

(Through the Bible) Matthew 13

by Chuck Smith

Jesus teaches through parables to illustrate truth and to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but also warns of the presence of false elements within the church.

Duration: 44:18

Scripture: Matthew 13:3-9, Matthew 13:16-17, Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36-43, Matthew 13:47-52

Topics: "Judgment Day", "Parables Of Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the net cast into the sea, which represents the world and its people. The net gathers all kinds of people, both good and bad. At the end of the world, the angels will separate the wicked from the just and cast them into the furnace of fire. Jesus uses parables to attract attention and subtly reveal the truth, as stories are an effective way to engage listeners and convey important messages.

Transcript

Now as we enter into the 13th chapter, we come into the area of the parables that deal with the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. And in these, we have more or less a key to all parables. And years ago, when I was in seminary, I had a very smart professor who exhorted us young seminarians to not preach from the parables until we had been pastoring for at least 30 years.

I now qualify. And I wish I had back a lot of those sermons that I preached from the parables when I thought my professor didn't know what he was talking about. But over the years, there has been a definite change in my understanding of the parables.

I do not profess to have a perfect understanding even at this point. And as I look at these parables, I cannot stand before you tonight and say, well no, this is what Jesus meant and have that kind of confidence. All I can share is what I have come to learn and what I have come to believe.

But as I continue to grow, I cannot guarantee that in time, I might even come to other understandings than what I presently possess. I will frankly confess to you that I do not consider my understanding of the parables complete. I'm certain that there is more to be gleaned than what I have yet been able to gather.

The same day Jesus went out of the house and he sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together under him so that he went into a ship and he sat and the whole multitude stood on the

shore. So, now he is sitting.

He has taken the posture of the teacher. And this is to the multitudes. Contrast to the Sermon on the Mount, when his disciples were coming to him, he opened his mouth and taught them saying.

But now he is talking to the multitudes from that little ship just offshore. And he spake many things unto them in parables saying, behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside and the fowls came and devoured them up.

And some fell upon stony places where they did not have much earth. And immediately they sprung up. But because they had no deepness of earth, when the sun was up, they were scorched.

And because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and brought forth fruit, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirtyfold.

Who has ears to hear, let him hear. Now, let's jump for a moment to verse 18, where Jesus explains this parable. And this one we can understand because Jesus explains it.

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it not, then comes the wicked one and catches it away, that which was sown in his heart. And this is he which received seed by the wayside.

But he that received the seed in stony places, the same as he that hears the word, and he receives it with joy at once. And yet he has not root in himself. And thus he abides for just a while.

For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he's offended. He also that received the seed among the thorns is he that hears the word and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received the seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, understands it, and bears fruit and brings forth some hundred, some sixty, some thirty.

Now, Luke also tells us of this parable and Luke gives us a few more words of Christ concerning it. First of all, he tells us that the field is the world. He that sows is the son of man.

The field is the world. The seed is the word of God. And he who sows it is the son of man of Jesus Christ.

God's word sown throughout the world. Some of it falls on the wayside. The birds pluck it up.

The bird is the evil one, Jesus tells us in Luke. Satan immediately comes along and plucks the word out of the person's heart. So, there's an immediate rejection.

There's just no, there's nothing. There's no response. The word doesn't take root.

It does nothing. In the second category, there are those who receive the word with joy. Oh, they get all excited, have a tremendous emotional experience, but there's no depth.

And soon when trials come, persecution begins to come. They fall away because they have lacked depth. They've never rooted themselves in the truth.

They've never really studied. They've never really developed a foundation for their faith. The third category, and unfortunately I think that this is the category that we would probably have to deal mostly with, is that which fell among thorns.

Lives who've received the word of God, there's been that development within them through the word, but thorns have grown up with it. And the thorns ultimately choke out the life that it becomes unfruitful. And when we read that those thorns are the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things, we realize that that fits many of us.

How that our lives are not as fruitful for the Lord as they should be because we've allowed the cares of this world, that desire for riches or for other things, to choke out the fruitfulness from our own lives. And as we look at our lives, we see that we are not bringing forth that fruit that the Lord would have us to bring forth. And so, I would warn you of this third type of soil.

Let us take care lest we be burdened down with the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, so that God's word is not productive in bearing fruit in us. Now, there is what is called expositional constancy. And I think that it is very important in understanding parables that we abide by this law of expositional constancy.

And that is a theological phrase used in homiletics, or hermeneutics actually, whereby in interpreting scripture, if a figure is used to represent something in one passage, every time that same figure is used in a figurative way, it represents the same thing. In other words, here the field is the world. Therefore, in all of the parables where you have a field, in each parable the field represents the world.

The seed is the word of God. Therefore, wherever you have parables that involve the planting of seed, it is the planting of the word of God. And it is important that we establish this expositional constancy, or else you can start reading into the parables other things than what was intended by the parable.

You have to remain true to the types. Otherwise, there would be just total confusion. Now, the question arises, after Jesus spoke this parable, verse 11, or verse 10, the disciples came and they said, Lord, why are you speaking to them in parables? Obviously, it was a beginning of a new method of teaching by Jesus.

And He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away, even that which he has.

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing ye shall hear, and ye shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, their ears are dull to hearing, and their eyes they've closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Now, why did Jesus turn to the parabolic method, or the method of parables? And be careful here, because a lot of people, surface reading would say, well he's trying to hide the truth. He's trying to disguise it, so only his disciples can understand it.

I would like to suggest to you that first of all, that is the opposite reason why a person uses parables. The purpose of a parable is always to illustrate a truth. When a person cannot understand, when a person cannot see, then you use a story.

You take something that is familiar with them, to them, something that they can understand, and you tell the story, and then by the story you illustrate the truth that you're trying to get across to them. Now, the people had come to the place where they were dull of hearing. They were beginning to close their ears.

Stories are always attractive, and they are a method by which the truth can be imparted, as the story unfolds the truth, and you can see it in a parallel form. And the purpose of parables are never really to hide. The purpose of illustrations, and a parable is an illustration.

It is not to hide the truth, but it is to subtly reveal the truth in such a way that you can understand. It's to draw attention, and any good speaker, when he realizes he's beginning to lose his, the attention of the hearers, will say, now let me tell you a story. Everybody wakes up, oh, a story, a story.

You know that it is a means of attracting attention, and you also know that it is a means of illustrating a truth in a very subtle way, because now they see it. Though they may have closed their eyes, maybe they don't want to see, but suddenly they see it. And this happened with Jesus and the Pharisees, as he was later on using some of the parables, he was nailing them, and then all of a sudden, oh, wait a minute, that was against us.

Ooh, you know, and they realized that he was speaking these parables against them, but he was coming at them in a way that he was just telling a story, but suddenly they saw that it was directed towards them, and the truth would hit. And of course, they would become angry when they saw, hey, he really trapped us there, wiped us out with that one, you know. And so Jesus, because of the dullness of their hearing, because of the blindness of their eyes, because of the attitude, he now turns.

He will still seek to reveal the truth. Jesus isn't trying to hide truth from men. Jesus wants to reveal truth to man.

But if a man cannot take it straight, then he will couch it in an illustration in order that they might catch the parallel and still get the truth. So this is why he began to adopt the form of parables. Therefore, he said, verse 17, many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and they have not seen them.

You hear those things which you hear, and they have not heard them. And then he explained to them the parable of the sower. Now, in verse 24, another parable he put forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man which sowed good seed in his field.

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares. Now, here is seed that is being sown, but it is definitely declared that it's bad seed, the tares among the wheat, and he went his way. And when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then there also appeared the tares.

So the servants of the household came and said, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where did these tares come from? And he said unto them, An enemy has done this. And the servant said unto him, Shall we go out and gather them up? And he said, No, lest while you are gathering up the tares, you also root up some of the wheat. Let them both grow together until the harvest.

And in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. Now, Jesus is beginning to show that the kingdom of heaven, the church, is not going to be a perfect representation. That there are going to arise within the church that which is not true, that which is not genuine, that which is false.

The tares will be there with the wheat. There will be that seed that falls on the stony ground. There will be the seed that falls among thorns.

There will be those that will be unfruitful. And as far as the tares are concerned, there will be even worse than those that are unfruitful. There will be those that will grow up within the church system.

There will come into the church system within the kingdom of heaven that which is manifestly wrong. And rather than rooting it out, let them grow together until the harvest, until the end, and then gather the tares and put them in the fire and burn them, but the wheat into the barn. So that into the system of God's kingdom, there will come that which the enemy has planted.

And God knows there are enemies to the cause of Christ in the church today. I cannot, for the life of me, understand those men who are in the pulpits across the country today who do not believe that the Bible is God's inspired word. What are they then teaching? Why are they in the pulpit? If they do not believe the word of God to be the word of God, if they do not believe the Bible to be divinely inspired of God, then what are you teaching the people? And there are tares that are growing with the wheat.

And it upsets me because every time you get some kind of an article in the paper that deals with controversy, you can always find some stupid liberal theologian that will come with some position against those who are evangelical and all, and will make all of these derogatory statements against anyone who has a fervent love for Jesus Christ. And yet, you know, Dr. So-and-so, the pastor of such a church, you know, declares, well, it's just, you know, a fad among the young people. It'll all pass, you know.

And this kind of, you know, I don't understand. Well, the Lord says, let them grow. Now, you see, if I were God, I wouldn't let them grow together.

I'd say, go out and get rid of them, you know, wipe them out. But God has his reasons, and the Lord is warning us here. Now, another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds.

But when it is grown, it is the greatest among the herbs. Now, most of your herb plants are very small. You know, you grow them in little boxes in your windowsill.

But of all the herb plants, the mustard is the biggest. And, of course, mustard plants can get as high as the pulpit here. It's the biggest of the herbs that you grow.

But Jesus said concerning this particular mustard seed that it became a tree. Now, that's an abnormality. So that the birds of the air come to lodge in the branches thereof.

Now, there are those expositors who say that this is a parable that is illustrating how that the kingdom of heaven will have a small beginning. Jesus is going to start with his twelve disciples. But as they have preached the gospel, the influence of the gospel is going to spread until it is a great tree and the birds of the air can come and nest in it.

So that glorious influence of the gospel, as it gradually spreads from just a very small, humble beginning as a small little mustard seed, but grows into a great tree. Problems. In expositional constancy, what are the birds? They are the ones, the evil ones, who came and plucked up the seed so it could not take root, could not grow.

From this expositional constancy, birds are always used in a bad sense in your analogies or in your comparisons. So, in as much as in the previous parable, he pointed out that there were going to be tares that are going to be growing along with the wheat in the kingdom. He is only further illustrating the same thing as the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, but somehow it has abnormal growth.

It grows bigger than what it really is intended to be. The true kingdom of heaven is, well, let me just say this. I think that the world council of churches is the wild mustard seed that's grown abnormally out of proportion.

It's a monstrosity. And every bird of heaven lodges in its branches. And if you can think of any evil, vile thing to support, notify them.

They'll be glad to do it. But I believe that that's exactly what Jesus is warning us about. That there will be this abnormal forced thing of man, not representative of the true righteous kingdom of heaven.

And it will become a shelter for all kinds of evil purposes as the church has been used today as a shelter for all kinds of evil purposes. Read Reader's Digest this month. If you are questioning what I'm saying about the world council of churches, that doesn't make your blood boil.

You're dead. Now, another parable he's spoken to them. The kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.

Now, again, there are two interpretations. The first is that the kingdom of heaven being like leaven, leaven having this unique, uh, capacity of permeating a whole loaf. All you do is take your little starter and you mix up a new batch of dough and you take a starter that is a piece from the last batch that's already fermented.

And you put it into the new batch of dough and this little batch of leaven, the fermented from the old loaf, will permeate and the whole loaf will become permeated with the leavening process of just a little leaven hid in this measure of meal, three measures, it'll leaven the whole thing. And so, the church is going to have, though it starts very small, is gradually going to develop and grow until it influences the whole world for good. And they teach that this will be the influence of the church.

It will ultimately permeate and influence the entire world. So, it starts off just so small, but yet this effect of the gospel in permeating the whole world. As I look at the world today, I cannot honestly rejoice for the tremendous effect that the world has received from the influence of the church.

I look at a sick world, a world that seems to me is getting sicker every day. I have difficulty with that particular interpretation also, because leaven is always used in the scripture as a type of sin. Jesus said to his disciples, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Paul, writing to the Galatians concerning the problems that were existing there, said, don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Writing to the Corinthians concerning an incestuous relationship, he said, purge out the old leaven. And always leaven is used expositionally as a type of evil, of sin, because leaven is actually the process of deterioration by rotting. And thus it makes a beautiful type of sin that has

a way of permeating the total person.

It has a way of rotting. It has a way of destroying. Its influence is permeating and rotting, not destroying necessarily, but rotting and permeating.

So the other interpretation is that Jesus is giving a series of parables in which he is illustrating the same truth or making the same warning all the way along, that the church is not going to be perfect, that there will come into the church evil influences that will actually permeate themselves through the entire church. Now, I would like to suggest historically that this indeed has happened and that even we ourselves are not totally devoid of the leavening influence of the Babylonian religion that was introduced into the church by Constantine. There was introduced into the church this leavening agent back at the time of Constantine as he sought to bring together the pagan world in Christianity by bringing the pagan holidays, the pagan celebrations and the pagan rituals and all right into the church, taking from the old ancient mystery Babylon religion and incorporating that into the church.

It was leaven and it began to leaven the whole lump until it is, you can point around to the church today and you can see all kinds of remnants of that ancient Babylonian religion that even we ourselves are not totally free of. I say that because we still celebrate Christmas and Easter, which have their pagan origins, not Christian origins. It's a part of the leaven that leavened the whole lump.

Now, all of these things, Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables and without a parable, he did not speak unto them that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet saying, I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house and his disciples came into him and they said, declare to us the parable of the tares of the field.

And he answered and said unto them, he that soweth the good seed is the son of man. So you have now your expositional constant. The field is the world expositional constant.

The good seed are the children of the kingdom. Interesting expositional constant, which puts a whole light on the other things. But the tares are the children of the wicked one.

The enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels. And therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire.

And so shall it be at the end of this world. The son of man shall send forth his angels. They shall gather out of his kingdom.

Notice out of his kingdom, all of those things that offend and then which do iniquity. They will grow together. It'll be a corrupting influence within the church.

It's the sad history of the church that it has been corrupted by these influences within it. And he shall cast them into the furnace of fire and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.

And whoever has ears to hear, let him hear. So, uh, quite heavy. Again, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure hidden in the field, the which when a man is found, he hides.

And for the joy thereof, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Two interpretations. Number one, the kingdom of heaven is glorious.

It's like a treasure. When you discover it, man, you know, you go out and sell everything in order that you might obtain that treasure by the field, obtain the treasure. The other, I preached some tremendous sermons on that interpretation.

That was before I'd been pastoring for 30 years. That one has a serious flaw. The doors to the kingdom of heaven are open freely to every man.

You don't have to buy it. You can't buy it. It's a gift of God.

Again, what is the field? The field is the world. Who then gave everything to purchase the world? Jesus Christ. What then is the treasure? Are you ready for this? You.

Back in the Old Testament, the story of Ruth, classic example of the law of redemption, where Boaz ultimately purchased the field in order that he might have the bride. He told his brother, hey, you know, Elimelech, our brother, sold the field that's coming up for redemption, the right of redemption, you're the guy. He said, oh, I'll take it.

He said, well, here's a catch. Whoever takes it has to take Ruth as his wife to bear a child by her for the family. Oh, he said, my wife won't allow me to do that.

He said, Boaz, why don't you buy it? Boaz says, all right, I'll do that. Because he was in love with Ruth and he bought the field in order that he might obtain the bride. Now, in this case, the treasure is the church.

And Jesus purchased the field in order that he might obtain the treasure. He didn't need another world, but yet he came to redeem this world. Now, you remember that when Jesus came, Satan took him into a high mountain and showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

And he said, all of these will I give unto you if you will bow down and worship me, for they are mine and I can give them to whomever I will. Jesus didn't dispute that. It belonged to Satan because man had forfeited it to Satan.

Jesus came to redeem it back to God, but not by bowing down to Satan, but by going to the cross and there shedding his blood and paying the price of redemption. And so Jesus purchased the world in order that he might take the bride out of it, his church, the treasure. So the parable became even more beautiful when I came to a real understanding.

And the next is of parallel. The kingdom of heaven likened to a merchant man, again the Lord, seeking goodly pearls. But the interesting thing is, is that a pearl to a Jew was not considered a valuable ornament.

It was something that was prized by Gentiles, not the Jews. So when you come to this pearl of great price, you're coming to really the Gentile bride of Christ. Or you're coming basically to the whole bride of Christ composed of Gentiles also.

Basically, it is always basic Jewish, but composed also of Gentiles who, when he has found one pearl of great price, went out and sold all that he had and bought it. Now, Jesus isn't the pearl of great price that you have to sell everything and buy him. The gift of Jesus is by free grace to you.

He is the one who gave everything in order that he might redeem you. Now, again, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a net that is cast into the sea and gathered of every kind. The sea, of course, is the, again, the world of people, humanity, in an expositional constancy.

And so the net is cast into it. And men gather, they pull it in and it has every kind in it, which when it was full, they drew it to shore and they sat down and they gathered the good into vessels, but they cast the bad away. And so it will be at the end of the world, the angels will come forth and sever the wicked from among the just and shall cast them into the furnace of fire and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus said unto them, have you understood all these things? And they said unto him, yes, Lord. Oh man, I don't understand them yet, but it's interesting. Then he said unto them, therefore, every scribe which is instructed under the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that is a householder which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.

So there are these glorious things that we are constantly discovering in the richness in Christ and ever discovering new experiences in the old truths. And so the faithful householder who keeps bringing forth out of the treasury, these glorious things came to pass that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed from there. And when he was coming to his own country, that is the area of Nazareth, he taught them in their synagogue in so much that they were astonished.

And they said, where did he get this wisdom? And how is he doing these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary and his brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, and his sisters? Aren't they still living here? Where did he get all of these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, a prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own household. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Self-explanatory. So we pray. Oh Lord, we ask that you by your Holy Spirit will reveal thy truth to our hearts.

Thy word is truth. Lord, we realize that there is so much to be gained through the work of your Spirit in teaching us thy ways. Give us, Father, a greater faith, a greater knowledge, a greater knowledge of thyself.

Lord, help us that we might bring forth fruit, hundredfold Lord, preferably. God, let our lives abound with the fruit of thy Spirit. Root out, oh Lord, those thorns that would choke out the fruitfulness from our lives, cause us to become sterile.

Oh God, help us, we pray, to so commit ourselves unto you and to the kingdom that we will seek first, primarily, the kingdom of God and your righteousness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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