesus presented to us new concepts of the heavenly kingdom concerning how we should worship, act, and struggle to reach salvation and unity with God., Jesus teaches seven parables. He gives the reason why He is teaching in parables as well as explanation for two parables that His disciples found difficult to understand.

The word “parable” in Greek is parabole which presents a comparison to inspire deeper thought. Jesus was an amazing teacher. His parables help us understand spiritual truths in a far more vivid way and to remember what we have learned as an interesting story. Likewise, when teaching from the Bible, we should try to think of simple illustrations that can help people understand and remember spiritual truths.

The Kingdom Parables:

1. Parable of the Sower (verses 3b-9, 18-23)
2. Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat (verses 24-30, 36-43)
3. Parable of the Mustard Seed (verses 31-32)
4. Parable of the Yeast (verse 33)
5. Parable of the Hidden Treasure (verse 44)
6. Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (verses 45-46)
7. Parable of the Sorting of Good and Bad Fish (verses 47-50)

1- The Parable of the Sower (13:1-17), Its explanation [18-23]

This parable seems to be THE key parable in understanding the rest of the kingdom parables. The basic principles in it about seeds and fruits are seen across several other parables so if we understand this parable, it will give us insight into others.

Christ is the great Sower and all whom He sends forth to preach are Sowers under Him.

The seed sown is His Word, the Gospel of the Kingdom. The soil is human hearts that either reject or accept it. The Lord Jesus offered to us four kinds of soil: the way, the rocky ground, the soil full of

thorns and the good soil. Indeed, the Sower and the seeds are one and the same; but whether there is fruit or not depends on the ground that receives the seeds.

1. The wayside hearer: He is the one that is careless and inattentive, negligent and forgetful. His heart is an open road where evil affections, and foolish and hurtful desires, continually pass and repass, without either notice or restraint. The word of God makes no impression on him.
2. The stony hearer: the heart that exhibits a temporary feeling at the appeal of the gospel; but upon whom no permanent impression is made. These hearers receive the Word as something new or pleasing, profess to be greatly delighted with it, and are full of zeal for it. But they are not true Christians. Their hearts have not changed. They are not really attached to the gospel. Their response was just an emotional or superficial one.. When trouble comes, these people abandon their newfound faith because it is too difficult to keep.
3. The thorny soil: the heart that takes in the Word but is so full of worldly cares that they are prioritized over the Word. his describes the world-serving hearer. This person hears the Word but does not love God above all else; the secular world pulls him away from faith and he bears no good fruit/works.
4. The good soil; the good and honest heart; the heart that receives and retains the truth. In such a heart the seed will grow, and the new life will be manifest. A heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties.

Since we are Sowers with God, the more seed you sow, the better the chance will be that some will fall on good soil. If you sow one seed, there is a pretty good chance nothing will grow. If you sow 5 seeds, there is still a chance nothing will grow. If you sow one thousand seeds, it is very likely that some of those seeds will hit good soil and grow up into a healthy plant.

Wherever the Sower is active Satan is also active to inactivate them. What can we do about this? The only thing we can do is pray.

An important application for us is to make sure that we don't fall into any of these first three categories. Through prayer and humility ask God to give you a strong root. Place Him as the first priority over everything in the world so that it doesn't choke your relationship with Him.

Where are you in this parable? Are you sowing a lot of seed, just one seed here or there, or just watching other people sow seeds? Are you the good soil? If so, are you bearing fruit? Do you want to bear fruit 30 or 100-fold? What must you do to bear 100-fold?

Why did Jesus conclude His parable saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear?"

Not everyone was spiritually prepared to understand Jesus' message and get the meaning.

Why did He give the interpretation to only this smaller group of people and not the larger group?

Jesus' closest followers sought to better understand this parable – There is an important spiritual truth here. Where were the other people? If they didn't fully understand, why didn't they come and ask Jesus about it? It seemed that these closest followers cared enough to seek out an answer to their questions while the rest of the people were ambivalent about the true meaning. The lesson for us is to keep studying, learning, asking, and meditating to understand more than before. Jesus rewarded their persistence and sincere questions with the explanation.

What does verse 12 mean? Why? “For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him”.

God has granted knowledge to the disciples because their receptive hearts have made them open to accepting the revealed mystery. Those who have made some spiritual progress will go on and have greater knowledge. But to those who have listened with a closed and critical heart, He will take away even what little they have heard in that they will fail to understand the significance of what Jesus taught. Those who have no desire for spiritual knowledge shall lose even their capacity for spiritual things.

Whoever uses his opportunities will grow; whoever abuses them will lose them.

Verse 15: “It was a voluntary and self-chosen blindness; therefore, He did not say, “They do not see” but “seeing you will see and not perceive;” so that the blindness is of their own wickedness.” St. Chrysostom.

A Sower Went Out to Sow



packed soil



stony ground



thorny ground



good soil

2- The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (13:24-30) its explanation (13:36-43)

It shows the patience of the Lord while waiting for sinners to repent and the inevitability of a final judgment.

Satan opposes the work of God. He not only actively takes away the good seed like we saw in the last parable, but he is planting bad seeds. He is raising evil crops to infiltrate the church as pretenders in order to damage the good crops. A weed is a destructive force in a garden. It zaps nutrients and chokes out good plants. Weeds in the church are also destructive.

God is patient, kind and wise. God does not act immediately against these people because it may damage the true believers. It is also not the job of men to weed out those weeds because we don't know people's hearts. Harvest time will come, and that is the time of separation by God. If one is not a child of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, he has chosen to be a child of Satan.

As long as there is still time, we should never despair, but keep struggling, not uprooting the tares, but rather in working to transform the tares into wheat. Father Isidorus Balbalsam says, the angels ask to uproot the tares, which is to punish the evil ones. But they are forbidden to do so, for them to

have a chance for repentance, and that the righteous would not be harmed. God did not uproot Levi the tax collector, St Peter, nor Saul of Tarsus.

3- The Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32)

A mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds in the world, just 1/20th inch diameter. The “tree” that grows from this seed can grow to be up to 20 feet high.

In this parable, He presents to us the possibilities of the live kingdom that works in the hearts, and that extends to the entire world in spite of the devil’s resistance. It is like a small mustard seed that has been sowed in a field in the earth, surrounded on every side by darkness. The soil presses on it, but ‘life’ that is dormant in it shoots up through the earth, to become a tree, attracting birds to nest in it.

He is giving us a contrast between the start of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and its future expansion to encompass the whole earth, sheltering all who come to dwell in the household of Jesus, that is the Church.

4- The Parable of the Leaven (13:35)

"The Mustard Seed" seems to point mainly to the outward growth of God’s kingdom in us, but the leaven is the inward growth. "The woman" here represents the Church, as she puts the leaven and works silently, and without being seen. The apostles, by preaching the gospel, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind.

Verses 34-35: Divine things cannot be taught to man but through the medium of earthly things. The quote is from Psalms 78:2.

5- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44)

Jesus presents to us the parable of the hidden treasure, where we witness the role of the believer, and his continuous struggle to discover Christ, ‘The hidden treasure in the field.’

This field is no other than the Holy Book which includes in it the mystery of Christ as a hidden treasure. It is only the persistent ones that are blessed with it, those who constantly dig more and more in the Book. It is therefore appropriate for the believer to sell everything so as to possess this field which contains the treasure. This is to be blessed with the treasure and hide it in his heart, just as the church hides her Christ amidst humanity.

For real, no one can possess the Holy Book in his heart, and react with it, unless he forsakes the world whole-heartedly, and concentrates on God’s word. It would not have been possible for Joseph to oversee the barns and storage of Egypt, if he had not left his cloak in the hands of this Egyptian lady [Potiphar’s wife] and ran away naked.

6- The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (13:45-46)

Now He presents to us the cost of this kingdom; actually no one could possess the Lord Jesus, the priceless pearl, unless he sells all that he has from the bottom of his heart and keeps Jesus alone to rule over it.

Both those who found the treasure in the field and that who discovered the valuable pearl had the wisdom to understand what they had found and the determination to give up everything worldly to keep it.

7- The Parable of the Dragnet (13:47-52)

In this parable, the Lord Jesus offers an essential quality for the kingdom of heaven, which is ‘the dynamic life,’ that is to say, ‘the incessant working.’ The kingdom of heaven is similar to a dragnet cast out into the world, just as in a rough sea, and it gathers of every kind and species. It is not brought to the shore except when filled with all the chosen ones. The fishermen cannot stop to sort while they are drawing the nets. Nor can the preachers of the gospel always distinguish between the truthful and who is not.

Here again, as in the parable of the Tares, it is taught that, at the end of the world, the angels shall sort the wicked from the just.

Takeaway and Lesson Delivery Ideas:

A lesson from the parable of the tares and the wheat: What would your final report be like?

God wants us to shine like stars now and be like wheat not tares so at the time of judgment we are sorted out with the good ones. Philippians 2:15.

Are you rooting sin out of your life? In Daniel Ch 6, we see a powerful statement about Daniel’s character in verses 4-5. These people tried every method for finding out Daniel’s secrets. Surely, they spied on him and followed him. They investigated him. They would have done things like checking his projects and paperwork. Asking questions of his co-workers, examining his house and possessions. Throughout history political adversaries are very good at bringing out the secret sins of their opponents. We have an idiom in English, “everyone has a skeleton in their closet.” It means that everyone is hiding something they don’t want others to know about.

But Daniel was not. Although they tried as hard as they could, they could find nothing even remotely shady in Daniel’s personal or professional life. In fact, the only thing they could find to accuse him about is that he was too zealous for serving God! Wow! Isn’t that amazing? Daniel had a shining testimony. It wasn’t an act. It wasn’t fake. He wasn’t one person at the office and another person at home. He wasn’t one person at church and another person in front of his friends. He wasn’t one person on Sunday and another person on the rest of the week. Daniel was the real deal. This is who he was. He was a righteous person who lived like it no matter where he was or who was watching.

I want you to put yourself in Daniel’s place for a moment. Imagine that a team of detectives investigates your life. Their goal is to dig out your secret sins. They want to expose you. They want to prove that you are a different person during the week than on Sundays. So, they dig into every aspect of your life. What will they find? If they were to check your credit card bills and banking account history, what would they find you spend money on? What will they find out about your truthfulness in records? If they were to look in your internet browsing history, what would they see there? If they were to check out what kind of things you watch on your phone when no one else is around, what would they discover?

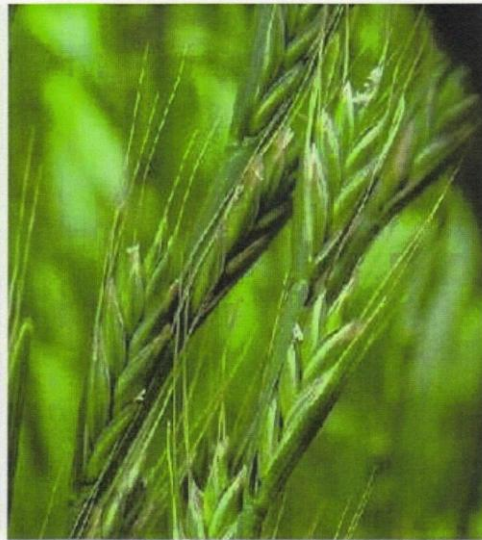
If they were to observe how you treat your family members and record a video of it, would you be okay if it is played at church? If they had the ability to go even deeper, and record the thoughts you think when you are all alone, would you feel comfortable playing those in front of everyone? So, what would the final report be?

Think for a moment about what you would be most afraid of them finding. If you could think of anything, then today take it God and Repent. God can help you clean it. God can help you have a testimony as pure and blameless as Daniel's. We all want to be like Daniel! We would want to pass an investigation like he did. We would want for people who are looking to accuse us to say, "We can find no corruption in His/her only problem is he/she is too zealous for serving God. A person of integrity and righteousness can live with no fear of being caught.

TARES Look **IDENTICAL** To **WHEAT**



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.



TARES: Lolium Temulentum