

# The Church - Part 1

by Les Wheeldon

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*This sermon explores the complexities of the Church through scripture and history, emphasizing its glorious nature amidst challenges.*

**Duration:** 1:11:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:1-9, Matthew 13:24-33, Matthew 13:44-50

**Topics:** "Church"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the parables of the age of mixture in Matthew chapter 13. He emphasizes that these parables serve as a warning about the temporary state of mixture in the church. The speaker explains that the parable of the leaven symbolizes sin, as leaven is never portrayed positively in Scripture. He highlights that the kingdom of God is not like leaven, but rather it is the church filled with life from God. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing and refusing to listen to those who try to define the church in a way that goes against the teachings of Jesus.

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## Transcript

Well, this is the first of a series on the Church, which I'm sure has been, has that been announced, that it's on the Church? And, er, I've also been asked by Judith that I may interweave in it something of Church history. Has that always also been announced? Church history. Alright, that was a... so we will see what we can do.

I mean, I'm not an expert on Church history. But what I find that that slant, or if you like, that angle does to my thinking, and it's a very useful angle, is because it makes your thinking much more rooted in reality. Because you can do a study on the Church, which is simply the Glorious Church.

You know, this author has a book, His Glorious Church, and that title of the book, His Glorious Church, is a wonderful title. And it's, of course, scriptural, because the scripture speaks in Ephesus' Ephesians chapter 5, a glorious church. But when you look at history, you're then faced with a dilemma.

Because you have a range of people, going from, well, the Apostles, through the Martyrs, to a conversion of an Emperor named Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, was converted, apparently. And then the rising of the Popes, the Bishop of Rome, Augustine of Hippo, all these different figures. And eventually you come to the Popes of the Middle Ages, then you come to Luther, and others of the reformers.

And then you come to all kinds of things happening, and you see things that puzzle you. And we could look now at church history, and we would be aware, even in our own direct experience, the history of churches that we've been involved with, have sometimes been incredibly painful and confusing. So if the whole story were a glorious church, then you could end up leaving the study thinking, well that was wonderful, but how does it relate to my church where I'm going through this, or what about that? And one of the puzzling things also is that you have to ask yourself, you know, the reality of church life.

Where is the reality? Now, tonight we're going to look at some teaching of Jesus from the New Testament. But I'll just tell you some of the things I shall be talking about. I shall be talking about the church through the ages tonight.

The church through the ages. As prophesied by Jesus. Alright? The prophecies of Jesus concerning his church.

I'm not looking at church history, I'm looking at scripture. Alright? And then another time, I'm not sure, this is the order I've written them out here, and I shall be looking at some of the fundamentals. For example, here's a fundamental.

Christ, the head of the church. Christ, the foundation of the church. The revelation of Christ.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that which forms a church. The ministries of the church. The priesthood of the church.

Elders and leaders, how the church is governed. Carnality and division in the church splits their causes and their healing. And the grounds of unity in the church.

That's just to give you some idea of all the breadth of subjects you cover when you look at the church. Now tonight, as I said, my subject is the church throughout the ages. And this is really a foundation for our whole subject.

Let's look into Matthew's Gospel and into chapter 13. And this chapter 13 would open to me some years ago now. I suddenly saw the whole chapter in another dimension, as I said, as a prophecy of the age in which we live.

Chapter 13 as a prophecy of our age. Now the teaching of Jesus is like that. You can see the teaching of Jesus as a lovely little insight into this or into that.

Sometimes if you take the sermons of men, that's what they're like. An insight here, an insight there. But the teaching of Jesus is not just a little insight.

It is a foundation for understanding that which we read about. Now when you look into chapter 13, one of the things you will immediately be aware of is you'll tell me the word church does not appear in chapter 13. And you're absolutely right.

And so I'll have to explain that a little bit more in a moment. But you see, one of the puzzling things about the church, and when I say the prophecies of Jesus concerning the church, you see, one of the puzzling things is that Jesus only mentioned the church twice. That's in Matthew chapter 16 and Matthew chapter 18.

Perfectly, again, because he was prophesying about the church as he would build it. And that was not just the church from Pentecost. It was a church here, a church everywhere.

He's talking about the church. So we'll look at those in another context. But of course the whole teaching of Jesus is concerning his church.

So when you look at the Sermon on the Mount, although you're looking at the laws of the kingdom, you're also looking at that which should be in the church. Now, we have, through the ages of the church, we have great errors that have come up. And we could look at the reason for these errors.

One of the greatest tragedies of the church is that great errors have come in because people have not seen the church as it was intended to be seen. They've seen it more as a continuation of Old Testament Israel. Working with a kind of government of God in a distant way, and something to be outworked in a kind of a social order.

And we'll look at different things like this. So you find two different kinds of churches in every nation today. Two different kinds.

One, the true church, if I can use that phrase. And then you find also other churches which are not biblical churches. They're more gatherings which are more on the pattern of Old Testament Israel.

Now, I'm just giving you a little bit of a forward idea of what we're going to look at. But now tonight we're going to look at Matthew chapter 13. And we're going to look at it in terms of the church.

Now this Matthew chapter 13 is a series of seven parables followed by a little picture which could be an eight if you like. But there are seven parables in Matthew chapter 13. The first, one of the most famous parables of all, the parable of the sower.

Followed by the parable in verse 25-24 the parable of the wheat and the tares. Then verse 31, the parable of the grain of mustard seed. Verse 33, the parable of the leaven.

Verse 44, the fifth one, the treasure hid in a field. Verse 45, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a merchant man seeking goodly pearls. So we've found one pearl, that's the sixth parable, one pearl.

And then the seventh parable, the net. Now, these parables are all about the kingdom of heaven. That's what we read in verse 24, the kingdom of heaven.

And so these parables are not actually purely and simply about the church. They are about more than the church. They are about the kingdom of heaven.

And the church and the kingdom of heaven is a phrase. If you said, is the church the kingdom of heaven? Is the kingdom of heaven the church? I would be forced to answer, no, they are not one and the same thing. Rather, one is contained within the other.

So the kingdom of heaven is there, a greater kingdom, but then within that kingdom you have the church. So when you begin to talk about the kingdom of heaven, it's a wider phrase. When Jesus is giving this teaching, he's also talking about the principles which govern this, our age, in which we can see the church.

Now, why is this important? Well, the importance is because you cannot read this chapter 13 without realising this great truth that Jesus is talking about an age of mixture. An age of mixture. So when we

speak of a glorious church, which we shall be speaking of, we shall be speaking of a glorious church, we have to understand it alongside an age which is not perfect.

Now if I said to you, this is not the age of perfection in the church, you would say, well, I could have told you that. But then what do you do with that truth? Do you give up the great ideals of the church? And abandon the great ideals and give way to despondency? Do you go over and become disappointed and say, they shall never be? This is what happens to some people. And we need to understand that Jesus, when he looked at the age of the church, he looked right down the years and could foresee exactly what would happen and gave us insight and understanding of what will be in this, our age in which we live, so that we should not be disappointed and never cease to live for the glory.

Because there is one thing absolutely clear, that what is needed by men and women is the glory. You need the glory of God. You need to be washed in the wonderful, life-giving, love-charged glory of God.

You need to be in that glory and you must never lose the hope of the glory of God. It may come under attack and you may be disappointed here and there along the way, but never, never accept the disappointment as something that annuls the promise of God. And so what we are saying now at the foundation of our studies on the church is that what I'm going to point you to tonight is, I'm going to point you to the glory of the church in the midst of some circumstances that are confusing, some that are sorrowful, but it is for you not to assume therefore that the glory cannot be known.

You can know the glory and you can abide in the glory all the way through. You can keep your heart in the things of God. And this is the important thing.

In other words, though there be difficult days, and who can look back on two thousand years of church history and say there have never been difficult days? If we should look through this, one of the things we must understand is that the most important work going on in the earth today is the church. It's the church. And it is God's glory, His purpose, His will to build His church.

And because that is God's plan and purpose in our age, you can be sure of one thing, there is a vicious enemy of the work of God. And remember that the church is the centre of God's affection. You are the apple of God's eye.

You're His beloved bride. You're His most precious one. But equally you are the most hated and opposed by the Prince of Darkness.

But as we see the church in all its glory, we also see the enemy of the church, the devil, opposing the church with viciousness, hatred and anger to destroy the church. And God has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church. And this is where we have to draw our comfort.

Yes, we're going to look at the grounds for things that we don't understand. But we're also going to see that through it you are to fix your eyes clearly on the Lord and on His purpose for this age. And you are to get your heart engaged in the will and the work of God to build His church.

And we'll see some interesting things in this chapter. Well, let's start with this chapter 13, verse 3. Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And he sowed and some seeds.

And you know the story. I don't particularly want to dwell on this first parable because this is the parable which tells you of the mixture of response to God's word. Now, this is one of the most obvious truths.

But when you look about on a congregation of people, you are not looking on a people of equal response to the word of God. So immediately you have the fact that the work of the church must always be the work of patience with the souls of men. And also work whereby you, in your judgment of what the church is, This is one of the great difficulties immediately in judging what the church is.

You already have a problem because when you begin to define the church, you'll find that many men who were great men of the church, according to Scripture, were never members of Christ's body. And I have a book at home, I don't think I've brought it with me, it's called The History of Christianity. I like that title.

The History of Christianity. It is not the title of another book I have, which is called The Pilgrim Church. The Pilgrim Church is the story of believers often despised in every age, in every age of history there have been believers who have followed the Lord and been true to him in terrible circumstances sometimes.

But the history of those who followed him. The history of Christianity is the history of everybody who claims to be part of the church, whether they are or not. So that's the history of the popes.

It's the history of all kinds of strange movements. The history of Christianity would include looking at certain sects which we would all agree are not true representatives at all of the Christian faith. Because they deny, say, some sects deny the Godhead of Jesus.

And so you've got the history of Christianity, but then you have the history of his church. His church. And you can trace that history distinctly.

If you set the conditions for it, you'll trace the history. But you see, when you look at a group of people, what you cannot see is, you cannot see the church by looking at the visible church. How many churches are there in Bracknell? I remember reading a little introductory pamphlet to a church.

I think it was a church in North London. I think it was Chase Fellowship actually. They handed out this introductory leaflet to anybody who came in.

And it said, Welcome to Chase Christian Fellowship, part of the church in Enfield. And I like that. That struck me.

Yes, that's true. This is not the whole church in Enfield. It's part of the church in Enfield.

And that was true, but the other is also true. When you go and visit Chase Fellowship, and you meet somebody at the door who's half drunk, that is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. It may be somebody about to become one.

But you understand, you can meet a group of people who are just coming, they're gathering, and you can see there, there might be ten drug addicts in the meeting. There might be people living in a terrible state of life. And you say, that's a funny church, but you have to know that not everybody who comes to the meeting, that's obvious, isn't it? Now that's true when you meet some people who've just come in for their first visit.

It's also true of some people who've been there twenty years, who've never let Christ deal with their pride or their sin. They've never known the power of God to change them. So they were never part of this church.

And they may be bitter, angry, all kinds of things. What they're saying here is, when you look on a, here the sow went out to sow, and some fell on the wayside, some fell on stony ground, and some fell among thorns, and some fell on good ground. And so you look upon a company of people, and you see mixed responses to the word of God.

And immediately you see you have the truth that when you look on a church, you don't, not that you're supposed to look and say, well he looks OK, and he looks a bit like a bit stony ground, and he looks as if he's got a ring on, you can, of course, these are not given to us to go and examine people. They're given to us so that we may know our own heart. What's my heart response? Of course everybody says, I'm the good bit.

I hardly meet anybody who says, I'm that one. But you, the truth is that when you hear this teaching, you are to examine your heart, and look carefully as to where you are in God's dealing with you. And you find people who rejoice.

This is those, the seed fell on the rock, it sprung, it springs up, tremendous. You know, that's wonderful, look at that person, how quickly they're going on. And three months later, bit of trouble, persecution, where have they gone? And so we have this difficulty, and this is what Jesus is saying here, it's a prophecy of the state of hearts, it's a prophecy of what will confuse men about the kingdom of God.

You can come into the church, and you can find somebody in the church who will treat you just even worse than a worldly person will treat you. You can find it in the church. It's in the church, visible.

You see, when you begin to examine these issues, let me tell you a statement that will probably shock you. Well, I don't want to shock you, but here it is. You cannot split the church of Jesus Christ.

It's impossible. Now you'll say that, what do you mean? You cannot do it. You'll have to examine that in greater light.

You can trouble it, but you understand there's something indivisible about the church. I'm talking about those who are in His love. In Him.

There's something indivisible about the church. Now you'll have to qualify that, because in one way you say, well, what about this, and what about that? But the truth is this, you can think of all kinds of scriptures, but the point is this. Those who are in His love, filled with His love, cannot be torn asunder.

You can only be torn asunder if your heart is not in the love of God. That doesn't mean to say that every split is a condemnation of everybody involved. What I'm saying is that you must look for the cause of these things in the hearts of carnal men.

Not in the heart of God, obviously. How could you split the Father from the Son? You cannot divide the body of Christ. Is Christ divided? No.

Christ cannot be divided. If it's His body, He cannot be divided against Himself. You can only be divided against Him if in some measure you have rejected Him.

That's not the whole story, because there are situations where I have no doubt that any man of God would split a church, a local church, and I would. If somebody stood up in our meeting and said Jesus is not God, I would say, unless that is utterly renounced by this body of people, I will leave this church and start

meeting somewhere else. I would do that, because it denies everything on which we're built as a church.

So, we've got a lot to look at there, but the thing is what you've got here is this truth that here's this body of people with mixed responses and here's the truth that you have to be patient. You can be idealistic about the church, but what you have to realise is that you are dealing with all different kinds of people coming. Right, now let's move on to this second parable, because the second parable, we may come back to the first one, but let's look at the second parable, which is the parable of the wheat and the tares.

And here already you have this prophecy that in our age it is not one pure wheat field. It's a mixed field. Now this is one of the grounds on which great confusion and disappointment has come, because in times of revival, men get idealistic and they begin to think now we've got the keys, this is going to be the best church ever.

And then after some time, trouble comes. But here in this second parable, the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed, this is verse 24, he sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went his way. It says, Darnell, but when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the weeds also.

Identical. So the servants, until a certain point, so the servants of the house all came and said to him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? Where have these weeds come from? Among your people. He said to them, an enemy has done this.

The servants said unto him, do you want then that we should go and gather them up? He said, no, lest while you gather up the weeds, you root also the wheat with them. Let both grow together till the harvest, and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather you together first the tares, the weeds, bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. And here is a little warning coming through this teaching of Jesus, and I hope this warning will remain with you.

It's the warning, which we will hear repeated at the end of the chapter in the seventh parable, it's the warning that now is the time when evil is alongside good. If you like, it's a mixed age, it's the age of mixture. When two opposites live side by side.

And this is true of our age. But the truth is this, and this is the warning, this is temporary. This will not continue forever.

The age is coming when the separation will take place. In other words, if a soul said, well I can do this because so and so does it, watch out, because if you are living a lie against the word and teaching of Jesus Christ, covering yourself behind the fact that others are doing it, watch out, you are living in an age of mixture. When evil men live as next door neighbours to good men.

I'm using this only in terms of those who have found God has regenerated. But there's coming a day when the separation will take place and there will no longer be an opportunity. And it will finish.

Now in this age he says, yes, look out across the field, look, it's a mixture. Here he says there are people here in this field who are actually the product of the activity of Satan. And you will not belong in the work of God before you realise that there are elements that work amongst the people of God.

Things coming amongst us. Doctrines we hear of. Individuals sometimes.

And I have been privileged to travel and meet somebody. Sometimes you meet a church where they say, well this man has joined us and he's visited this one in their home and that one in their home and he's convinced them of this. I know churches where the pastor has run me up and said, look, everybody in the church has gone after this.

And it's a season of troubling for that church because something is coming in and shaking people on all kinds of levels. And they don't know what to do with it. And you can't put your finger on it.

And it's this and that. Sometimes it's a movement. Sometimes it's this or whatever.

But the point is, what you look out upon is a mixed field. And you are not to be disappointed when you look on a church you sometimes see activity which is not of God but is definitely of the devil. It's we.

Can't we see it's we? This is not the fruit of God's word. This is not what we expected. This is the activity of Satan.

Surely, where have these we's come from? This is the work of an enemy. Right among God's people. And sometimes we grow impatient and sometimes if you're a pastor you say, can I not remove this person from the church? And that person, if I could only do that, my life would be easy.

This person's troubling the church. Of course, that's a nice easy answer. Let me go through the church and weed out any troublemakers and weed out anybody who's whinging and a complainer.

Let's stop all those coming who come one minute late. Oh dear, no, no, no. We only have me and thee.

No, you were a minute late. Wait till I'm caught in traffic and you can quote me on that. But you understand that what we look out on is, we smile, but the truth is this, that we are not to demand perfection from the church.

You are not to demand it. And I know that in one way, that if a church is to grow, it must grow with an understanding and a loving heart that the center of the church is patient with all. You know that in the former communist bloc, and this has happened also in Cameroon when I was there, that the government sometimes sends spies in among the church to go and see what they say, what they really say.

And it's lovely because sometimes the spies sit there listening to the word of God and they get converted. Now that's true of a direct spy, but if the enemy sends people, of course it happens to them too. Remember, people aren't sent by the devil knowing they're sent, but they just come for different reasons.

Sometimes they come, but all kinds of, the church is a mixed group. It is not something you can look at and say, ah, this is it, we've reached perfection. We are not living in the perfect age, and people have said, if you find the perfect church, don't join it.

People say little quips like this, and it sounds so funny, and it's also interesting. But the truth is this, you are to look for perfection, because it exists. It exists.

This is what the Hebrew writer says, let us go on unto perfection. There's perfection. But you are not to look for these things because in an unreal way, trying to build the perfect church, you're to look for perfection where it lies, in Christ.

And you are to dwell in the perfect one. When you dwell in perfection, I'll tell you one thing will happen, you will be perfect love to everyone, wherever they are, at whatever level they're at, you will begin to love them perfectly. All right, now let's go on to another parable, because these parables are, as I said, prophecies of our age.

Here's another prophecy of our age, verse 31. The kingdom of heaven is like 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 herbs, and become as a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it. Now there is no doubt in scripture that the birds of the air are a picture of evil, not of good.

And in this particular parable, Jesus is prophesying a state which is particularly conducive for the activity of demons, birds of the air. What is it? Well, it's quite simple, this. Unnatural growth.

Unnatural growth. Because you know that no mustard seed will grow into the greatest tree in the forest. I don't know if anybody here knows anything about trees, but mustard seeds never become the greatest tree.

They're always remaining. And even if they grow big, they're very weak. If it's very big, it's an unnatural growth.

Now where do we find unnatural growth in the church? There can be all kinds of reasons for unnatural growth. One of the areas where you find unnatural growth is in organizations which take over the supervision of the church. Now I'm not saying this can always be avoided, but the truth is that churches outgrow themselves and organizations begin to take over.

Various things happen and very soon you have an enormous organization. And the bigger it is, the more it will become a place, a foothold for evil. So Christian organizations become a place where there are footholds for evil.

You might say, what are you saying? What awful thing are you saying? Let me give you some of the examples. Let me give you an example from, I don't want to say anything really, but you know that a Christian university, let's build a Christian university. Let's have our faculty.

How do you recruit a faculty? A Christian hospital, a Christian organization. You know what you'll get eventually? You will soon have a necessity to recruit people for two different reasons. One will be their spiritual life, the other will be their academic qualifications.

And in every area where you have these things, you suddenly have this problem, this conflict. OK, he's the right man spiritually, but he hasn't got the academic qualifications. He's the right man academically, he's got to have the job.

And so you find organizations taking over and growing bigger and bigger. And so you find that when a movement, you can take any movement in history from now, you could take the Methodist church, the Salvation Army, you could take anything. When it starts with the excitement and the move of God and the men, but then it begins to organize, it begins to outgrow itself in terms now of not actual growth, but actually now organizing itself, and suddenly you have positions created.

You have things needed. For example, you find in history, strange things happen like Gypsy Smith was expelled from the Salvation Army. Now does that condemn the Salvation Army? Well please forgive me if

it sounds as I'm not condemning any movement.

All I'm pointing out is the dangers when that great umbrella outgrows itself to the point where it takes on a life of its own. There is unnatural growth. In the church.

The worst examples of it are of course the largest denominations. The largest denominations in the world, you will find things happening in them which absolutely are a scandal. Absolute scandal.

And here you've got this truth that the body of Christ is not a huge organization. It's a living organism in its living attachment to Christ. Now have I by this condemned every large organization? No I've not.

Because Christ is at work in all kinds of large organizations. And they're there. What Christ is warning in this prophecy He's warning you of the dangers that come when organization takes on its own path.

You know that I believe that administration is not the central function of apostolic gifting. But that's what it becomes when the church outgrows itself. When it ceases to be a living organism and begins to work out now how can we build this? How can we do that? And we begin to get replaced by committees.

I believe that one of the great deaths of the church is the committee. We are governed by God the Holy Ghost infusing life into every part of the church. And as soon as you've built up this man has got the deciding power.

But is he going to move in the spirit? That committee will come up with a decision. How will they come up with a decision? Will they wait on God? This group of men will appoint somebody for this. But how will they appoint them? You know I remember working not in but some of my fellow missionaries were in a church called the apostolic church which I respect these churches for the things they've done.

This is the Pentecostal church the apostolic church. But you know that when an apostle died or moved on or they have apostles, prophets all these things the committee appointed the next one. And I'm horrified thinking how can a committee appoint an apostle to replace one? So this is what you're faced with.

Organisation. You cannot organise life. You can't do it.

Either there is life in the body or not. And this is the truth of this. He's saying there's an unnatural growth of the church and there's unnatural developments of the church whereby some things begin to happen and branches occur and growth occurs in which birds of the air will lodge and cause havoc.

And sometimes things happen you know that certain things happen in large organisations that are scandalous. I mentioned the university but I remember the biography of Keith Green and he went to visit Oral Roberts University this is an account of a public event he went to visit Oral Roberts University and he preached against immorality and homosexuality on that university campus and various prominent students, one of the leaders of the student body confessed to homosexual acts and various ones came down and repented until there came a moment when one of the professors got up and said let's not get all serious about this this is just going over the top let's leave this the university is not a church a committee is not the church and again what you're faced with is when you're looking at these prophets of Jesus he's looking out on our age and he's saying what is my church? and he's saying that which is filled with life from God and that's the third parable we then come to the fourth parable because this is perhaps one of the most important of all of them well, who could say that? but each one has got its own importance here's the fourth parable when he speaks of a woman who the king of heaven is likened to the whole of leaven which

a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened now here you've got this whereby you could say the kingdom of God is like leaven and it isn't the church is not like leaven the kingdom of God is not like leaven look at this second parable the kingdom of God is like a man no he's talking about the whole parable in this parable the kingdom of heaven is not like leaven it's like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened it's the whole picture it's the whole event leaven in scripture on not one single occasion is ever anything positive it is always the picture of sin now this parable could be understood let's assume that the leaven is the kingdom of heaven what does it mean?

God brings his kingdom into this world by creating his church through the blood of his son and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost wonderful what happens as a result of that that leaven works throughout all society until the whole world is Christian if you believe that's what that parable means then you believe that this the Christian gospel is working away quietly to convert the whole world but you and I, we all know that has never been so in human history neither is it so in our age so what does it mean? it means this this is the kingdom of this is the church if you like unleavened bread there it is, unleavened bread now we're on real ground now because that's Biblical the church is unleavened bread not leavened bread, it's unleavened bread the feast of unleavened bread even in Corinthians the unleavened all this, this wonder unleavened bread, we are the church of unleavened bread what does that mean? freed from sin by the power of God what's this? what's this in the world? we've got the other activity coming in again the activity being fed and the terrors being sown the unnatural growth that's a temptation but here's the activity of Satan again leaven being presented to your soul this is why later on in the New Testament you're going to find this command purge out there for the old leaven because when you meet imperfection, wherever you meet it in whatever form you may encounter it do not thereby let your God drop to the point where you embrace the leaven you may have three gossips in the church let their voices remain but three don't join yours with them don't let the leaven of gossip invade you it's one of the things you know that when we examine our rights as believers to influence the church how do people influence the government?

I'll tell you this very simply by the power of complaint we have a culture of complaint and I'll tell you it's completely consistent the more democratic rights we have the more we have to exercise them through complaint so you better understand the church is not a democracy and it works the opposite the more you complain the more you will suffer spiritually, that is a spiritual law and you can find it in the bible complaint will impoverish your soul that doesn't mean that if there is somebody doing something wrong in the church you can't go and meet them face to face that's a different issue but I know one thing is clear complaint must not be a leaven in the church, let there be no complaining in our streets, this is one of the beautiful words of the Psalms, no complaining in our streets,

what a wonderful thing no complaining isn't that wonderful, blessed is the church with it no complaint in it just think if in England there was no more complaint just think it on on the today program they said to the conservative spokesman, what do you think about the government? it's wonderful what do you think about Tony Blade? fantastic anything wrong at all? can't think of anything well what's wrong with your church? oh come here I'll tell you just listen I'll give you a long list the leaven of the world invades the church and will corrupt and destroy you you hear it on the radio and you let it into the church the tragedy of church history is so often that what is in the world is fed in the greatest defeats in church history come when the church is popular and this is one of the

strange things, people want the church to be popular they want the church to be all right with the world let's have their music, their songs and everything let's be like them and they are in surprise and all the power goes out you cannot have the world and Christ cannot serve God in that, and so this is it it will infect you and sin will wash through silently working unless you in your response say no to it from the very moment you see it, you have to recognize leaven you can't recognize the tears and tear them out of the church but when somebody invites you to pour out your complaints, you say no I will not say that I will not speak to you about this one of the greatest things you can ever do to the church is to say no to a person who is defining it, refuse to listen to them, and that is

the fourth parable so we are working our way through the parables of the age of literature, but remember what I said, the warning comes, this is temporary, it is not the constant state, let's just jump down to the last parable for a moment before we look at the fifth and the sixth but the seventh parable is of a net a drag net the net is dropped into the ocean it's left and it things swim through it and get caught in it, all kinds of things get caught nobody knows it's left down there the end of the age it's drawn up oh there's a whole mixture in here let's have a look what we've caught and this is the truth in verse 49, so shall it be at the climax the consummation the end of the world the climax the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just now if we say to the

Lord Lord will your people here tonight send forth your angels amongst us what's going to happen to the world mighty angels, millions of them will go forth into the world and will begin to intervene in the history of this world, you know angels will come forth the last trumpet shall sound and they shall lay their hands on the wicked and separate them from the just, mighty angels you know when a policeman stops you when someone this man you know that I've got a friend who's a policeman and he says it's amazing how many people swear at him and don't respect him and are angry with him for catching him when God sends forth his mighty angels I warn you there shall be no one fighting back God shall send forth his mighty angels and shall separate, there shall be a day of fear and of judgment,

God is going to do it you and I are going to see it seeing mighty angels stepping forth to do the work of God God's angels are not visibly active throughout the course of human history but at certain moments God says now is the time and he sends them forth and they do his work this is not the angelic age not that they stopped working they continue their work but unseen but the day will come when they shall be seen well it's now the fifth parable and the sixth, the fifth parable and here we're on much more positive ground if you like, here's the fifth parable, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field for which when a man has found he hides and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has and buys that field and this has been taken as the picture of the gospel coming to a man

who goes and repents in order to obtain the treasure but again I feel this is a wrong interpretation, it is true that when we find the gospel when we find Christ we are to give everything we have to obtain that treasure, but the danger of that is it puts it puts the whole thing on the emphasis of what we give to obtain but the emphasis of this parable and both these parables is much more on the love of God finding us not us finding God here's the wonder of it and this is the glory of this little parable here, it's a lovely parable for this reason, verse 44 for joy he went and sold everything he had now that tells you something about his estimation of the church he had joy now remember what he's found is you and he's glad he's got joy now what is it that he sold everything it's the cross

when Jesus sold everything it was the cross, it was the incarnation and it was the cross and when Jesus came to this world it was because of joy and when he went to the cross it was because of joy what you

have to see is that the reason Jesus went to the cross was the joy that he found you and me and he loved it you know that when when Jesus sat with Nicodemus in Jericho and Nicodemus had all his questions and Jesus sat with him Jesus didn't sit there with a lofty air with two birds saying well Nicodemus unless a man is born again he cannot do he was glad that Nicodemus had come he was like springing on the head of his feet to catch him and I think this Nicodemus when he listened to Jesus was this power that was drawing him in and he wanted to be drawn Nicodemus Nicodemus was a lovely man

he hadn't come to argue he'd come to find out he'd risked everything when Jesus sat there with him in the upper room and he said Nicodemus this is Jesus speaking God so loved the world pardon I thought you do you mean now? do you mean God doesn't love the world are you saying he loved the world God so loved the world that he gave so loved what do you mean God so loved you because he loved you not because he saw you tonight and if I meet you I might say oh how lovely to see you but God loves you because he loved you what this is telling you is that God can never love you more or less because before you were born he loved you and before you were born he gave his son the reason he loves us tonight is because he loved us he'll never change he loved us God so loved the world he so loved you

what it means is that there's nothing you can do to make God love you more nothing you do makes God love you more nothing you do makes him love you less it's incredible you can separate yourself by refusing the love and saying no to it all that but it doesn't stop God loving you nothing can stop the love of God because he loved you he loved you there was a day when I didn't love my wife because I didn't know her I didn't met her never even heard of her and I lived 23 sad years without meeting her until I met her didn't know how sad I was now life has begun at 20 whatever it was but not God God doesn't say I loved you since you came to the church and heard God says God so loved you and this is what it says here the kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field which when a man is

found forjoys it off he hides and forjoys it off he goes and spells all the way up why did Jesus go to the cross? because he loved you because he had joy, you know I can't believe how there could be joy in the cross, but there is and I know this, unless there were joy in the cross there would have been no cross there was something he saw greater than everything he suffered it was you he loved you and his heart leapt it's like the bible describes the love of God as like a man who has fallen in love time means nothing suffering means nothing, it says about Jacob that he served 7 years for Rachel and Hilbert a few days because of the love he had for her a few days, you know 7 years gone by, gone gone, why are they so quick when they have been heading for it I love her the cross, didn't the

cross crush you Jesus? oh no it was but a little thing because of the love well it's always going to be a great thing but for him it's this oh yes I know I died for you, but look I know I love you God so loved you that he gave his son for you and this is the heart of the church that God loves us this 6th parable which we will close with is a parable of a pearl one pearl, that's why I say you can't divide the church, there is only one and it says in Solomon's song it says there about all concubines all residents there is only one only one my beloved there can be 10,000 churches but there is only one bride you can boast in your church but you are wrong you've got to boast in his church you've got to love the bride you've got to see what he is making you and you know that the pearl right at

the heart of the pearl is a speck of dirt oh sorry it's grain, it's grit that got into the irritation irritating the oyster that's his life it was an irritation you know that you and I we were an irritation I'm not sure if you were as big a pain in the neck as I was I'm glad you didn't meet me I'm glad that you didn't meet me before I was saved but the truth is that we are so there is something about it that is so awful until we get into that

love of God where we are washed now in this case, in the picture you could say well it's all a cover up and it's still the same as art well that's not true in the church there is no cover up in the church what happens is when you get into the love of God into the oyster this grey cushion and the oyster swallows you up he doesn't just cover you up he

changes you inside and you are made new and your being made new is actually because you are actually scarring the oyster you hurt the oyster and through the pain of the oyster comes a coating which makes you into a pearl so here is God he says come here let me swallow you up into my love that's all he wants and I'll make you part of the church one of the great one of the members of my body you'll be part of the church and they swallowed when Jesus looked on this earth he looked down and he saw and he said I want them I want them and his heart didn't say well I've got to go Father I'm willing to go, I'm willing to suffer he said I'll go, gladly and right there in the heart of the church is joy the joy of Jesus over you and it's wonderful because it's not your joy at the heart of the church

it is the thing that's wrong with you is that you are at the heart of things and you want everything, no no my joy your joy is all the product of his joy the joy that's in the heart of God so if you look down the age, if you look down it's in our age he's saying well what do you think the church is do you think the church is this, do you think the church is that do you think they've missed it, do you think this has missed it, oh well you know somebody said to me, I won't tell you which church there's something wrong with that church and I said to them immediately I said, and I named one of the elders and I said what's wrong with, and I said his name tell me, what do you mean, what's wrong with him the reason I could say was because I knew that man could be full of love I said tell me

what's wrong, oh there's nothing wrong with him, he's alright what do you mean then when you say the church you cannot say the church and not include that person you are an affront when you say that and I'll tell you something else if it's the church of Jesus you're saying there's something wrong with him you be careful and one of the things I hate most of all is to hear anybody give a general word of course there's things wrong with the churches in their manifestation in the earth, but you watch out because this is one of the things that's said in the new testament not discerning the body they don't discern the body they don't discern Christ they look at a group of people and they say there's something wrong here yes there is something wrong, that's one of the things that's wrong the

most, people can't discern Christ, can't discern the love of God once you've let that oyster swallow you up all your irritability irritations, all these things swallowed up and washed isn't that a wonderful state it's wonderful to be swallowed up in the love of God Oh Lord you've changed me and I see things differently look down the ages look where we are at in our age what's right with the church what's wrong with it, all these questions I know but the question is where's the leaven, is it coming to you? where are you? where's your heart? but right here in the heart of his people God so loved us joy, love Amen well there is a perfect church and he's the head of it and you've got to be grafted in and submitted and submerged into him Amen, let's pray shall we Praise you Jesus Lord I praise

you that your eyes are clear you're not you've not got these sightless eyes of a of a dreamer who just doesn't see reality you work with us as we are to bring us to perfection to bring us to the love of God to bring us into the holiness of God, to bring us into these wonderful states of life and I praise you that you've not finished yet the trumpet has not yet sounded your church is still being formed made ready for your coming people being added to it Glory to your name Lord and I pray that here in this place you shall so refresh the vision of the church so refresh the vision of the glory of

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