

Matthew 13

Read Matthew 13:1-23: Jesus was spending time alone with his father as a priority. One result was many miracles. We get that backwards. We run around and keep busy doing good works; while not taking the time to just practice the presence of God.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

Jesus' miracles drew large crowds. Miracles bring crowds in a hurry. We seek to have a larger church or a larger Bible study. Is that always better? The quality *one on one* time gets lost. What is better for evangelism may not be as good for discipling. We should never use God's gifts to attract crowds, or marketing our purposes.

Those seeking miracles were more desperate than most. Jesus was able to communicate with those who had *ears to hear*. Are we ready to take action? Are we desperate enough to look for direction from God? Jesus can't really impact the indifferent or distracted or the content. Jesus used the opportunity of being surrounded by those in dire straits to teach the word to any who were intent on receiving instruction. Was it a blessing to have Roman occupation and brutality? Was the plague of leprosy a blessing? Were the demon-possession ultimately another cause to seek God's help? All of these issues surrounded the healings and salvation opportunities that Jesus handled.

Jesus spoke in parables; when he addressed a mixture of believers and unbelievers. Parables are like coded messages; filtering out those who are not permitted to understand spiritual things. To what degree are we tuned into God's frequency?

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. *There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.* (Psalm 19:1-3)

How much communication does a father give to his son? What if the son does not want to be there? The only message remaining is discipline. If the son shows some interest; more information can be absorbed and shared. It is the same with us and God. When we roll up our sleeves; and treat the Bible like a life tool; it becomes legible to us. We have to demonstrate a willingness to obey, in order to receive added responsibility. There is a higher accountability that comes with the gift of spiritual perception. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Our minds are carnal; and do not comprehend spiritual realities readily. Jesus would begin with a story of something that all hearers were familiar with; and then compare it to something spiritual. Further interpretation requires some spiritual discernment. Are we looking for answers and clues? True followers were sincerely looking for personal application. People who are not followers reject possible application. That is evidence of the fear of the LORD. The crowd *at large* did not believe. The scriptures use a term called the mixed multitude to not only indicate the diversity of ethnicity, but in varied levels of belief as well. Originally the mixed multitude concept described the Egyptians and other friends who accompanied the Hebrews when they left Pharaoh's captivity.

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OF A
PARABLE

Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock. (Exodus 12:37-38)

The concept is refined during the wilderness journey; as it becomes evident who has faith; versus those who are just on the bandwagon for blessings (no commitment to God).

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:19)

It is better to not hear the message if you are going to deny God's still-small voice. Those who are present to hear God's word and witness his miracles have more accountability, and become hardened to the Holy Spirit; as they effectively are say "No". Information about God alone cannot save you. You must entrust and commit yourself to the content of God's message. Denying further proof (miracles, etc..) only increases your capacity to deny God and ignore reality.

For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. (Hebrews 6:6)

It is not just the truth that most people seek. They are really seeking truth about others; while covering their own sensitive shortcomings. Most seek to be comforted in their condition. That can come from: denial, mischaracterizing, or comparison to others.

ONE DEFINITION
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People seek someone who will reinforce their views. Jesus did not like murmuring about the Romans, getting drunk, or tricking someone into paying too much. Jesus saw through the every citizen's false pretenses; which was like inviting a mind reader over for dinner. Most people do not want their most-guarded secrets revealed. We love to hear about the sins of our political leaders; or some local scandal. People would rather not hear the ugly truth if the truth is about themselves. You have to seek the truth; even at a personal cost to move forward.

always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:7)

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. (John 16:12-15)

A parable uses association (like phonics) to remember a lesson. I can teach 10 pages of biblical truth; using one personal story, anecdote or an analogy. Five years from now; you will perhaps only remember the story.

Having ears to hear are the degree of openness to receive and apply the message. The amount of personal set back that you are willing to sacrifice is the degree that you seek the truth. The scriptures are pretty interesting to some people until they begin to see that they have to give up something they cherish. We need a *teachable spirit* to move forward in the kingdom; and in advance our walk with God.

Why did he teach the particular parable of the sower? The seed represents God's word. The soil represents our heart condition. It is a lesson of the receptiveness of the hearer. In other words; it is a parable about why he teaches in parables. A soft and deep soil is necessary for a plant to flourish. We might pridefully imagine that we can be harder and more resolute than God. God does not move out of the way...we have to back down. The scriptures describe a stone in the middle of our path that will that we either alter our course; or trip and fall on it. That stone is Christ. Instead of stubbing our toe as we persist in sin; we should make use of this stone and use it to lay out our plans.

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. (2 Peter 6-8)

We need to have plenty of flexibility to foster personal spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit is always working on my flexibility. Every time I become so invested and focused that I cannot be deterred; I find the Holy Spirit whispering that I *missed the turn off*. I do not like changing direction. I hate going in reverse. This is partially pride. Repentance involves shifting into reverse. Hard circumstances rip and plow our stony heart and breaks down our hardness of heart. Our heart is like a field that gets plowed. Are we

picking up the stones and tossing them out of the field as they get kicked up with the plow...or do we just let them re-incorporate into our life? As our hardness becomes apparent; we can collect the surfacing rocks out of our heart. Shallow soil is a shallow commitment to the message. It is the notion that I might not accept anything that costs me too much. If we can *take it or leave it*; I will lose my opportunity. If we realize scriptures importance; and desperately hold it; and internalize it; the word can have a chance to take root. The birds represent demons looking to take God's word out of our mind. The devil tends to discourage us before things get started, more than after things are moving forward. Anyone can hear a message and get excited about taking on a better direction. The real test is when there is opposition to growth by our life's circumstances. Will our little seedling die because we are letting other interests suck up our time and energy...leaving nothing by default? Where do you ration your daily gallon of water? Is it watering your spirit; or is your energy poured out in the daily grind?

Read Matthew 13:24-30, and 36-43: Jesus teaches another parable. The wheat and the tares are about believers and unbelievers living together in this world. There is no current judgement. We are all left alone to live. When we die; we face our eternal judgement.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

The subject of the story is really the good seed. It is about those who believe. The tares are unbelievers that are allowed to live with

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us. We need to remember that there is a good reason for all that God allows.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. (Romans 8:28)

If the story is about our journey to heaven amidst unbelievers; then the tares are playing a needed role. One benefit is to teach by contrast, and understand grace.

Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, (Romans 9:21-23)

We learn here that the angels to bring the wicked to judgement. Judgement is represented here as burning trash. It is like the Valley of Gehenna (symbolic of hell). The Valley of Hinnom is where people heaped their trash and continually burned it...outside the city gates.

to be cast into hell fire— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'(Mark 9:47-48)

Angels play a role in judgement; like a sheriff bringing a criminal to court. In some cases; Marshall law is allowed.

And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Then He said to them, "Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" And they went out and killed in the city. (Ezekiel 9:3-8)

ACT OF MERCY

Read Matthew 13:31-34: These two parables have multiple applications. They speak of how a lone believer in a pagan culture can be used to affect the surrounding community for Christ.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. (1 Kings 18:22)

It is also important to realize that the nature of faith is to multiply. If your faith is not multiplying in the lives of others; then look to these parables to diagnose your spiritual ailment. Is it getting choked out by concerns and activities of this world?

Another aspect of faith is that it is considered by some to have minimal value. It is just trash or life-clutter to the man who is not looking for it.

Read Matthew 13:44-46: The kingdom is a hidden thing that we are fortunate to get a glimpse at. It is like a buried treasure that no person knows about, except you. It is like a beautiful pearl, closed up in a clam. Once we find out about it; we need to make a plan to acquire it.

Both parables indicate that you can't have everything. You need to trade this world's collectables for the single-most valuable thing in creation. A man who won't sell all that he has; or part with other shiny objects in order to obtain the greatest treasure loses everything in the end.

Read Matthew 13:47-52: A dragnet is a heavy-weighted net that catches everything in its path. There is no way to escape the judgement.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-14)