

Parables of the Kingdom

by William MacDonald

The parables of the kingdom reveal the mysteries of God's kingdom, warning of the dangers of worldly cares and riches, and emphasizing the importance of repentance and faith in salvation.

Duration: 32:44

Topics: "Parables"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the parable of the four soils as told by Jesus in Matthew 13. The sower in the parable represents Jesus Christ and all who spread the good word of God. The seed symbolizes the word of God itself. The parable describes four different types of soil: the wayside soil, which is hardened and unresponsive; the stony soil, which lacks depth and quickly withers; the thorny soil, which is choked by worldly concerns; and the good soil, which produces fruit for God. The speaker encourages listeners to examine which type of soil they identify with and emphasizes the importance of genuinely bearing fruit for God.

Transcript

...in your Bibles this morning to Matthew chapter 13, 13th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. I'd like to begin reading with verse 1, Matthew 13, 1. On the same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. The great multitudes were gathered together to him, so that he got into a boat and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Then he spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places where they did not have much earth, and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, they were scorched, because they had no root, they withered away.

And some fell among thorns, the thorns sprang up and choked them, but others fell on good ground and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. As you know, Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as King of the Jews, and in the early chapters, the earlier chapters of this gospel, you find the Lord Jesus making a bona fide offer of himself to Israel as the King.

In chapter 12, just before this portion that we've read, the leaders of Israel accused the Lord Jesus Christ of committing his miracles, performing his miracles in the power of Beelzebub, the Prince of the Demons. The Lord Jesus actually performed all his miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, but they accused him of

performing those miracles in the power of the God of filth. They said that the Holy Spirit was a devil, that's what they said.

They committed the unpardonable sin. The Lord Jesus pronounced their woe in chapter 12 of this book, that all manner of sins can be forgiven against a man, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come. The leaders of Israel had committed the unpardonable sin.

The Lord Jesus saw in that his own rejection by the people. Because the leaders had rejected him, he knew that the mass of the people would reject him as well. And so, at the end of chapter 12, you have his mother and his brothers standing outside, and they're waiting to speak to him.

This is very, very significant. The one said, look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak with you. And he answered and said to the one who told him, who is my mother and who are my brothers? And he stretched out his hand toward his disciples and said, here are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Now, what is that? Just an isolated incident? No, it's part of the flow of thought. He's making a break with Israel. Up until then, he was dealing primarily with the nation of Israel.

I am not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But now he's saying something very, very significant. He's saying, it's not the blood in your veins that counts, it's your obedience to God in heaven.

That's really what matters. You see, up until that time, they had all prided themselves that they were sons of Abraham. To them, that was the most important thing.

God could not send a Jew to hell. And Jesus is saying now, my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and obey the word of God. So, the last verses of chapter 12 of Matthew represent a very distinct break with Israel.

The king has been rejected. And in chapter 13, he's explaining that the kingdom is now going to take a different form. Instead of the Lord Jesus setting up his throne on earth and ruling over the earth, he's going to go back to heaven.

The kingdom will still exist on earth, but it's going to exist in a mystery form. The parables in chapter 13 are spoken of as the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And you'll remember that a mystery in the Bible's sense is not something that's mysterious, strangely enough.

It's something that has never been known before, but something that the Lord now reveals to the sons of men. And the description of the kingdom in chapter 13 is something that was never known in the Old Testament. You won't read about it in the Old Testament.

A kingdom where the king is absent, but where people on earth still acknowledge him as king. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He gives seven parables in this chapter, and they're a description of the age in which we live.

They are a description of what conditions will be like from the time he was on earth until the end of the tribulation period, before he comes again and sets up his literal kingdom on earth. The parables in this chapter are a picture of Christendom, not Christianity, not true Christianity, but they're a picture of

Christendom. They tell us that while the king is absent, there's going to be a great fear of profession.

A lot of people are going to profess to be followers of the king, who don't really know him at all. A lot of people will say that they're Christians, but they've never been born again. And this is very strong in the parables in Matthew chapter 13.

You must see that, otherwise the parables are meaningless. They're a picture of the age in which we live, in which there is reality. There are those who are genuinely saved.

There are those who say they're saved, but indicate by their life that they've never been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. And he said this condition will continue to the end of the age until I come back and set up my kingdom upon the earth. Now, notice how the chapter begins.

On the same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. I personally believe the house in this verse is a picture of Israel, and the sea is a picture of the Gentile nation. Actually, characteristically in the Bible, the sea is a picture of the Gentile nation.

And so here you see Jesus leaving the house, going out to the Gentiles, as it were. And this is a very distinct flow in the gospel of Matthew. The Jewish people reject the gospel.

The gospel begins going out to the Gentiles. And you find Gentiles coming to the Lord Jesus, like the Syrophenician woman. And she asks for healing for her loved one.

And he said, look, I haven't come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And she beseeches him. And he says, look, it's not right to take the bread for the sons of the kingdom and give it to dogs, because that's what the Gentiles were called, dogs.

And she said, I know, Lord, that's true. Everything you say is true. I'm just a dog, but sometimes a master will let some crumbs fall from the table to the dogs under the table.

Would you do that? And he shook his head, and he said, I haven't seen such faith in all of Israel. That was true. That was true.

Where the proud Pharisees and scribes were rejecting him, the Gentiles were listening to him. Not completely, but by and large. So you see the significance of this, Jesus going out of the house and sitting by the sea.

Great multitudes were gathered together to him. So he got into a boat and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. It's wonderful, isn't it, to think of the crowd and how they followed the Lord Jesus.

They wanted to hear the matchless words that fell from his lips. And then he gave what is sometimes called the parable of the four seeds. But it really isn't the parable of the four seeds, it's the parable of the four soils, because the seed is the same in each one.

But there are four soils. First of all, you have the sower, and primarily the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ, but all who go out sowing the seed in his name. The seed is the good word of God, isn't it? That's what the seed is, the good word of God.

And there are four different types of soil in this parable. First of all is the wayside soil. This is the hard footpath.

People have been tramping on it, and the soil is hard. The seed can't get into it, hasn't been plowed, hasn't been tilled. You really have to plow the land and till the land in order to have a good crop.

And this is just like sowing seed on a path that's been tramped by hundreds. That's one kind of soil. Second kind of soil is called stony ground.

It doesn't mean soil with a lot of stones mixed in with it, but it's soil, a very small layer of soil over a ledge of rock. That's what it is. It's as if you have a solid piece of slate with a half an inch of dirt over the slate.

That's really the picture here. And the seed can get into the dirt, but there's no place for a root. Third kind of soil is the thorny ground.

This particular type of soil is able to produce, but it produces thorns. And a good seed gets in there, but the thorns just choke it. And the last type of soil is good soil.

Good soil. Here the seed gets in, it germinates, the plant grows, the crop grows, but even there there are different degrees of fruit. Some 30-fold, some 60-fold, some 100-fold.

The Lord Jesus says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Now, an interesting thing to me is that everybody in Sun Valley Bible Chapel this morning is in that parable. Can you find yourself in that parable? That was the whole point of the Lord Jesus telling this to the disciples.

And he didn't leave it without an interpretation. If you'll turn in Matthew chapter 13 to verse 18, the Lord explains the parable. First of all, I should probably pause and say, why did Jesus speak in parables? Why didn't he come out and say it the way it was? Why did he speak in parables? Well, there's a very good reason why he didn't speak in parables.

There's a principle in the spiritual realm that if a man really wants to hear, it'll be made very clear to him. But, if a man's defenses are up, and he really doesn't want to hear the word of God, it will be obscure to him. Jesus said something similar to that in John chapter 7 verse 17.

He said, if any man will do his will, that is, if any man really wants to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself. That really means that if a person sincerely desires to know the word of God, and to know the will of God, and to know the way of salvation, God will reveal it to him. But, if that desire isn't in his heart, the whole thing will be night to him.

The whole thing will be darkness to him. Light rejected is light denied. And so, he gave it in parables, and the disciples, their hearts were opened.

They wanted to know the truth, and they understood what he said. He revealed to them the meaning of what he said other people did not want to know, and so they didn't know. And that's why you read in verse 14, and in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand.

Seeing you will see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people has grown dull, their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart, so that I should heal them.

Now, it isn't that God doesn't want people to know. It isn't that he doesn't want them to understand. He does, but their attitude determines whether they're going to know or not.

Now, the Lord is saying to his disciples, you're going to be going out. After I leave this scene, you're going to be going out, and you're going to be sowing the seed, and you'll come across four different types of soil. The first three, unbelievers.

First three, unsaved people. They come in contact with the gospel, they don't get saved. Only one out of four types of soil produces fruit for God.

I'm glad he gave that to the disciples, because otherwise they could have become very discouraged, you know. A lot of people, when they first get saved, they think, this is so wonderful, I'll go and tell my relatives, and they'll all get saved immediately. Won't they? It doesn't work that way.

It doesn't work that way. You think that. It's so wonderful, a free salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing.

Simply receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior from sin. Everybody would want it. No, they don't.

They don't. In fact, if one out of four accepts it, it's good. And even that one out of four different amounts of fruitfulness for God.

So, I think it was very good of the Lord, part of his wisdom, to warn the disciples what kind of a situation they would be in, in this age in which we live. Now, let's look at the parable of the sower explained. This is verse 18.

Therefore, hear the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, and incidentally, when it says does not understand it, it doesn't mean that their IQ isn't adequate. It means they don't want to understand it.

It doesn't mean that they can't understand it. It means they're determined that they won't understand it. Very important to see that.

Jesus said that to the Jews of his day. He said, you search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of me, and you don't want to come to me that you might have life. That's it in a nutshell.

The reason people aren't saved is they don't want to be saved. There's nothing about the Lord Jesus that makes it impossible to believe on him. He's very credible, and the reason doesn't lie in the intellect of man.

The difficulty is not in the intellect of man, it's in the will of man. You show me a person today who's not saved and has a valid presentation of the gospel, and I'll show you someone who doesn't want to accept it. Both the Bible and your experience prove that to be true.

Those of you who are saved, why weren't you saved sooner than you were? Because you didn't want to be. The Lord was wooing you. The Spirit of God was wooing you.

You were holding back. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, that is does not want to understand it, God is not withholding truth from him. Truth is all here.

Then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart. Notice it says in the parable, the birds came and devoured. The Lord interprets that.

The birds there refer to Satan, refers to the devil. The gospel goes out, it's clearly told, the message is made clear and plain, and the devil comes and he tips on a person's shoulder and he says, not now, later. You want to live your life.

You want to grab the gusto. Religion is for women and children, not for macho men. The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart.

This is he who received seed by the wayside. I don't know if you are witnessing Christians. I don't know if you're talking to your friends and relatives day by day.

You are, you find this. You find people, the soil is just pounded down, and you present the gospel to them, the devil comes with some words of sweet nothing, and no decision is made for Christ. That's the first soil.

He who received the seed on stony places, this is the ledge of rock covered by a thin layer of soil. This is he who receives the word, who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy. You say, well praise the Lord, this is getting encouraging.

No, it's not getting encouraging at all. It's very discouraging. So why is it discouraging? Because it's not a good thing for an unsaved person to receive the word with joy.

You see it sometimes when you go to one of the great crusades, you know, and the invitation is given out at the end, and the choir sings, just as I am without one plea, and you see people walking jauntily down the aisle with their faces in a broad grin, and they're chewing gum a mile a minute. They're receiving the word with joy. You go back to them two weeks later, and they don't know what it's all about.

They don't know what it's all. They profess to become Christians. It would have been a much better experience if they had received the word with tears.

It would have been much better if they had received the word with repentance. It would have been much better if they had received the word with confessions. You say, doesn't salvation bring joy? Of course it brings joy, but before it brings joy, it brings sadness and sorrow over a person's sin.

Dear friends, without repentance there's no salvation. Paul and the apostles preached repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance has to come before things, and one of the tragedies of evangelism today is that people are urged to make a profession in the spirit of joy. That is no good.

We should use the word of God, and we should use the law of God to bring them to the place where they're broken at the foot of the cross. Then, when they trust the sinner's savior, there's something to it. Watch out for joyful receptions of the word.

He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who receives the word and immediately, who hears the word, immediately receives it with joy. Notice what happens. He has no root in himself, but endures only for a while.

When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Notice it said in the parable, when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. The Lord Jesus interprets that when the sun was up, that means when tribulation or persecution arises.

We see this happening today. We see our dear young brothers and sisters going out to the campus and witnessing to young people on the campus, and some of them apparently receive the word. Apparently receive the word.

They're willing to pray a prayer. They're willing to give mental assent to four spiritual laws, or something of the sort. They'll even give you your telephone, their telephone number, so you can check up on them.

In many cases there's no such telephone number. They gave it to you to get you off their back. Profession? It's not a profession.

Nothing to it at all. Where there is genuine conversion, there will be endurance. Jesus said that, didn't he? He that shall endure unto the end shall be saved.

Not that you're saved by enduring to the end, but true faith does have the quality of permanence. Where you find a person who's a well-saved soul, he goes on to the end. Now, he who receives seed, verse 22, among the thorns, is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

In the parable, the Lord Jesus had spoken about thorns, thorny ground. Thorns sprang up and choked them. Now he interprets it.

What are the thorns? The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. Now, this man makes a profession. You listen to his word, you think, if that fellow's really saved, really think he's got it.

But, as time goes on, he becomes completely absorbed in the cares of this world, and he makes money his God. The only important thing in life is going after money, and no matter how much he gets, he can still adjust his budget to accommodate the increasing amount, and spiritual things don't really matter to him. We were mentioning yesterday at the conference on prophecy, the Lord Jesus taught that everyone either loves God and hates money, or he hates God and loves money.

Shocking, isn't it? Because who? You cannot serve God and man. For every one of us, money is either master or servant. So how would I know? By how you make your decisions in life, by your priorities in life.

Now, this is the deceitfulness of riches, that they forsake you when you need them most. They forsake you at the great hour of need, which Jesus never does. So those first three types of soil say to them, are you a Christian? Of course I'm a Christian.

What do you think I am, a Jew? That's what they say to you. They're part of the kingdom, in its wide aspect. Profession, not reality.

Never were born again. And that leaves us with the fourth. He who receives seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

What is that saying? Dear friends, it's saying that where there's genuine conversion, there's going to be a change in the life. That's what it's saying. God is a fruit inspector.

He's looking for fruit in a person's life. What is fruit? Well, generally today, when people think of fruit in Christianity, they think of souls won to Christ. And I don't doubt that it could include that.

But generally speaking, fruit is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. It's the development of a Christlike character. That's what it is.

And the Lord Jesus is saying in this parable, what I want is good soil. What I want is soil when the word comes in, the person says, God help me, I'm a guilty sinner, and I deserve to go to hell. But I believe with all my heart that the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary.

I accept that testimony. He died on the cross of Calvary to pay for my sins, and I here and now, by a definite act of faith, receive him as my Lord and Savior. Henceforth, to own him as a master in my life.

He said that's good soil. That's the kind of soil that produces fruits of God. Same seed in all cases, different soil.

I said that everyone in the room today is in one of those soils, is one of those soils. Can you find yourself there? I hope you can find yourself in that fourth type of soil, bringing forth fruit for God. Different degrees of fruit, yes, that's true, but fruit just the same.

The proof that Christ makes a change in a person's life. That's what God wants to see. If there is anyone here this morning, and you think maybe you're in one of those perfect soils, we'd encourage you to stay behind and talk to us.

We'd love to tell you how you can be sure that you are that fourth type of soil. Genuinely say, not a mere professor, genuinely say, bringing forth fruit for God, shall we pray. Father, we thank you for the matchless teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How clear it is to those who have ears to hear, who have eyes to see. Lord, we pray as we go to the Word of God that we'll have open, teachable hearts every day of our lives. We pray that if there are any here today who might be that wayside soil, that hard, packed-down earth, or the stony soil, just a shallow layer of soil over a ledge of rock, or that thorny ground obsessed with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, Father, we pray that any such might lift their heart to you today in repentance, receiving the Word with tears of contrition, and accepting the Lord Jesus as only Lord and Savior.

We ask it in his worthy name. Amen.

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